

The second type of corruption is more common in collectivist or widely nationalised systems, in which State property and the national patrimony blur and overlap. In his statement of 14 July 1986, François Mitterrand defended the conception that only that part of the national wealth that is the property of the State really “belongs” to the community. It is a dangerous philosophy, because it tends to legitimise the use of State power, in all good faith, to distribute public money in the form of preferential appointments, subventions, or sinecures. Not that either of the two types of corruption totally excludes the other. They combine in different proportions according to the dominant tendency of the régime.

In Spain and France alike, it is true, the socialists have so

lofty a notion of their own morality that if you listen to what they say you might almost believe they make corruption respectable when they practise it—rather than finding their virtue tarnished when they succumb. . . .

Corruption increases in inverse proportion to democracy. Neither the recent public scandals in France, nor those which are not yet public (and perhaps never will be), could have happened if the balances and reciprocal control and supervision of power had been working properly. Where democracy does not exist, corruption is one of the most intractable hindrances to its birth and growth. Where democracy does exist, corruption is one of the most pernicious methods of undermining it.

Malign, or Muddle-Headed . . . ?

A Footnote to the Case of Mgr Bruce Kent—By JOHN HACKETT



IN JULY last year a dear friend died. He was a surgeon, widely respected and loved: his name was Lipmann Kessel. I know of others deeply indebted to Lippy, whose skills were to bring him, as a Professor at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, high distinction among the surgeons of our time, both at home and abroad, and whose modesty and kindness made him many warm friends. I have myself a more than usually strong reason to hold him in high regard. He gave me more than 40 years of life.

I was brought in to St Elizabeth's Hospital in Arnhem, as our doomed battle dragged on through its last throes, with severe abdominal injuries. A German SS-surgeon, working in that confused situation with the RAMC Captain, Lipmann Kessel, advised him that I was beyond hope. Lippy disregarded his advice and, after what has been described as a surgical miracle, I lived. Months later, in the harsh winter of 1944-45, we were to meet again, in snow-bound woods, on

the run in German-occupied Holland, to make our stealthy way together out of it.

Though very different persons, he and I developed after the War a friendship too close to be affected by any differences between us. Lippy, an Afrikaner and a Jew, was also a Marxist. I was none of these. Indeed, I had for many years made no secret of my view that Marxism, though once useful, could no longer be seen as anything but unscientific, romantic and obsolete. Lippy envied me my Christian faith but regretted that he could not share it. There were other differences. He was a member of Ex-Services CND and had for some years been chairman of its medical committee. However worthy the motives of many (though by no means all) of those who joined CND, and however they regarded it themselves, it seemed to me (like so many other so-called “Peace Movements”) to be little more than a useful tool of Soviet foreign policy. Lippy and I, however, never talked about these things. . . .

A TV company once tried to set up a confrontation between us as “interesting television”. We were absolutely firm in our refusal to discuss before a million viewers topics we had never wished to talk about in private. The respect and admiration I had for this devoted, skilful, gentle, compassionate man was unbounded. We were happy in our friendship and did not want it disturbed.

What I am writing about now, however, is not so much Lippy, and our friendship, as the interesting position of Monsignor Bruce Kent. It is about Bruce Kent that the question that heads this piece arises.

When Lippy died I had a letter from the President of Ex-Services CND, John Stanleigh, a former member of one of the finest fighting units in British Airborne Forces, “Boy” Wilson’s 21st Independent Parachute Company. We had fought alongside each other in the Oosterbeek perimeter. It seems that copies of his letter to me and my reply were sent off to Monsignor Bruce Kent, who then wrote back in his turn

GENERAL SIR JOHN HACKETT, after a distinguished military career (GOC-in-C Northern Ireland Command; Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Ministry of Defence; Commander in Chief British Army of the Rhine), was from 1968-75 Principal of King's College, London, and continues there as a Visiting Professor in Classics. He is the author of “The Profession of Arms” (n.e. Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984) and “I Was a Stranger” (Chatto & Windus, 1977), and co-author of “The Untold Story” and “The Third World War” (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982, 1978).

to John Stanleigh, and kindly sent me a copy of his reply "with good wishes" from "Bruce". I have the permission of the other two to quote them, and now reproduce relevant parts of all three letters. The letter from Monsignor Bruce Kent to the President of Ex-Services CND deserves close attention.

From the President, Ex-Services CND

4 August 1986

DEAR SIR JOHN,

As you know, Lipman Kessel, one of our distinguished Vice-Presidents, passed away last month. As a fitting gesture, we should like to publish an obituary in our next (quarterly) Newsletter from someone who knew him well.

I understand that Lipman Kessel was your friend for many, many years and I thought you might kindly agree to provide us with this last tribute.

I appreciate that you did not share his views about nuclear arms and we would, of course, make it clear to our readers that your contribution should not be construed in any way as an endorsement of our objectives.

*Yours sincerely,
John Stanleigh*

(formerly 21 Indep. Para. Coy—Boy Wilson)

Reply from General Sir John Hackett

12 August 1986

DEAR STANLEIGH,

I was pleased to be in contact with a former member of that quite outstanding body of fighting men commanded by my very old friend Boy Wilson. I assume you were in the Arnhem encounter and if you were a member of that group from the Independent Para. Company which fought so stoutly on the eastern sector of the Oosterbeek perimeter you would then have been, at least nominally, under my command. I saw a lot of Boy at that time and was full of admiration for that Company. They were splendid people.

I find your request a difficult one to answer. I owe my life to Lippy but make no secret of my own lack of enthusiasm for what I can only regard, at its best, as the high-minded folly of CND. Much of the support it gets, as you must know, is not high-minded at all. The enthusiasm with which Communists in this country, of varying shades from the CPGB outwards and downwards, claim to have more or less taken CND over says really all that needs to be said. Whether the claim is well based is perhaps open to question. It is certainly, as you know, widely put forward by Communists and rarely refuted. I know the Christian priest Bruce Kent quite well and, contrary to the views held by many respected and responsible people, see him less as malign than muddle-headed. What your own views on this matter may be, particularly in respect of the wholehearted support by CND of aspects of the foreign policy pursued by the anti-Christian USSR, I do not know. I shall have to think a little more about your invitation to contribute to your next newsletter. Perhaps you will let me

know what your deadline is and what sort of length you would expect me to produce.

*Yours sincerely,
J. W. Hackett*

Monsignor Bruce Kent to John Stanleigh, CND

5th September 1987 [sic]

DEAR JOHN,

. . . I am sorry that you could not get John Hackett to write a few lines about dear Lippy.

Contrary to the views held by many respectable and responsible persons John is really a decent chap and was once an above average college principal. It is just that like many retired military people he always goes on fighting the war before last and actually believes nuclear weapons have some military purpose. All contrary views he is obliged to regard as symptoms of a subversive conspiracy, so obvious that any evidence for it is not necessary.

*Yours sincerely,
Bruce
Bruce Kent
Vice Chair*

LET ME DISPOSE OF one small matter raised in the Monsignor's letter before going further. He writes that contrary to the views held by many respectable and responsible persons John Hackett is really a decent chap." I wonder if I could perhaps be told the names of some of these respectable and responsible persons so that I could ask them upon what grounds they hold a contrary view.

There is, however, a much more important matter to discuss. I have for 30 years been saying that all-out nuclear world war is the ultimate obscenity, and that any use of a nuclear weapon on land in Europe will open Pandora's box. We cannot guess what will come out of that, but in high probability it will be early and steep escalation towards the strategic exchange we all dread. The essential debate is, of course, not about *whether*, but *how*—not about *whether* we want a nuclear war but *how* we prevent it.

To suggest that a unilateral renunciation of nuclear weapons by ourselves would be followed by the Soviet Union is, in the light of common sense and experience, quite futile. We abandoned chemical weapons, for instance, in the 1950s. Did the USSR follow suit? Theirs have increased tenfold since then, and more. I reluctantly have to endorse the view expressed by the Pope, Cardinal Hume, and Archbishop Runcie: that, uncomfortable though it may be, there is as yet no better safeguard against nuclear world war than nuclear deterrence. These all suggest that, however repugnant, nuclear deterrence must, at least for the present, be retained.

I am not in any way "obliged", as the Monsignor claims, to hold any views whatsoever, least of all the infantile opinions his letter suggests. Some obligation to follow a superior's lead may well, on the other hand, be thought to fall upon a senior member of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. In a matter as important as nuclear deterrence this is something that the Monsignor might wish, at some appropriate time, to discuss with the Holy Father. No obligation to follow any line at all,

except that dictated by conscience and common sense, bears upon me; and what is said here about the inevitable posture of a former military man is no more than fantasy.

What chiefly deserves attention in Monsignor Kent's letter, however, in any discussion on whether this man is malign or merely muddle-headed, is one quite startling statement: "He always goes on fighting the war before last."

Bruce Kent knows very well that, with some others, I wrote a very widely read book (it sold over 2 million copies in 23 editions in 10 languages) on a world war which was not in fact *the one before last* (the First World War), nor even the *last* (the Second World War) but the *next* (World War III). He cannot easily have forgotten this, for we have debated aspects of that piece of writing more than once in public. However, though Monsignor Kent is clearly on all this evidence somewhat fanciful by nature and apparently of unreliable memory as well, whatever else he may be he has not yet, in my own view (which I realise is not universally shared), shown himself to be more malign than merely muddle-headed. I look forward with confidence to his continuing to furnish the same sort of evidence as that offered in this correspondence to support me in maintaining this position.

London Commentary

A Mandate for Humility?

By Edward Pearce



ENTERING A YEAR which is horribly likely to produce a General Election we find ourselves more confused by the polls than we would expect. A Conservative lead of 8 points, according to Gallup, made the latter part of December sour for the Opposition, taking the brandy out of the sauce and the sage from the onion. But no sooner had a pleasure-battered electorate stirred for epiphany and work than a poll from Marplan proclaimed a margin of only 1%.

Agnosticism about polls from both sides may have rather more justification in the light of such dazzling variations than the usual whimper at a bad figure. "Oh, I don't take polls seriously." Like hell they don't. And taking them seriously really leads to only one likely conclusion—that the electorate is less committed, less party-minded, and more disposed for a wander round the supermarket. For despite the growing

extravagance of the popular press—"LAWSON FLAYS LABOUR", "MAGGIE LASHES LAYABOUTS"—that sort of depressing thing—the parties are nearer to one another in substance than they have been for a decade-and-a-half.

The effective abandonment of a tight money policy by a Chancellor of the Exchequer, shepherded by his Prime Minister as she looks for a snap election to win, is paralleled by a caution on public spending and trade-union power not seen in Labour ranks since the early 1960s. The present rather vulgar mood of politics has little to do with ideology or with any other form of sincere conviction translated into policy. It has everything to do with old-style electioneering on a small flood of consumer credit in the hope that the flood can be cut off as soon as the votes have been counted and the Opposition decently interred.

Speaking of which, Harold Macmillan, so lately elevated Earl of Stockton (the run-down Durham town which returned him to Parliament in the 1930s), never showed better timing than in his on-cue passing at the year end. For it was Macmillan, elegant excoriator of Mrs Thatcher—"I recall that unemployment in Stockton in 1935 was 29%. I went there for a party of some friends recently . . . and it was 28%. Rather a sad way to end one's life, don't you think?"—who, as the showman Prime Minister, perfected the bought election on easy terms in 1959.

He stood in bitter contrast to his Labour opponent, Hugh Gaitskell. They saw each other respectively as charlatan and preacherman. Lately Mrs Thatcher, with an angry threat through her lobby spokesman, the grey, discreet, universally known Bernard Ingham, had briefly threatened to cut Neil Kinnock off from the security briefing always granted to a Leader of the Opposition. And the two leaders regard each other, though for different reasons, with as much detestation as the Prime Minister and Gaitskell in 1959.

Yet now, as in those days of "Butskellism" (compounded from Butler and Gaitskell), the registered programmatic differences, with the single exception of Defence, are not huge. Labour is a modest advocate of job-directed expenditure. The Government is playing the plastic credit-card for all it can. The Tories have largely completed their privatisation programme, except for the questionable issue of British Airways; and anyway, did it ever have half as much to do with competition as it had with short-term one-off revenue (with which elections can be swayed)? Perhaps there will, and perhaps there will not, be a tax cut. But, if achieved, it will again be a simple inducement to vote.

Otherwise we wait to see how the price of oil will move, look to see if unemployment will dip from the figure arrived at by 17 separate massages, big and little, applied to it by the Department of Employment. But there are no major departures promised and in a sense both parties are reconciled to a modest-growth, low-inflation, high-unemployment economy.

ELECTORALLY THIS MEANS that we are less into party politics and more into personalities than is readily appreciated. For not only does policy appear essentially *ad hoc* and pragmatic, but the pull of party as a *patria*, a political fatherland, is simply not what it was.