

# Reviews

## Adam Smith in Beijing

**Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-first Century*, 432 pages, Verso, paperback ISBN 9781844672981, £14.99**

Giovanni Arrighi has added to his big book, *The Long Twentieth Century*, and his subsequent articles in *New Left Review*, in the tradition of the World Systems School founded by Immanuel Wallerstein, a new path-breaking book on China's emergence as the challenger to United States' world hegemony. Despite the book's title, Adam Smith does not really get to Beijing until page 267 of the 389 pages of text. The great bulk of the book brings up to date (2007) Arrighi's thesis of the succession of world capitalist systems of Venice, Genoa, Holland, Britain, ending with the United States, each having a productive beginning leading to financial domination. In this thesis Arrighi emphasises the importance of the military power which wealth bestowed, and was the basis of imperial expansion. While Marx and Engels wrote of cheap commodities as the 'heavy artillery' with which the European bourgeoisie 'batter down all Chinese walls', Arrighi emphasises that 'British cotton cloth could never compete in Chinese rural markets with stronger Chinese cloth'. It was British gunboats and opium that conquered China.

In Arrighi's world systems, Britain's industrial revolution and the emergence of industrial capitalism, based on the power of capital and the exploitation of wage labour, are seen as secondary to Britain's displacement of 'Amsterdam as the financial centre of the globalising European system of states'. This is how Arrighi writes of the 1780s, the very years of Britain's industrialisation. Britain thus became, in Arrighi's view, 'the heir of the imperialist tradition initiated by the Iberian partners of the Genoese'. British industry's scouring of the world for raw materials and for markets for its manufactures is thus seen as the product rather than the source of its financial power. This all seems to sit rather awkwardly with the central argument over the causes of boom and slump in the 1920s-30s, and again in the 1950s-70s, which Arrighi conducts with Robert Brenner throughout the book. Brenner is accused of over-emphasising the competition between rival industrial powers, and under-emphasising the conflicts between capital and labour. I would agree, but on a 'World Systems' view the rise of the United States to world hegemony, or at least to domination over the European powers, would seem to be more significant.

The core chapters of Arrighi's new book concern the inability of the

United States to move from military domination to hegemony. Arrighi sees this not only as the result of the military failure in Iraq, but of mistaken policies of raw militaristic imperialism offered by the ‘Neo-Cons’ that led to the Iraq invasion. He titles the core chapter 11 ‘The World State that Never Was’, and spells out the alternative that could have made the United States into a world state. This he takes from David Harvey’s *The New Imperialism* as a sort of New Deal led by the United States and Europe:

‘This means liberating the logic of capital ... from its neo-liberal chains, reformulating state powers along much more interventionist and redistributive lines, curbing the speculative powers of finance capital, and decentralising or democratically controlling the overwhelming power of oligopolies and monopolies (in particular ... of the military-industrial complex).’

This alternative project, Arrighi comments, resembles the ‘ultra-imperialism’ of co-operating European powers envisaged long ago by Karl Kautsky, but he insists that it also corresponds to Adam Smith’s picture of an ultimate reconciliation of his ‘natural’ and ‘un-natural’ forms of development, through the demise in hopeless contradictions of the latter. And this eventuality is obviously what inspires Arrighi in considering the outcome of the Chinese challenge to the United States.

Arrighi’s introduction of Adam Smith’s thought about ‘natural’ and ‘un-natural’ development enables him to build on the self-destructive essence of industrial capitalism to reveal a possible outcome in China for ‘industrious’ capitalism, that is one that is based on human labour at its centre and not on labour saving and exploitation, together with capital-rich machinery. But, first, he is anxious to reveal the real threat to US claims to world hegemony – and this was written before the financial collapse of 2008-9. Arrighi, rightly in my view, puts his finger not only on the enormous military cost to the United States and utter failure of the Iraq invasion, but also on the relative decline of US manufacturing industry. The United States was unable to pay its bills, and became totally dependent on Chinese and East Asian finance. This was the moment when the United States’ claim to world hegemony collapsed, and the so-called ‘peaceful ascent’ of China became a real threat to the US.

How the US might respond to this challenge becomes the subject of Arrighi’s last chapters, but first he explores the reality of China’s market based ‘industrious’ capitalism. More than I have read anywhere else, Arrighi emphasises the labour intensive nature of Chinese industry, the absence of capital-intensive robots in Chinese manufacturing, and the huge importance of non-agricultural production in rural China. A major difference from European economic development through the dispossession of the peasantry was the

destruction in China of the power of the landlord class and the redistributive land reforms. This had begun under Mao in the 1940s, and Arrighi reminds us how important for China's subsequent economic development was the foundation created by the communes and decentralisation of the Mao years. Even the mad Cultural Revolution to some extent undermined the bureaucracy of the Communist Party, and brought the urban middle classes to recognise the capacities of the rural population. China's rapid economic development under Deng was based essentially on the domestic economy and local control of agricultural surpluses. In fact, the success of the Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) in the 1990s was so great that even Deng himself declared them to be 'totally out of our expectations'. They have not ended the vast gap in incomes and wealth between urban and rural societies.

This is where Arrighi sees Adam Smith in Beijing. Smith would have encouraged the 'natural' path of development through agricultural improvement and domestic trade. Far from leaving trade and industry to the free working of market forces, as many modern free marketeers would now cite Smith as their authority, Smith himself believed profoundly in the need of the legislator to regulate the market in the general interest. This is quite evidently, according to Arrighi, what the Chinese Communist Party has been doing. As Arrighi explains Chinese official development policy:

'They make capitalists, rather than workers, compete with one another, so that profits are driven down to a minimum tolerable level. They encourage division of labour among, rather than within, production units and communities, and invest in education to counter the negative effects of the division of labour on the intellectual qualities of the population.'

To take one example, the establishment of huge Export Processing Zones (EPZs), far from simply adopting and adapting foreign giant company investment, has been combined, as Arrighi writes, 'with the transformation of several Chinese cities into hotbeds of technical research' and 'an expansion of the educational system at a pace and on a scale without precedent even in East Asia'.

When Arrighi comes to consider how the United States might respond to the Chinese challenge, he examines three alternatives. The first is a direct confrontation, perhaps starting with Taiwan, leading almost inevitably to a war which neither humanity nor the planet can afford. The second is a delaying game of playing off China and her potential allies – Russia, India, Japan and the rest of West Asia – against each other and remaining aloof until the last minute, as the US did in the two World Wars. The third, which Arrighi evidently hopes for, is that of a new 'Bandung' reproducing the

treaty of non-alignment of the 1950s. This could only follow from a further strengthening of Chinese industrious development, and weakening of industrial development elsewhere. Arrighi fears, however, that the Chinese élite might still become a new bourgeoisie, and turn towards Smith's 'unnatural' development with all the disastrous results in growing inequality and ecological breakdown that this would entail. The role of Europe and of a new US President would be crucial in this conjuncture, but despite an unprecedented world financial crisis, it seems that from these quarters we can only expect more of the same which produced the crisis. Can the Chinese rescue us, not just financially, but by their socialism?

*Michael Barratt Brown*

## **The Biggest Organ**

**Ffion Hague, *The Pain and the Pleasure: The Women in Lloyd George's Life*, Harper Press, hardback ISBN 9780007219400, £25**

When I was invited to review Ffion Hague's text, I hesitated. I had not heard of her as an historian but as William Hague's partner. I expected a pot-boiler written with a right-wing slant. I procrastinated but agreed to receive a copy of the publisher's blurb, which led me to agree. I was glad I did.

Despite committing myself to read 590 plus pages, which ate into time I should have been giving to other commitments, I have no regrets. One should never rely on one's prejudices. I was mistaken on a number of counts. The values implicit in her treatment of L.G. and the period are the ones I am inclined to share.

Ffion Hague explores and empathises with the lives of the numerous women who loved Lloyd George. She has written a revealing and fascinating text enriched by her own judicious comments and exploration of her subject's motives. L.G. was a serial womaniser with, it appears, an excess of libido. His Principal Private Secretary, A. J. Sylvester, who knew L.G. and his family over a number of years, describes L.G. getting out of his bath in 1931 – he was then 65 years of age. He wrote admiringly in his diary: 'There he stood ... with the biggest organ I have ever seen. It resembles a donkey's ... It must be a sight for the Gods – or the women – in erection! No wonder they are always after him and he after them!' Elsewhere he records the comment: 'If L.G. gave his mind to thinking how he could best help the country, instead of thinking cunt and women, he would be a better man.' The author's meticulous research of contemporary documents demonstrates that Sylvester was correct about L.G.'s sexual proclivity. He had two wives and innumerable sexual partners ...

Contemporary observers claim he had an hypnotic effect on women.

He married his first wife, Maggie, in 1888; 25 years later, in 1913, he 'married' his second wife, Frances Stevenson. He was then 50. Much of the text records in intimate and revealing detail the manner in which L.G. succeeded in managing to keep his affair with Frances Stevenson from public scrutiny in what we would now regard as a censorious age. The author has the good fortune of being able to access voluminous archival material, which enables her to describe in detail the manner in which he was able to conceal his relationships from his wife and family. Matters were facilitated by Frances acting as one of his Private Secretaries.

I strongly recommend Ffion Hague's text for readers wishing to enlighten themselves as to the value system of their Welsh forebears. Readers will be aware of the changes in public attitudes in respect of sexual and relationship norms during the nineteenth century, and be surprised to read that L.G. was able to survive the damaging gossip and reports of his philandering. He was able to do so, relying on his wife's public testimony. What will come as a surprise is Ffion Hague's recording of the intensity of religious belief, and the schism among members of the non-conformist community. We learn that when L.G. was married, his father-in-law would not hear of his daughter being married in a Baptist chapel, whereas his uncle, to whom he was devoted, would not countenance a Methodist wedding. After much discussion, a compromise was eventually agreed.

I was also struck by an account she gives of the ethnic divide in North Wales and the attempts to abnegate the Welsh language. She records the level of retribution inflicted on a member of L.G.'s family who, when at school, spoke to a schoolmate in Welsh. She records that his teacher struck him on the side of his head with such force that he permanently lost his hearing in one ear.

Hague reminds her readers of L.G.'s radical past, and gives details of his famous 1909-1910 'People's Budget'. He proposed raising thirteen million pounds more in taxes – a massive sum by today's standards. The rich would pay more income tax, inheritance tax would be increased, and drinkers and smokers would pay more for their supposed pleasures. His most radical proposal was a system of land taxes.

The author reminds her readers that L.G. opposed the Anglo-Boer War. He was acutely conscious of the fact that the war was costing enormous sums, which would have paid for measures to tackle poverty at home. In one of his speeches L.G. noted that there was not a shell which burst on an African hill that did not carry away an old age pension. Challenging his audience, he asked: 'What is the satisfaction? Oh, it killed two hundred Boers – fathers of families, sons of mothers, who wept for them. Are you

satisfied to give your old age pension for that?’

L.G.’s reputation, which he gained as a radical Chancellor of the Exchequer and war-time Premier, was compromised by his alleged abuse of the honours system. From Hague’s account, it appears that both the Liberal and Conservative Parties benefited from the sale of honours.

Under Asquith’s leadership, the Liberal Party amassed a sum of £1.5 million – £59 million in today’s value. The going rate for a knighthood was £12,000 (which could be paid in instalments) and £35,000 for a baronetcy. L.G. did not deny the practice. He claimed it was preferable to the American system, when the steel trusts supported one party and cotton interests another. He argued that giving money to a political party should not rule out someone from receiving an honour.

I have just one niggle: commenting on changes in Britain’s social structure in the Edwardian period. Ffion Hague writes of contraception being ‘readily available’. I question, as will others, this proposition. One final comment: the author has produced a text of considerable merit. Moreover, the value of the book is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of a Victorian style index, which will be of inestimable assistance to scholars working on the period in question. It is worth anyone’s twenty-five pounds. I hope it appears in paperback.

*Peter M. Jackson*

## **Financial Hegemon?**

**Martin Wolf, *Fixing Global Finance: How to Curb Financial Crises in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 230 pages, ISBN 9780300142778, £18.99**

This is certainly not a political economy analysis of financial crises, or even a structured critique of the role of finance in economies. The author is a subscriber to the ‘globalisation does us good’ school. Chapter 1 kicks off with ‘Finance is the brain of the market economy’ (p.1). There is no reference to corruption, ENRON, pension mis-selling, the dissembling presentations of banks, Savings and Loans companies, insurance and mortgage companies, stock markets, and the failed theory of private pensions leading to economic growth and greater individual security (variously, Ghilarducci, and Kay and Sinha in references below). The book fizzles out at the end with no real policy changes.

But once we understand where the author is coming from, some fascinating questions emerge. Pursuing the biological or anatomical

analogies of much recent economics, he comments that ‘The brain is susceptible to a variety of infirmities’ (also page 1). Then he refers to Charles Kindleberger and Andrew Glyn (references below), both radical commentators with invaluable contributions to the story of finance. The author is well read and the bibliography alone is worth the read.

The main argument is this; how has the United States become the ‘spender and borrower of last resort’, piling up massive foreign debt, much of it supplied by so-called developing countries who could get a better rate of return domestically? It is not just about US financial supremacy, but also about international politics based on the dollar as the measure of value. The conventional economic development theory is that the flow of funds should be the other way around, developed to developing countries. But developing countries (China and India in particular) are funding the profligacy of the super-power.

Wolf has an excellent section on the ‘pyramids of promises’ (p. 11ff). ‘Sophisticated and dynamic modern economies depend on pyramids of promises’ (p.12). But it all depends on that elusive concept (my words) called ‘trust’. The author notes that the degree of trust necessary to sustain the system has been rare. ‘That is at least part of the reason why financial crises have been so frequent and so dangerous’ (p. 13).

According to Wolf, it is about the denomination of the debt. The old adage, ‘if you owe the bank 10 quid, you’re in trouble, but if you owe a million, they are’, is overtaken by ‘it depends what currency you are dealing in’. So the underlying thesis of the book (my words again) is about the fickle role of the all-important dollar following the expense of the Vietnam war, its devaluation and the incompetence of the corrupt Nixon administration. This is all very well, however. It is hard to understand why such a monetary unit is still so dominant, and why developing, including Muslim countries, want it, especially when it probably contributes to US subsidies and guarantees of Israeli debt and weapons purchases from the US to occupy Palestine, kill Muslim men, women and children, maintain nuclear weapons, and export arms to questionable regimes. We, or they, fail to make these connections. Money and its supposed neutrality – solely a means of exchange – take on other, political implications.

The role of the United States, and its personification in a currency, is the theme of the book, and a perceptive one. My main complaint is that one has to plough through page after page of figures, tables, charts, descriptions about current/capital account surpluses/deficits, currency liabilities, exchange rates and much else besides, all of which are necessary, but spoil the plot. Much of these could be put in appendices.

Now to the final conclusions and questions. ‘The performance of the financial system has been the Achilles heel of the era of globalisation’ (p. 195). ‘How plausible are these arguments for the sustainability of the pattern of capital flows from the world at large to the world’s richest country?’ (p. 136). ‘The answer is a global one: a large number of countries have been unable to absorb their savings at home, even at low real rates of interest’ (p.63). And that is the nub of the issue. The question remains, why not? And that is political, not economic.

The book ends with a considered critique of the International Monetary Fund, and a passing of responsibility back to individual countries themselves. But surely there is much more to be said about the role of finance, and the US – the financial hegemon – in international development. The author has made a good shot at it, but the attempt is rather apolitical, albeit interesting in its own terms. I do not think he convinces us about ‘fixing global finance’ or ‘curbing financial crises’. My own conclusion is that until finance is defined as a public utility, with national and international organisations to treat it as such, the sorry saga will continue.

*Richard Minns*

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## America’s End

**Gabriel Kolko, *World in Crisis: The End of the American Century*, Pluto Press, 190 pages, paperback ISBN 9780745328652, £12.99**

Gabriel Kolko was writing about the global financial crisis long before it hit. In 2006, he wrote in this journal ‘There has been a profound and fundamental change in the world economy over the past decade. The very triumph of liberalization and deregulation ... has also produced a deepening crisis that its advocates scarcely expected’ (‘Crisis of Greed’ *Spokesman* 92). Now the world is mired in slump, and all around there are claims that no one saw it coming. Kolko has reason to differ.

His new book is about the end of the American century. This is a telling



counterblast to the neoconservative claims to a New American Century, which have proved so hollow. Kolko gives chapter and verse on those failures. He writes:

‘All of Bush’s major policies, especially his wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the grandiose neoconservative agenda to make the US the dominant world power, have failed, leaving a legacy of fear and hatred in the Middle East and much of the rest of the world, while making an enemy of Russia and weakening America’s traditional alliances.’

The folly of America’s overseas misadventures compounds its acute economic decline. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been ‘costly beyond imagination, will endure long after those who begun them leave Washington, and yet will end in failure.’

According to Kolko, ‘US foreign policy has always suffered from a disjunction between policy and reality ... the way it treats fictions as facts – and why – has been crucial in shaping the demise of its immense power.’ This brings to mind the extraordinary deceptions shared by Bush and Blair in bringing ‘shock and awe’ to the people of Iraq. A bigger pair of liars would be hard to find.

Kolko is the historian for everyman. He ranges across America’s lamentable record on the world stage during the Twentieth Century. In plain words, he spells out the pressing limits on those who gave us the horrors of ‘full spectrum dominance’, while eschewing such brutal jargon himself. He sums up the United States’ demise thus:

‘Nothing quite illustrates the end of American power so well as its strategy in the Middle East – where it has sustained Israel, made war in Iraq, and tried several times since 1954 (successfully in that case) to overthrow Teheran governments.’

This little book should be on everyone’s wish list.

*Anthony Lane*

## Afan Valley

**Tina Carr and Annemarie Schöne, *Coalfaces – Life After Coal in the Afan Valley*, Parthian Books Cardigan, 82 pages including 51 full page colour prints, hardback ISBN 9781905762545, £19-99 with DVD**

The landscapes and architecture shown in these colour prints make it clear that life in a remote Welsh valley was not easy even before the pit closures. If you like pictures with your politics you may appreciate this sociological

visual inquiry into the lives of the inhabitants of the upper Afan valley, some 15 miles inland from Port Talbot on the coast of South Wales. This valley, carved by the river into the post-glacial peneplane from a height of almost 2,000 feet, surprisingly is not a blind one. Its road with several hairpin bends connects with the Rhondda valley to the east.

The book, like all the photographs, is landscape in format, and there is narrative including a postscript by the authors in which they explain their interests in the social and ecological effects of industry and big business, and their preference for the philosophy of E F Schumacher. The two author-artist-photographers are introduced by Amanda Hopkinson, a journalist and academic with Welsh connections, and by Osi Rhys Osmond, an artist, writer, teacher and broadcaster born of a mining family in the Sirhowy valley. Both rightly applaud the commitment, concern and sensitivity of the authors. Osmond's comment on the effects of 20 years of pit closures is quoted below. The effects include 65% male unemployment in some areas.

'They have become a people stranded by history as the great wealth of the coalfield bypassed the communities that produced it leaving them with deep social and physical scars, powerful collective memories and an extraordinary and very necessary social resilience in the face of the constructive indifference of the political élites.'

The greater indifference was that of the Thatcher government, which irrationally sacrificed the industry to achieve the greater objective of disabling a powerful trade union as an object lesson to all others. Mrs Thatcher cared little for the fact that no democracy is safe without democratic trade unions, and she was later a defender of General Augusto Pinochet. She probably knew nothing of the grandparents of people such as those photographed in this book, some of who saw fascism taking root in Europe before her party did, and who went to Spain to try to halt it.

*Christopher Gifford*

## **Fabricator**

**Bob Drogin, *Curveball: Spies, lies, and the man behind them – The real reason America went to war in Iraq*, Ebury Press, 444 pages, paperback ISBN 9780091923044, £6.99**

'The intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy.' That was the chilling message Sir Richard Dearlove, then head of the British

intelligence organisation MI6, brought back from Washington in July 2002, eight months before the land invasion of Iraq.

The leaked minute, which became widely known as the 'Downing Street Memo', records Sir Richard ('C') telling his fellow spooks, sundry assistants to Tony Blair, as well as Jack Straw (Foreign Secretary) and Geoff Hoon (Defence Secretary) that it's countdown to war. It reads:

'C reported on his recent talks in Washington. There was a perceptible shift in attitude. Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. *But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy [emphasis added]*. The National Security Council had no patience with the UN route, and no enthusiasm for publishing material on the Iraqi regime's record. There was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action.'

Surprisingly, neither the Downing Street Memo, nor the excellent website it gave rise to in the United States ([downingstreetmemo.com](http://downingstreetmemo.com)), are mentioned in Mr Drogin's book. Tony Blair rates one mention, as does David Kelly, the British expert on chemical and biological weapons who was found dead on the day Mr Blair was originally to have received his Presidential Medal of Freedom in Washington. (It was finally hung round Blair's neck on 13 January 2009, at the bitter end of Bush's second term).

For *Curveball* claims to reveal 'the real reason America went to war in Iraq'. But it does nothing of the kind. The British spook, Dearlove, does a better job in the quotation above. What the real imperatives were that drove the decision to invade and occupy Iraq is a far more complex question which still awaits a proper answer. But the thesis here seems to be that a lone Iraqi chancer who claimed asylum in Germany, and was codenamed 'Curveball' by the Germans intelligence service who guarded him jealously, somehow duped the US intelligence, military and political brass by claiming active involvement in the construction of mobile laboratories to produce biological and chemical weapons. His claims were the basis of Bush's reference to Iraqi mobile labs in his 2003 State of the Union speech. Curveball's drawings prefigured the diagrams Colin Powell flashed up in the UN Security Council chamber as he argued for shock and awe in Iraq. (See *Spokesman* 86.)

These claims were complete bunkum. They were totally bogus, as David Kelly confirmed in the months before his untimely death. Indeed, they were as baseless as Blair's claims about Iraq's ability to launch nuclear, chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes of an order to do so. David Kelly also tried to expose those lies.

Curveball, an Iraqi taxi driver, was finally interviewed by United States officials in March 2004, when the analyst was able to confirm that he was, indeed, a 'fabricator'. He wasn't the only one.

*Tony Simpson*

## **Fly on the Wall**

**Joachim C. Fest, *Albert Speer: Conversations with Hitler's Architect*, Polity Press, 180 pages, hardback ISBN 9780745639185, £19.99**

Of all the biographer's and writers on the Third Reich, Joachim Fest was not only good at his craft, but also had the good fortune to be invited to act, as he describes it, as 'interrogating editor' for the best selling autobiography of Albert Speer, the highest ranking Nazi to escape a death sentence at the Nuremburg Trials. This book is no heavy biography, which Fest completed earlier. No, what he has done is to create the literary equivalent of a fly-on-the-wall documentary.

In this book Fest records, at his own personal level, the numerous significant encounters he had with Speer, frequently accompanied by Wolf Jobst Siedler, the editor of the publishing house who won the contract for Speer's memoirs. The effect of this style is to make readers feel that they are on the inside track, almost to the point of wishing to ask their own questions at times.

The search for a single cause of the madness that was the Third Reich is, of course, as elusive as ever, what with the vanities, lust for power, and the threat of the firing squad hanging over anyone who stepped over a none-too-well defined line. That line would ultimately be defined by Hitler himself, should defining be required, even post hoc. Add to this the internal struggles, and Hitler's inner circle could be likened to ferrets in a sack. Within this was Albert Speer, Hitler's architect, who rose to be his munitions minister in 1942.

Speer's trial and his approach to his pleas of mitigation describe the incredible turmoil that must have been within Speer's head. He was convinced that the death sentence was to be his fate after the court had been shown the American news film of the concentration camps. At some point he decided to fight, and it is suggested that the shock of finding himself in the dock with such mass murderers as Kaltenbrunner or Frank, and characters like Streicher, made him realise that, for his own spiritual

survival, he had to distance himself from them. For his trouble he escaped death, but earned scorn from others, particularly those detained in Spandau.

Fest himself was always troubled by Hitler's final denouement in his Berlin bunker. It was difficult for him to reconcile Speer with his decision to make a last visit to Hitler. Yet, at a meeting between the Fest and Speer in September 1974, Speer finally opened up on this crucial visit. What is revealed is a scene of mayhem where even the plumbing stopped functioning. It also reveals how the power of the Führer had faded in that, although he was confronted by insubordination on the part of Speer, he allowed it to pass.

Almost as an aside, Fest drops into his account an indication of the vanity and sense of possession that can exist between biographers and their subjects. Frau Gitta Sereny, who was also interested in the Speers, had arranged a meeting with Speer's son, who is also called Albert. On discovering that Fest was accompanying Albert Junior, Sereny threw a small fit and refused to attend the meeting as she wanted it to be one to one. As it happened, Fest had taken the trouble to bring with him the notes which formed the basis of this book, fully intending to give them to Sereny to aid her work. I wonder if she has ever realised the service she did to the recorded history of these times by ensuring Fest himself wrote up the notes.

*Henry McCubbin*

## Thriller

**Carl Tighe, *Druids Hill*, Five Leaves Publications, 168 pages, paperback ISBN 9781905512553, £7.99**

In September 1973, the recently appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Army, General Augusto Pinochet, led a *coup d'état* against President Salvador Allende. The coup was successful, and Pinochet remained in office until 1990. Almost immediately after securing power, Pinochet banned all leftist parties that had been associated with Allende's government. The dictator's violence was not just aimed at political parties alone, but towards any dissident, their family and other civilians too. In all it is believed that nearly 3,000 people disappeared, 30,000 were tortured, and several thousands were exiled whilst Pinochet was President of Chile.

On a cold wintry day in 1975, a young boy is delivering newspapers to an old mansion when he notices something unusual and enters the house. Upon discovering the house's contents, he is blasted with a shotgun and dies immediately. Then, 25 years later, in 2000, a man dies at a demonstration in Manchester against General Pinochet. Could the murdered teenager, the death at the demonstration, and the *coup d'état* in Chile be linked somehow?

*Druids Hill* is a crime thriller set in Manchester. It follows Emma Tulip, a journalist, as she investigates the contents of the mansion on Druids Hill, which led to the death of the fourteen-year-old boy. She discovers two mysterious characters, Miller and Agard, who, before their deaths, hid information proving that the CIA was closely involved with Pinochet's coup. Several sinister characters would like to get hold of this information, but Emma beats them to it. Can she escape the same fate as the paperboy, Miller and Agard, and the hapless man at the demonstration?

Carl Tighe's novel is a fast-paced political thriller that entwines fact with fiction. Throughout, the main narrative is interspersed with the chronology of General Pinochet's rise to power. It is a fascinating read, which delves into corruption, restricted information and murder, within the world of the novel as well as the real world itself.

*Abi Rhodes*

## A Communication from Florida

'My copy of *The Island That Dared* [reviewed in *Spokesman 102*] has not been sitting idle for a minute. It is a very hot number, being passed around as fast as anyone can finish it, with a waiting list of people eager to read it. If you folks are in touch with Dervla Murphy, please tell her how much her new book is appreciated here in Central Florida where a number of our peace and justice folks went to Cuba (at considerable risk) in the mid to late 1990s on friendship tours and others of us sent clothes, medical supplies, and other stuff through Pastors for Peace. Thanks again for your review, which alerted me to the book.'

*Joyce Chumbley*