

We are going through a Peel phase at the moment. And we might understand the Prime Minister, Sir Keith Joseph, and Sir Geoffrey Howe best, not as monetarists but as Peelites. The romantic backbenchers who cry out for reflation, who man the Tory Reform Group, who murmur their regard for the Social Democrats and who "care passionately" about something-or-other, are to a man spangled Disraelians, though I would never allege against them the comprehensive insincerity and conmanship of that exploded phenomenon. But, like the former Floor leader, Mr St John Stevas, they are attracted to Disraelian stances because these are attractive, perhaps also from a certain unacknowledged defeatism. The Left is the camp of Victory: we must find out what the Left is doing and pre-empt it.

Even in a period of very heavy unemployment there is a terrible fallacy in this flinching kind of politics. The creditable side of Disraeli had to do with dishing the Whigs when the Whigs were in the right and supporting a course which would justly and inevitably pass into victory. There is no analogy to be made between the Reform Act of 1867 and the social reforms of Cross on the one hand, and the Union Closed Shop on the other. Equally it is a very shallow and silly response to the tribulations of a half-attempted monetarism to be crying out for reflation by one means or another. A proportion of back-benchers, and a higher proportion of Cabinet members—where distaste, even loathing, of present policies is stronger—echoes the Labour Party mantra: "*This woman is obsessed with the single dogma of monetary control.*" By extension they would like her to let the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (that requirement again) go up . . . in the interests of flexibility. It takes an imaginative leap to recall that Harold Wilson fought and won an election in 1966 on the scandal of a debt incurred by another flexible Tory, Reginald Maudling in his leap for freedom two years earlier, a mere debt of £800 million!

Lurking under all the maybug antics of the Disraelians as they skim the surface of events is the Salisbury instinct, resting like a Giant Grouper in the oceanic depths of Tory waters. Whatever will win an election and keep the institutional Party in the Arcadia of red boxes and Downing Street cameramen is right.

AS I PRAISE CONTEMPORARY Peelism, it has not escaped me that Peel ended in defeat and his Party in 30 years of continuous opposition. Yet Peel's work—free trade and reformed banking—once established, quite simply *were* the 19th century. The point was acknowledged by Disraeli when pressed for agricultural protection 30 years later.

Contemporary Tories would assuredly like a quieter life. And, hot as ginger and vindaloo, they want to win the next election. Which is why the name of Mr Francis Pym, bland, modest, unhectoring, and comfortingly male, civility's second self, is often mentioned in a Spanish Bourbon way for the succession. Mr Pym is a nice man, an excellent Floor leader, and the public which, alas, still loves a gent, would adore him. But the work is Peelite work. For Mr Maudling's £800 million "requirement" has become in Geoffrey Howe's "obsessed", "extreme", "dogmatic" aspiration £10,500,000,000—if, that is, his budget is permitted by affronted backbenchers to get it down by taxes from an estimate of £14 billion!

The Government may have some markers in its favour: a rapidly recovering stock market, companies which having come through a shattering ride in the tunnel of unlove—recession plus tight money—may well be suddenly very productive and efficient indeed, and an inflation which is steadily decelerating. But with money still not controlled, with the public sector arrogantly unmarked while the private sector has been sweating it out, with unemployment figures very high, the Government can take anything except the panic of its own troops.

To think, in politics, and to act upon those thoughts is to incur the easy enmity of those habituated to the sleepy felicity of a long decline. For all its compromises and resiliings, the present Ministry has shown more courage and reasoned principle than any Government since 1945. It also knows that Peel was destroyed only by the combined panic and ambition of a faction in his own Party. And it understands, accordingly, that the secret weapon of loyalty is there to be used.

Letter from Sweden

By Jytte Bonnier

Stockholm



THE dispiriting news has by now got around: ill fares the Welfare State. Once Sweden's historic "middle way" was considered throughout the West as an admirable model, avoiding the excesses of old-fashioned private capitalism and new-fashioned totalitarian communism. But quietly, and non-violently, deep problems have arisen to plague the Nordic utopia of a prosperous social democracy.

The roots of the difficulties began in the post-War period; not having participated in the War the Swedes became pioneers of the affluent society. Whatever was backward, in poor sectors here and there, was promptly developed. Markets were bullish, changes and reforms were on the constant agenda of the day. Incomes were slowly levelled by an insistent taxation, and the public sector grew and grew, as did the monopolistic power of trade union organisations. New ideas and experiments rained down on them as the Social Democracy reigned confidently through three decades. Not that it was any kind of Marxism which shaped policies, rather crisper views of social engineering, mixing positivism with social behaviourism. A few isolated voices dared to argue that "the good life" was not really a matter of materialistic satisfactions. But a new mythological success story was the *idée fixe* of the day: from rags to riches, from underdeveloped backwardness to technological splendour; and the ideology became a kind of unwritten law as self-censorship crept into the mass-media. Critical foreign observers spoke of a New Totalitarianism, which was surely going a bit too far. But pluralism was a rare commodity, and provincialism spread over the land.

Before every important election the national leadership saw to it that one great problem, dramatically and decisively put, was set before the

voters. The citizens pondered and discussed; the future was at stake; the living standard was yet again to be raised. Until 1976 the Social Democrats won every electoral test. Then came the simple issue of "Nuclear Energy", and this proved to be their undoing. The leader of the Agricultural Party, Torbjörn Fäldin, and the other "bourgeois parties" won the election on an anti-nuclear platform: the voters seemed to be tired of all-knowing paternalistic guidance on all the essential issues of humanistic togetherness. But a subsequent referendum on nuclear power showed a majority of Swedes in favour. Collapse of the great debate.

A TIME OF TROUBLES began: labour was restive, disputing about overtime pay, whether they could be locked out or should try for a general strike. Public attention was caught up in the realities of unfavourable balance-of-payments. Suddenly to be plunged into grievous difficulties was something of a national shock for Swedes who burn their boats happily behind them and try never to look backwards. Where did all the mounting problems suddenly come from? They had prided themselves on being as optimistic and dynamic as the Americans; but surely the USA was not without its instructive problems, and the whole pattern of crisis of the last fifteen years in Europe should have given warning signals. But, I am afraid, the Swedes have quite forgotten how to learn from experience.

No reforms were critically re-examined, and many were effected so speedily that the population was constantly assailed by new projects. The government bureaucracy knew how everything worked except the functioning of real human beings. Theorists at desks wielded power; an academic memorandum changed lives. All were confident that "changing the environment" was the clue to all social reconstruction; but what if the environment was not the cause and controller of all that we are and hope to be? Dissident intellectuals began to raise awkward questions about inherited qualities and human potential which seemed to pre-empt a new pessimism.

Two recent reforms typify the problem. Swedish laws on secure-and-guaranteed employment and the right of all to "participate" in all-decision-making-which-affects-our-lives were surely in keeping with the noblest Scandinavian ideals of justice and moral idealism. How shocking that once put into practice they should have dubious consequences! When jobs are totally secure, a "black" casuistry develops since employers must give factual reasons for "just dismissal." Small employers, naturally, found this law especially burdensome, and tried to circumvent it. And then there was the requirement that all trade unionists be fully informed in the "participatory decision-making process." The discussions were long, but

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productivity did not exactly benefit; and when production fell and markets shrank, what good was the guarantee of "job security" if employment could not be maintained?

It is fairly obvious that if a society is indulging itself in vast programmes of state aid, there will grow up a bureaucratic turn of mind which is short on psychology and long on mechanical scientism. There may be, I suspect, an element of their "national character" here; for Swedes have strong technical and scientific aptitudes, and the idea of constantly repairing the human being, tinkering with his institutions, fixing things up so that he can run efficiently from-birth-to-death has not been very far from their deepest ideals. But the model citizen in the model home has proved to be very far from humdrum Swedish realities.

Still, nothing will stop the parties from trying again; and this time, as they warm up for the next national elections (in 1982) the salvationist reform will be the new progressive schemes for shareholding. Shares in one's own firm? Shares in other possibly more rewarding (dare one say profitable) firms? But the wealthy trade-union congress, the *LO*, regards shares as a poor investment for its own capital. Ironies abound.

I WOULD ARGUE that despite their enthusiasm for reform and their enlightened passion for the permissive society, the Swedes are essentially an authoritarian people, in a sense still a "religious" people who need something all-embracing to believe in. Their Social Democracy has been a kind of folk phenomenon, a species of revival movement, with the traditional belief in paradise simply transferred to more terrestrial neighbourhoods. Deep down they have, I firmly believe, no real problems of governability. A sceptical, critical liberalism never struck deep roots in Sweden. They remain easy to govern: so long as the politicians know what the chief end of human life is, enunciate appropriate maxims, proclaim elevated aims. Here is the rhetorical genius of their illustrious Prime Ministers: Olof Palme and Tage Erlander.

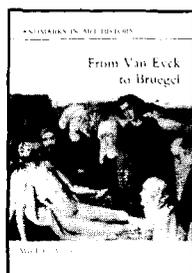
But the world of realities is not quite what the Swedes would like to have it, and it is especially disagreeable when they have to learn anew how to cope with its surprises. I suppose the last time they

retreated successfully was in the time of Gustavus Adolphus. The retreat today would have to be away from the bloated Public Sector; but this will have to be camouflaged. The young prefer to think of decentralisation into smaller units, or having fewer worldly goods, or going in for a simpler life with its ways of recycling, biodynamic farming, and long treks on foot over traffic-free highways....

ILL FARES the Welfare State, and a recent international conference in Stockholm on "*Welfarism, What Now?*" brought the message home to an unsettled, uncertain intelligentsia who are beginning to have doubts about a growth-economy with high inflation, about a paternalism with a proliferating bureaucracy, with big organisations all competing for power in a corporate state. It would be nice to think that Sweden, facing problems that beset the entire West, could once again be innovative and find a "new way". But the harsh truth of the matter is that they have throughout their history always taken their movements from the outside. On their own they offer a certain amount of undeniable energy and passion, but these need to be galvanised by an ideology, or a fashion, or indeed anything new that comes from abroad.

In the midst of all this essential national conformity it must be strange, I submit, to ponder the whole gallery of Swedish personalities who have made their mark in so many fields. Perhaps they are the eccentric exception which proves the conformist rule. How else account for a Strindberg? A brilliant individualist in a world of dull authority. And how else account for Ingmar Bergman's cries of lonely anguish out of a crowd of folksy togetherness? A talent for individualism is there, deep down and constantly breaking out (from Greta Garbo to Ingrid Bergman, from Dag Hammarskjöld to Björn Borg). Possibly it has all to do with the strangeness of northern climes where fires are burning beneath the surface of cold and darkness. In other climes, one is told, there are certain species of cactus which produce extraordinary flowers every few years. In olden days this small country even had dreams—and almost fulfilled them—of becoming a Great Power. There is a driving force here; and it should be watched.

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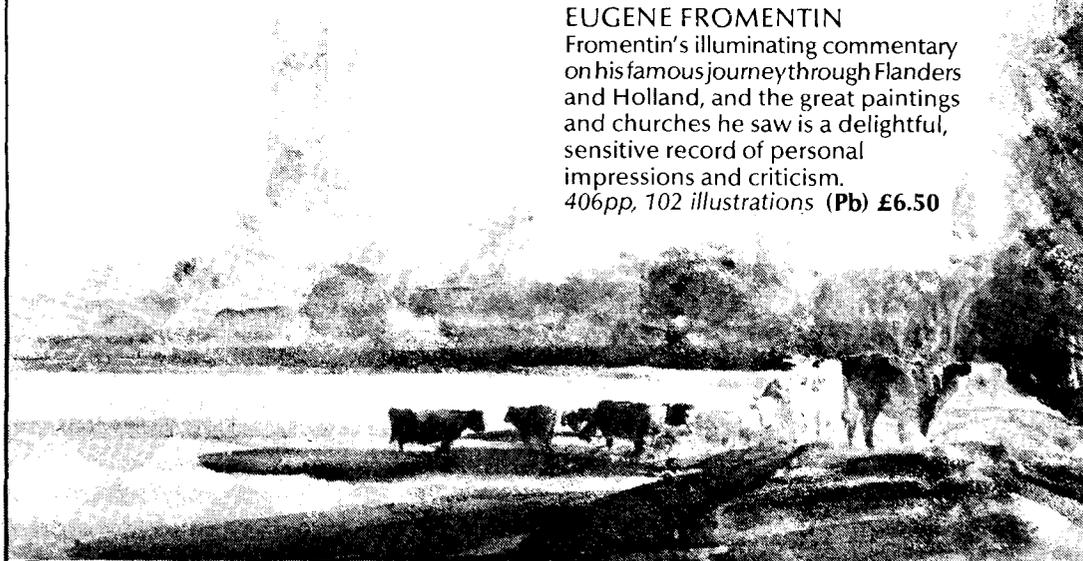
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BOOKS & WRITERS

“Dearest Forster”—“Dearest Masood”

An East-West Friendship—By R. W. NOBLE

I. 1979–80:

E. M. Forster under Surveillance

FORSTER ... SAID, ‘Only connect’: and connect they did, with the agents of the KGB,¹ concluded one of several commentators who have developed this thesis since the “mole”, Professor Anthony Blunt, was exposed a year ago.

The mole-catcher, Smiley, from Le Carré’s *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, might have paused for meditation:

“E. M. Forster? The name first came up after Moscow Centre had taken their English supermoles in from the cold. Our Soviet networks were rolled up, the circus was pulled inside out. But we managed to sandbag the Professor, a deep penetration agent who had been covering their backs. The Circus intended to turn him round. When our interrogators went to strip him, he’d tried, like dons do, to put on fancy costume: Socrates, Queen Victoria, he left out Marx ... Karl, not Groucho, ‘no style’, he said, but he liked this Forster. Or rather, he liked something the chap had written during the ‘38 panic. Whitehall, Parliament, nearly everyone except a few of us at the Circus, you see, were crawling to Hitler, Stalin, you name your villain. Forster did a bit of private enterprise, ‘If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country....’ It’s all recorded in the Circus’ dossier on the Professor, with our interrogator’s citation and query in the margin, ‘Re Forster’s

statement, *I believe in personal relationships. A mole-breeder?’”*

What did E. M. Forster in fact make of the choices which preoccupied him—whether personal relationships or public duty or art or his sexual inclinations—during the years after the publication of his first novel and leading up to the completion of his last novel, *A Passage to India* (1924)? We can now picture, through recently discovered manuscripts, how during those years Forster often “had to choose”, not only by the use of his own self-determination but also as a result of the give and take in his erotic relationship with Syed Ross Masood.²

II. 1906—June 1910: *Attracted to Masood*

E. M. FORSTER and Syed Ross Masood first met in late 1906. Masood’s guardian, Theodore Morison, who had recently retired from his post as Principal of the Muslim Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, India, was E. M. Forster’s neighbour at Weybridge, Surrey. He retained Forster to coach his ward for the entrance examination in Latin at Oxford. Forster, then twenty-seven, had already written *Where Angels Fear To Tread* (1905). Masood was only seventeen, but he had an outgoing decisive character. He immediately admonished Forster, according to the latter’s 1906 diary, to give up “duties for friends—which is civilisation.” He would add wryly, “Hence the confusion in Oriental States.” Nevertheless, his first contention helped to extend a similar notion in Forster, who took it to epitomise Masood’s singularity as well as his Islamic culture: “To them personal relations come first.”

In several respects, however, Masood seemed to have little in common with his tutor. Forster often referred—sometimes with humour, sometimes with pessimism—to his own conventional behaviour and unprepossessing appearance. Masood was physically impressive—over six feet tall,

¹“Tarnished by Blunt” (Editorial), *Spectator*, 24 November 1979, p. 3. Cf. *The Times* (London), 22 November 1979, p. 15.

²Most of the recently discovered MS. letters and the verse-book which are referred to throughout this article were in the possession of the late Begum Amtul Chhatari (formerly Lady Masood) and are now in the care of Mr Jalil A. Kidwai. Other sources of documents include King’s College, Cambridge and the India Office Library. (Forster’s MSS © The Provost and Scholars of King’s College, Cambridge. Masood’s MSS © The Ross Masood Education and Culture Society, Pakistan.)