

Reviews

Hydrogen

Jeremy Rifkin, *The Hydrogen Economy*, Polity Press, 2002, 294 pages, hardback ISBN 0745630413 £50 paperback ISBN 0745630421 £14.99

Can we have a source of energy in the world which is both ecological and democratic to replace our present dependence on fossil fuels which are not only running out but which, under the control of a few giant transnational corporations, are destroying the very atmosphere that the life of the planet depends on? Jeremy Rifkin believes that we can, and it is hydrogen – if it can only be separated cheaply from the oxygen with which it is combined in water everywhere. When three years ago Jeremy Rifkin, the author of the much discussed *End of Work*, produced a book on *The Hydrogen Economy*, it received scant attention; and I confess that I did not take notice of it. Since then the price of oil has doubled, not only because of war and instability in oil producing countries, but also because, while oil production is reaching its peak, demand grows steadily year on year at 2% a year. Rifkin gives us a telling statistic. For China and India to reach Korean levels of oil consumption they would be taking 50% more oil than the whole of world production in the year 2000.

Rifkin places his warning about the urgent need for action to be taken to move from dependence on fossil fuels in the setting of the history of previous civilisations, which collapsed when the cost of maintaining the social order became greater than the energy resources available to meet its needs. He cites the energy of slaves in Rome and the energy supplied from the felled forests in Medieval Europe. Our modern civilisation has been built on the extraction, over 250 years, of the fossilised fuels in the earth's crust – coal, oil and gas. These energy resources are now running out. There are still more coal and tar sands to be exploited, but at great cost in labour and pollution of the atmosphere. As demand begins to exceed potential supply, not only will prices rise, but competition for control over the remaining resources will grow. Wars for oil become inevitable, and by the grace of Allah it so happens that most of the oil that is left lies under lands where the Islamic peoples are established. It may have been a slip of the tongue when, after 9/11, President Bush called for a 'crusade', but a 'crusade' to control the oil fields is what he meant.

Rifkin argues convincingly from the evidence of the 2001 Report of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change that the danger to human survival from atmospheric pollution is even greater than that from wars started for control of energy resources. According to this Panel, the CO₂ content in the atmosphere is one third greater than in 1775, when the fossil fuel era began, and such a concentration has not been exceeded in the last 420,000 years, and likely not in the last 20 million years. The rate of increase is without precedent, and 75% of this increase is the result of burning fossil fuels, the rest the result of

deforestation and changes in land use. Changes in world temperatures, leading to desertification, melting of the ice caps and glaciers, flooding of low lying coastal cities and the spread of tropical diseases, are forecast to be greater than anything experienced in more than ten millennia.

Rifkin insists that there is an alternative. Wind power, wave power, water power and solar heating are all beginning to take their place as suppliers of energy, but they do not meet the voracious demands of the motor car, or of air, rail and sea transport. Hydrogen is the one alternative universally available and non-polluting. Unlike electricity, moreover, it can be stored in cells on a large scale or on a small scale. The possibilities of the use of hydrogen have not gone un-noticed by the giant oil companies and motor manufacturers. Royal Dutch/Shell and BP are investing billions of dollars in renewable energy resources. Every major automaker in the world has announced plans to introduce fuel cell-powered automobiles. Daimler-Benz with Ballard Power Systems of Canada, joined subsequently by Ford, have one billion dollars invested to produce 100,000 fuel cell cars by the end of the decade. Some are already on the roads.

The whole thrust of Rifkin's final chapters is that the hydrogen economy need not be controlled by the giant oil and automobile companies. He makes comparison with the Internet. Of course, the manufacturers of the hardware are giant companies like IBM and Dell, and Microsoft has almost a monopoly of software, but there are large numbers of servers as well as giants like AOL and, most important, every owner of a PC can without much cost communicate with every other owner on a two-way system of exchange and have access to a vast resource of information. Hydrogen cells have to be topped up with hydrogen from some service station just like petrol or a battery, but there are three differences. They produce their own energy as well as storing energy, they create no CO₂ or other harmful emissions, and the production of hydrogen can be on a quite small scale. Already many companies in the United States are installing hydrogen cells as a back-up to supply them with electricity in the event of power failures.

The great advantage, therefore, of the Hydrogen Economy, apart from its ecological cleanness is that it can be democratically controlled. Distributed generation, as it is called, can be established by associations of consumers in Hydrogen Energy Webs, where the consumers are also themselves producers linking in their own fuel cells to a grid which works from the bottom up, not as now unidirectional from the top down. There are already many cooperative associations in Europe and the United States where electricity generation is on a local scale and not in the hands of giant companies, and in some cases they even feed into the grid as well as drawing from it. A Hydrogen Energy Web could be completely self-standing with its own grid using existing cables, once it becomes possible for households, offices and workshops to buy the fuel cells and the necessary equipment and sophisticated software to go with them. Iceland has shown the way. The entire island will be a hydrogen economy within twenty years, virtually eliminating fossil fuel energy. A similar project is under way in Hawaii.

The advantages of the Hydrogen Economy are enormous for the poorer

Developing Countries, which are not oil producers, burdened as they are with existing debts for their oil imports and faced with the high costs of installing fossil fuel generated electricity. Once again the existence of cooperative organisations especially among the great numbers of small-scale agricultural producers may give them the chance to move straight to the Distributed Generation Energy Webs of a Hydrogen Economy without needing to go through the stage of centralised electricity generation. The absolute impoverishment of one third of the world population is but the obverse of the gas-guzzling economies of the rich third. Such inequalities simply cannot continue if the planet is to survive. We have to work now to persuade our governments to act. Britain has all the scientists and skilled workers that are needed to build an alternative economy from the ruins of our dying coal and steel and engineering industries. The Hydrogen Economy offers a way forward.

Michael Barratt Brown

Protection racket worldwide

Thomas P.M.Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map*, Putnam Publishing Group, 2004, 320 pages, hardback ISBN 0399151753 \$26.95

Pentagon transformation is well underway. The US military is increasingly being converted into a global oil protection service. Secretary of War Donald Rumsfeld has a 'strategy guy' whose job is to teach this new way of warfare to high-level military officers from all branches of services and to top level CIA operatives. Thomas Barnett is a professor at the Navy War College in Rhode Island. He is author of the controversial book *The Pentagon's New Map* that identifies a 'non-integrating gap' in the world that is resisting corporate globalisation. Barnett defines the gap as parts of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, all of which are key oil-producing regions of the world.

In what Barnett calls a 'Grand March of History' he claims that the US military must be transformed in order to pre-emptively take control of the gap, so the US can 'manage' the global distribution of resources, people, energy, and money. (It has long been predicted that the gap between rich and poor around the world will continue to widen and that the Pentagon will be used to keep the boot on the necks of the people of the third world to the benefit of corporate globalisation.)

Barnett predicts that US unilateralism will lead to the 'inevitability of war.' Referring to Hitler in a recent presentation, Barnett reminded his military audience that the Nazi leader never asked for permission before invading other countries. Thus, the end to multi-lateralism.

Barnett argues that the days of arms talks and international treaties are over. 'There is no secret where we are going,' he says as he calls for a 'new ordering principle' at the Department of Defense (DoD). Barnett maintains that as jobs

move out of the US the primary export product of the nation will be 'security.' Global energy demand will necessitate US control of the oil producing regions. 'We will be fighting in Central Africa in 20 years,' Barnett predicts.

In order to implement this new military vision, Barnett maintains that the US military must move away from its often-competing mix of Air Force-Navy-Army-Marines towards two basic military services. One he names *Leviathan*, which he defines as the kick ass, wage war, special ops, and not under the purview of the International Criminal Court. Give us your angry, video game-playing 18-19 year olds, for the *Leviathan* force, Barnett says. Once a country is conquered by *Leviathan*, Barnett says the US will have to have a second military force that he calls *Systems Administration*. This force he describes as the 'proconsul' of the empire, boots on the ground, the police force to control the local populations. This group, Barnett says, 'will never come home.'

Barnett's plan is essentially underway today. New, fast, flexible, and efficient projection forces with 'lily pad' bases are now being developed for control of the gap. Over the next decade, the military will abandon 35 per cent of the Cold War-era bases it uses abroad as it seeks to expand the network of bare-bones sites in the gap. The planned changes, once completed, will result in the most profound 'reordering' of US military forces overseas since the current global arrangements were set 50 years ago.

According to Michael Klare, Professor of Peace Studies at Hampshire College, 'American troops are now risking their lives on a daily basis to protect the flow of petroleum. In Colombia, Saudi Arabia, and the Republic of Georgia, US personnel are spending their days and nights protecting pipelines and refineries, or supervising the local forces assigned to this mission.'

Klare continues, 'The Department of Defense has stepped up its arms deliveries to military forces in Angola and Nigeria, and is helping to train their officers and enlisted personnel; meanwhile, Pentagon officials have begun to look for permanent bases in the area, focusing on Senegal, Ghana, Mali, Uganda and Kenya.' *The Wall Street Journal* has reported that 'a key mission for US forces (in Africa) would be to ensure that Nigeria's oil fields, which in the future could account for as much as 25 per cent of all US oil imports, are secure.'

National Guard units across the United States are now being assigned the task of developing on-going basing relationships with each nation on the African continent.

The Bush administration is also exploring the possibility of expanding the emerging missile defence system into Eastern Europe as an element in the strategic containment of Russia, China and the Middle East. The Pentagon has been negotiating with Hungary, Romania, Poland and the Czech Republic about one or more of them hosting new missile defence bases. Oil-rich Iran is to be encircled by missile defence posts in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

In order to pull all of this together the Pentagon claims it will need 'a God's-eye view' of the world. A new 'internet in the sky' is now being built for the wars

of the future. Costing well over \$200 billion, the new web would give war machines and military forces a common language, instantly emitting an encyclopedia of lethal information about all enemies.

According to Art Cebrowski, director of the Pentagon's Office of Force Transformation, 'What we are really talking about is a new theory of war.' The military wants to know 'everything of interest to us, all the time,' says one Pentagon insider. Military intelligence including secret satellite surveillance covering most of the Earth will be posted on the war net and shared with troops. 'The essence of net-centric warfare is our ability to deploy a war-fighting force anywhere, anytime. Information technology is the key to that.'

Thus US military and economic control of the gap will be dependent on a system of networked computers. Fusing weapons, secret intelligence and soldiers in a global network, what the military calls net-centric warfare will, they say, change the military in a way the Internet changed business and culture.

Bruce K. Gagon

Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space

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Needham's ghost with us still

Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China, Volume V: Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Part 12: Ceramic Technology* by Rose Kerr and Nigel Wood, Cambridge University Press, 918 pages, hardback ISBN-10: 0521838339 ISBN-13: 9780521838337, £120.00

Since 1954 this prodigious labour has been continuing, even though Joseph Needham died back in 1995. He had personally completed the first four vast volumes, and begun work, much of which was published before he died, on the next three. Each volume from the fourth onwards had to be divided into several separate books, and more and more scholars were recruited in order to complete their chosen parts of the work.

It must have been one of the last important decisions which Needham made, to agree to invite Rose Kerr to address the history of ceramic technology in China, and to begin the drafts which have led to this twelfth part of volume V. Weighing in at a little short of a thousand pages, this in itself is an indication of the exhaustive nature of this incredible work.

Christopher Cullen, who has taken over the responsibilities of general editor of the History, will be kept busy for a long time, since many future volumes are envisaged. But he is likely to remain very proud of this particular one, which covers a vast field and which also (for the first time in the annals of the History) is copiously illustrated in colour. Of course, it would have been difficult to do justice to the aesthetic development of this theme without colour: but the finest porcelain, the most sophisticated glazes, all 'are made of rock and clay', and

have their origin in holes in the ground which are often opened out by main force from inhospitable territory.

The great merit of this book is that it shows the whole process of creation, linking head, hand and eye in a way which would have excited Needham himself. Ms. Kerr and her principal collaborator, Nigel Wood, seek to explain not only the mechanics of ceramic technology, the detailed evolution of kilns, the growth of knowledge about glazes and colouring, but also the evolution of markets.

A millennium and a half saw the growth of China as the monopoly producer of porcelain. China supplied the whole world with its products, and it was only in the nineteenth century that European potteries nudged forward to compete. For much of these times, Chinese ceramics set an elusive example to the West. Actual exports were slow to build up. In the Middle Ages they were rare: but they built up massively during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Not only the pots, but also the technology involved in producing them, greatly influenced the wider world economy during these years. There followed a decline in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, now in the process of reversal, as China enters the production of high technology ceramics, described at the end of this volume.

After tracing the growth of ceramic technology, with exhaustive (indeed, book length) descriptions of the raw materials involved in the production of earthenware, stoneware, glazes and porcelain, the authors are able to show that similar clays could be, and were, used to manufacture very different wares throughout the whole history of China. Their scrutiny digs deep, back to the Loessic clays which were used to manufacture the Neolithic burial urns in Kansu Province.

The use of such materials continued over a long period, and included the manufacture of the famous imperial funeral army buried at Sian. Even during the Han Dynasty lead glaze tomb wares were produced from the same basic clays. The stoneware of later Dynasties helped to form the wider world's view of Chinese ceramics. These had wide industrial uses, and were employed in the smelting of metals, the manufacture of firebricks and crucibles, and more exotic arts such as alchemy where stills and alembics were commonly ceramic products.

China has always used ceramics in its sculpture as far back as Neolithic times, when life-sized clay figures with turquoise eyes were found at Niu-ho-liang. Certainly the most famous example of this use came at the end of the life of the first Emperor, with the manufacture of more than 7,000 terracotta warriors, to which we have already alluded.

The emergence of Chinese porcelain has been the object of considerable recent study, all signposted in this extraordinary work. With the same thoroughness, the development of kilns is traced. The firing of clay completely transforms this raw material, creating a permanent and irreversible new substance capable of taking a glaze. Chinese high temperature kilns evolved through two quite distinct processes in the North and the South. It is on the basis of a thorough examination of these technologies that manufacturing methods can be carefully examined. Old techniques are seen to recur in modified forms, and

there is a rich continuity in these arts.

There are exhaustive treatments in later sections of the book, on glazes and pigments.

All these traditions combined to produce a uniquely influential art. Gifted with an exceptional source of raw materials, China developed an equally exceptional fund of skills. The potter's art inspired imitators all around the world. Of course, Chinese exports extended themselves from Mesopotamia to Egypt, from Japan across Asia, and from Saxony to Russia. A fierce competition to emulate Chinese standards of aesthetics was to follow, at different times, throughout the competing history of other civilisations. Ultimately, with the eclipse of Chinese influence in the nineteenth century and later, other centres of ceramic excellence began to preponderate. But the new China is pushing ahead again, with the development of modern high technology ceramics.

Specialised and authoritative though it is, it would be difficult to imagine a more fitting tribute to the great work begun by Joseph Needham. Deaf to the movement of fashion, Needham began a labour of scholarship which can already be seen to be pre-eminent in the history of ideas in the twentieth century. But the rise and continued rise of China will surely ensure that Needham's prescience will be more and more generally appreciated in the years to come.

Ken Coates

Arms for oil

Craig Unger, *House of Bush, House of Saud*, Gibson Square Books, London, 2004, 368 pages, hardback ISBN 1903933587, £17.99

Pictures were shown in a BBC2 programme (*05.10.04*) of the cosy relationship of Mrs Thatcher with the Saudi royal family, but this appears to have been more than matched by the two Bush presidents and the Saudi royals. Craig Unger, in his book *House of Bush: House of Saud*, revealed what he calls 'the hidden relationship between the world's two most powerful dynasties'. Based on interviews with three former directors of the CIA, top Saudi and Israeli intelligence officers, and executives of giant investment firms and many other sources, Unger claims that as in Britain so in the USA the role of the intelligence services has been central to government policy. But in the United States the twist came with the unravelling of the Bush-Saud relationship following 9/11, and the rise to power under Bush junior of the Neo-Cons.

The Saud support given to Bush's presidential election and the Saud involvement in Bush's oil business were well known. What was less well known was the depth and closeness of the Saud-Bush family relationship revealed by Unger. This alone explains the extraordinary fact that on 12 September, the day after the twin towers were destroyed and all planes in the United States were grounded, 140 members of the Saudi and Bin Laden families then in the United

States were assembled from different parts of the country to be flown out, with what can only have been the authority, or at least the acquiescence, of the President. Prince Bandar, nephew of King Fahd, the Saudi ambassador to the United States, had over twenty years in the country established such a relationship with the Bush family that when Bandar's wife, Princess Haifa, was cited by *Newsweek* as a possible source of funding for two of the 9/11 hijackers, Laura Bush and ex-President Bush are reported to have called to console her.

The story begins with Bush senior, George H.W., a Connecticut Yankee, whose father Prescott Bush was managing partner of Brown Brothers Harriman, a firm allegedly with major ties to Nazi industrialists. George HW went cruising with Averell Harriman, former governor of New York, presidential adviser and heir to the Union Pacific railroad fortune. George H.W., however, took off in 1948 for Texas with his wife and infant son George W. In Houston Bush senior made money in oil and was elected to Congress, establishing a good relationship with President Nixon, representing the US at the United Nations and, when Nixon fell, being made director of the CIA in 1976. With burgeoning Houston Texas oil money behind him, he became Reagan's Vice-President in 1980. His friend James Baker, who had helped him on his way as campaign manager, became Reagan's Chief of Staff. Bill Casey followed Bush senior at the CIA. Here lay the beginnings of what Unger suggests was a cabal with Frank Carlucci, another onetime CIA man as Reagan's Defence Secretary, and David Rubenstein, founder of the vast Carlyle investment group heavily involved in the arms industry, and a prized client of James Baker's law firm, Baker Botts.

Enter Prince Bandar, nephew of Saudi King Fahd and son of Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan. Saudis had first begun to take an interest in Texas when they began to look for openings in the United States for the vast flow of oil money that followed the oil price hike in the 1970s. In this they were much assisted by James Bath and Bert Lance who had connections with the infamous Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), founded by the Pakistani Hasan Abedi. BCCI became the bank of choice for illegal arms sales to Iraq as well as other covert CIA operations. Bill Casey, the CIA director after Bush, is reported to have said that he depended on Abedi for all the secrets of Middle East political leaders. The Bush family were already seen by the Saudis as important political contacts, when young Bandar emerged from Johns Hopkins University with a Master's degree to lead a Saudi lobby in a fierce battle with the Israelis over arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

This lobby of the United States government in 1981, as Unger explains, was designed to persuade President Reagan and the US Senate to agree to a \$5.5 billion package of AWACS planes and all the associated technology to go to Saudi Arabia. Despite all the Israeli objections, Bandar won, forging a considerable change in US Middle East policy. Bandar was rewarded by the Saudis with the post of ambassador to the United States, which he held for over 20 years. This was the start of a decade of Saudi orders from the US for arms, airfields and ports valued at some \$200 billion, in which a major beneficiary was

the Saudi Bin Laden construction group, whose immense wealth Osama Bin Laden was to inherit.

The destruction of the twin towers and part of the Pentagon on 9/11/2001 brought all the contradictions of US policy into the open. The bombers were found to have been Saudis and members of Al Qaeda under the ultimate command of Osama Bin Laden, the hero of the Afghan war against the Soviet Union, whose family as part of the extended Saud family were closely associated with the Bush family. The association was both personal and commercial. Key to the ascendancy of the Carlyle Group of US defence contractors with assets in excess of \$16 billion, which was what Unger calls 'home to powerful figures from the Reagan-Bush era', had been 'Carlyle's relationships with the Saudis, including the Saudi royals, the Bin Ladens and the Bin Mahfouz family, both as investors and clients for defence contractors owned by Carlyle.'

This was the background to George W. Bush's business and political career. The young Bush was a born and bred Texan. Positively attractive to many American voters for his brash, homely speech and Marlboro Country type cowboy dress, he easily made his way in Republican politics. His oil business ventures, however, were failures. But he had a saviour. Young Bandar Saud had been a Bush family friend who enjoyed the same country pursuits as the young Bush – horse riding, hunting, shooting – in the same wide-open spaces of Texas reminiscent of Arabia. They became friends and when Bush's oil business was in serious trouble Saudi money became available. Some of it was linked, unknown to Bush, to the infamous BCCI bank, but it was the Carlyle Group that was the main link between the Bushes and Saudi royals

So perhaps it is not surprising that when inquiries were made about the failure of US intelligence to anticipate a disaster on the scale of 9/11, Unger reports a strange inability in high places to take seriously the actual intelligence that existed about apparent Arab terrorist designs. US visas were being granted to Saudi nationals without investigation. Stories of Saudi pilots training in the United States were not followed up. During the eight Clinton years, Al Qaeda had escalated its attacks on US establishments, blasting the embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya, to which President Clinton had responded with raids on targets in Afghanistan where Bin Laden was encamped and on a harmless chemical factory in Sudan. Before getting involved in the Monica Lewinsky affair, Clinton did strengthen the position of Richard Clarke, as head of the National Security Council's Coordinating Sub-group, into a sort of counter-terrorism czar. And it was Clarke who kept pressing for chasing up the funding of Al Qaeda.

Richard Clarke's comments on the Saudis, quoted by Unger, are very illuminating:

'There's a realisation that we have to work with the government we've got in Saudi Arabia. The alternatives could be far worse. The most likely replacement to the House of Saud is likely to be more hostile – in fact extremely hostile to the US.'

But Unger argues that ‘if the House of Saud were a genuine ally, the Bush administration could have pressurised it about the Saudi role in terrorism, aggressively gone after Al Qaeda following the USS *Cole* bombing, and still maintained a productive alliance. But that didn’t happen.’

Richard Clarke, according to Unger, seems never to have ceased demanding action against what he believed was a real threat from Al Qaeda. As late as September 4th, seven days before 9/11, Clarke was insisting that a strike within the United States was imminent. He demanded the deployment of the *Predator* drone, an unmanned airborne device, fitted with hell fire missiles. But nothing was done. The drone was used in Afghanistan in raids on the Taliban, but that was too late. The bird had flown.

Unger quotes Charles Lewis, head of the Centre for Public Integrity in Washington, asking the crucial question:

‘When it comes to war on terror, a lot of people have to be wondering, why we are concerned about some countries and not others. Why does Saudi Arabia get the pass?’ and he goes on to quote Lewis addressing the particular issue of Bush-Saudi ties within the Carlyle Group: ‘You would be less inclined to do anything forceful or dynamic if you are tied in with them financially.’ To this Unger comments: ‘It is a fact that more than \$1.4 billion has made its way from the House of Saud to individuals and entities tied to the House of Bush.’

What happened after 9/11 only goes to support Unger’s argument. All the contradictions of US Middle East policy came out into the open. When Richard Clarke finally resigned in February 2003, just before the invasion of Iraq, he told reporters, ‘You know that great feeling you get when you stop banging your head against a wall.’

It is a striking fact that in all the argument about the entry of the United States into a prolonged war in Iraq, both the US and UK governments have insisted that they had the word of their intelligence services that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction which posed a dangerous threat to their countries and to world peace. After the event, when we come to read the reports of what those intelligence services were actually saying at the time, we find that it was not what Bush and Blair were claiming. It is evident that these services are now not too pleased.

Unger quotes Kenneth Pollock, a former National Security Council specialist on Iraq, explaining that ‘Bush officials dismantled the existing filtering process that for fifty years had been preventing the policy makers from getting bad information. They created ‘stovepipes’ to get the information they wanted directly to the top leadership ... They were forcing the intelligence community to defend its good information and good analysis so aggressively that the intelligence analysts didn’t have the time or energy to go after the bad information.’ Those who work for British intelligence could well say the same about the Blair cabinet office intervention.

Donald Rumsfeld as Bush’s Defence Secretary apparently set up a new agency called the Office of Special Plans to make sure intelligence that supported

the imminent invasion of Iraq made its way to the highest levels of the administration. This was the same Rumsfeld who had once assured Saddam Hussein of America's continuing friendship and supply of arms. A joke current in the USA during the run-up to the war against Iraq, in 2003, was that Rumsfeld, by then Bush Junior's war minister, when asked how he knew that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, replied that he 'had the receipts'. The change in US policy cannot simply be explained in terms of Saddam's increasing independence over his oil sales. The fundamental contradictions which Unger's book has sought to reveal in US policy as a result of the Bush-Saud relationship leading to the rise and rise of Osama bin Laden have to be taken into account. If impeachment proceedings were to be started on President Bush, even more important than his illegal war against Iraq would be his softness towards the Saudis which enabled Osama Bin Laden to achieve the horrors of 9/11.

Michael Barratt Brown

Who runs Britain?

Anthony Sampson, *Who Runs This Place? The Anatomy of Britain in the 21st Century*, John Murray, hardback ISBN 0719565642 £20 paperback ISBN 0719565669 £7.99

Who Runs This Place? is an important book. It raises an increasingly urgent set of questions about who has the power in Tony Blair's Britain, and for whom they exercise it. Is there a new 'they' running our lives, or just the same old 'establishment' in new clothes?

Though the book follows the same format as Sampson's famous 1962 *Anatomy of Britain*, its mood music is significantly different. There is a scarcely disguised political anger, all expressed in urbane and balanced terms. And, a nice old-fashioned touch, there is no analytical jargon or phoney theoretical terminology, which is not to do down good political theory, of course.

Part of the tougher feel from forty years ago is that investigative journalism has been born and become a force in its own right. This point gives me a chance to mourn the death of Paul Foot who contributed so much to this sort of journalism.

The 'establishment' which Sampson writes about now brings out different responses in him. Today he does not like New Britain, not least, I suspect, because he has understood the fundamental continuity between Mrs Thatcher's '*UK plc*' and Tony Blair's '*New Labour, New Britain*'. The book confirmed my not untypical sense that many of the people in power today are simply immoral hustlers, careerists, greedy bastards and manipulators who do not deserve much respect from us. In a market-led society, lots of them come across as either self-promoters or literally 'for sale'. The maybe genuine veneers of civilisation and public service in traditional British public life are back stage. But these are my words, not Sampson's.

‘The establishment’ may be an outdated term in its own right. Recent letters in the *Times Literary Supplement* between Sampson and Sir Richard Wilson, former Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, show how far the crucial public service ethos has been eroded. The letters were about Sir Dick going off from his high public service career to become chairman of Mowlem, the construction company. Wilson had told a Parliamentary Committee that ‘the public service ethos is a bit of a fantasy’. Sampson had said in the book, ‘the respect now shown for money making and wealth, rather than professional conduct and moral values, has been the most fundamental change over four decades’. So Sampson’s hallmarks of balance and soberness are still there. But there is also this underlying anger.

I bought Sampson’s first *Anatomy of Britain* as an eager student, in 1962. The first book was a big success, quickly followed by *Anatomy of Britain Today*, in 1965. I’ve still got that and the rest of the ‘anatomy’ series, but somebody borrowed(!) the original one. Then came *The New Anatomy of Britain*, in 1971, and *The Changing Anatomy of Britain*, in 1982. So this author is about as seasoned an observer as you can get.

The book should appeal to two overlapping markets: one, the general reader – what I’m certain Sampson regards as the intelligent, independent-minded citizen and voter.

The second audience are the lesser and greater spotted and unspotted opinion formers and participants in the power game. There are also many tens of thousands of decent people on the fringes of power, people who have either been close up to the exercise of real power, or had a bit at one time, or were in touch with one or some of the influential networks surveyed in the book.

Both groups of readers can have a lot of fun – or grief – looking at the two diagrams which Sampson has done, mapping out the power structure. Maybe this was originally done with coins on a pub table, with a weather eye on the Olympic Games symbol. But there’s more precision and professional consideration in the diagrams than might seem to be the case from a quick glance. You have to note that there are single rings, double and triple rings. Some overlap, either once or several times. They are different sizes. Small triple ones are really powerful, but big single ones carry a lot of ongoing influence.

The readership group of connected people will no doubt rush to look up the entries on the people and sectors they know a bit about. However polite and careful the entries may be, you can rest assured that any comment from Sampson will land a reasonable punch. Both groups should also ponder the political message, which is pretty heavy by any standards.

So, having encouraged people to either read it, or buy it to check the bits they know, like a joined up *Who’s Who* reference book, I nevertheless want to offer some respectful ‘criticisms’.

Musing on the bits of the power game I’ve seen in my union and labour movement years, I regret the decision to drop unions from the power map. I also find the unions chapter – The Lost Voices – too gentle on the leaders who bent

over backwards – for some that wasn't difficult – to get anyone but anyone at any price as leader of the New Labour party. And then didn't dare fight even faintly to restore their rightful role and protect their members. What a sad, historic compromise that has been.

On the Labour Party, if Sampson can't say it, or doesn't know it, some of the crucial characteristics of New Labour that need recording have been its unwarranted self-importance and smart professionalism (they're not that good, really), its loathsome bullying, and its obsessive careerism. Add, too, the phoney culture of consultation – real, as long as you do what they want.

Equally appalling has been the systematic destruction of the Labour Party as an independently democratic, if awkward, defender of popular rights and values in British society. It has robbed the whole British constitutional heritage. They've torn up Citrine's *ABC of Chairmanship* and replaced it with the manual of the business ship!

And, New Labour's overwhelming American connectedness needs to be mapped in more detail. While this was initially sold as a natural affiliation with Clintonism and globally modern politics, the ease with which Blair slipped into Bush's unpleasant bed demands explanation. That goes for Brown's economics too.

Some names which crop up rate more attention, I think. Take two New Labour Lords. The former British Petroleum boss Lord Simon, as Blair's European courier, played a crucial role in heading off old Labour's and the unions' strategy of alliance with the European left.

Lord Hollick, banker, then media mogul, sometime British Aerospace director with American and European interests, apparently, became very influential as far back as Neil Kinnock's creation of the base for New Labour.

In New Labour again, backroom guru Geoff Mulgan at No 10 Downing Street – creator of the political doctrine of 'connexity' – is not mentioned. Top adviser Andrew Adonis is recorded too neutrally: most of the advisers are 'born-again' market maniacs.

Then there's an important point for which I have to thank the car radio: an interview with a representative of the rather secretive *Who's Who* publisher revealed that the vast majority of the top 600 wealthiest people in the United Kingdom do not want to be, and are not, named in *Who's Who*. From a research report I did recently on how companies are run, I found out that the pool of non executive directors (known as NEDs !) in the top 100 London Stock Exchange quoted companies (FTSE100) is amazingly tiny. A mere 392 NEDs sit on each other's remuneration committees. That's a very élite band of back-scratchers!

More is needed about the business wealthy and their methods, and especially the new top people who've come from privatisation, private finance initiatives, and all of the massive sell-offs that have gone on. And carries on.

On the UK economy and industry, I sense Sampson still thinks there is a UK macro-economy with identifiable business élites and networks of control. There is nothing unusual in that, since most economists work on this assumption. But

there is a different story. Most key British industry and big companies are owned by foreigners, while UK shareholders, through the City of London, own more assets outside their own country than they do in it. That's globalisation for you, or is it just an update on old fashioned British empire economics?

Maybe the powerful folk in our economy aren't even part of any national 'anatomy' any more. If there is a second edition, or a sequel, maybe it should look at some of the global anonymity issues, and the 'who benefits' issue. I respectfully suggest a title: 'The New, But Not Very Changed, Rather Nasty Anatomy of Britain PLC 2005'. That's a bit brash, but then I've been influenced by the amazing populist style of radical American Mike Moore, whose communications methods are a million miles away from anything we know in Britain. But then Sampson is half-way there already, in titling this book, *Who Runs This Place?* Sampson's new title is deeply derogatory. He sounds pretty pissed off about what has happened to Britain. I agree.

Regan Scott

Depressing story

Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, *Socialist Register 2005: The Empire Reloaded*, Merlin Press, London, 2004, 354 pages, paperback ISBN 0850365473 £15

The Socialist Register 2005 is the 41st annual volume in a series originally launched in 1964, with Ralph Miliband and John Saville as editors, to provide an arena for left-wing socialist analysis and discussion. This volume, together with the previous volume, for 2004, comprises a collection of articles on globalised capitalism and American imperialism, which are identified as 'two dimensions of a single phenomenon', sustained not just by force but by 'the penetration of other states' economies and social orders of the other leading capitalist countries by the US state, US corporations and US values' (p. vii).

Although they are dealing with the same theme, the different authors are not always of the same opinion. They write on different issues and sometimes adopt different stances. Between them all, however, they provide an immense amount of information on global capitalism. Some of it is, nonetheless, very daunting.

Articles on the international financial system by Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin and by Christopher Rude survey a number of aspects of the world scene, including the various crises since 1980: the Latin American debt crisis, the US stock market crash of 1987, the Japanese crises in the 1990s, the European monetary problems of 1992/3, the Mexican peso crisis of 1994/5, the collapse of the Thai currency in 1997, which precipitated the Asian crisis, the subsequent crises in Russia, Brazil and subsequently Argentina. However, while emphasising the instability of the system, these authors contend that it will not collapse – firstly, because those holding dollars will support it to protect their own interests and, secondly, because of the immense strength of the US Treasury

market, which Christopher Rude considers to be the foundation of the international financial system (p. 103-4).

Accordingly, the view that a dollar crisis is inevitable as the US deficit grows is deemed to be mistaken (p. 103).

Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin contend that the way out of global capitalism and American empire will not be found in a return to a reformism modelled on the post-war order (p.75). They argue that globalism has left virtually no national bourgeoisies for Labour to ally with in such a project. This makes it a non-starter.

Vivek Chibber is of the same opinion and contends that ‘developmentalism’, by which he means intervention by the state in Latin America, India and Turkey in the 1960s and 70s to create new industries and produce import substitutes, basically failed, except in Korea. Industries created by this means were highly inefficient, and sheltering them from international competition meant they had no incentive to innovate or improve productivity. Only in Korea, where they were geared for export and had to compete, was success achieved in building new, viable industries.

Chibber is sceptical about the possibility that, in present conditions, President Nestor Kirchner of Argentina, Luis Ignacio Lula de Silva in Brazil, or Hugo Chavez in Venezuela will achieve substantial success.

The article by Patrick Bond on South Africa is particularly depressing, insofar as it relates the manner in which the ANC has come to terms with global capitalism and the American empire since the collapse of apartheid. Thabo Mbeki is not the only culprit. Nelson Mandela began the process, he argues.

Gerard Greenfield recounts how Asian countries claiming to recall the spirit of the Asia Africa Conference at Bandung in 1955 are, in fact, promoting US based globalism. Boris Kargalitsky, while stating that Putin is not a mere US puppet, shows how far he has gone in accepting a US dominated system. Yuezhi Zhao argues that Communist China has its own way of adopting neo-liberalism.

The evidence gathered by all these writers is very powerful. However, what is lacking is evidence that there will be light at the end of the tunnel. The advancement of credible counter strategies is not a prominent feature of this symposium.

The idea that there is some ideal strategy or a perfect instrument out there, waiting to be discovered for us to achieve the transition to socialism, certainly does not accord with political reality. However, it is important to indicate that there are positive and practical steps to be taken. We need to be reassured that progress is possible.

It is better to work with what we have and to give at least critical support to those who appear to be moving in the right direction than to reject everything.

I remember lamenting to the old socialist, Konni Zilliacus, in the early 1960s that none of the potential Labour Party leaders at the time were worthy of support. In rebutting my view and arguing that we had to support the best available candidate, he said with a chuckle:

‘As the Russians say – “When there are no fish, a crab is a fish”’.

I therefore go along with what Tony Benn says in his answer to Colin Leys, in the last contribution, arguing for a continued struggle within the Labour Party:

‘So for me the Labour Party is stage one in winning the battle for public opinion. I’m not defending the Labour Party, although I’ve been a member of it all my life. I simply say, without them, what’s the instrument?’ (p. 330)

Of course, the Labour Party has been hijacked by the New Labour élite and is not the only instrument. In this country, as well as in the world at large, we must recognise that others will legitimately seek to use or establish other instruments. We must mobilise support for movements with positive features, even if we have serious criticisms. In our endeavours, however, we need facts and arguments.

In this volume of the *Socialist Register* there is a vast amount of information ready to be used in such endeavours, and it is to be hoped that it will have a great impact. The previous volume was apparently a sell-out. It is to be hoped that this one will have at least the same circulation.

Stan Newens

DU

Anne Gut and Bruno Vitale, *Depleted Uranium: Deadly, Dangerous and Indiscriminate*, Spokesman for the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium (CADU), 160 pages, paperback ISBN 0 85124 685 0 £7.99

When *The Guardian's* environment correspondent, Paul Brown, visited Iraq shortly after the 1991 war, it was to investigate its environmental consequences, such as oil burning. He was struck by the large number of burnt-out Iraqi tanks; his military escort enthused about the allies' wonderful new tank-buster weapons, missiles tipped with 'depleted uranium' (DU). As Brown noted in his account, uranium is radioactive, though of low activity. Soon after, reports began of increased illness rates in both US and UK troops returning from service in the Gulf, and later of higher than normal leukaemia and other childhood cancers and birth defects in the Iraqi population in and around Basra. Despite claims from the military that the health risk from DU was low, except for those who had gone into disabled tanks without protective clothing, DU was soon being directly blamed for these illnesses, and strident calls have persisted for DU weapons to be banned.

There is no doubt that depleted uranium is indeed radioactive, and that according to international regulatory bodies there is no safe dose of radiation; as a 'heavy metal' (like lead or mercury) it is also a chemical poison. This book, first published from Switzerland in French, is a very thorough review of the uses, misuses and effects of DU on the body and the environment, in Iraq, former Yugoslavia and various test sites. It excludes Afghanistan and the most recent Gulf War where no reliable figures on its use have yet been published. These chapters are thoroughly referenced (so that the book may not be easy reading for the non-scientist) and

mention many of the uncertainties surrounding the subject, as well as the certainties – some further confirmed since the book was written. For instance, the increased sickness rate (though not death rate) among Gulf War veterans has been further confirmed, though there is apparently no definite ‘Gulf War Syndrome’.

There is increasing concern that radioactivity from sources entering the body (such as inhaled DU dust) could be more dangerous than corresponding exposure to external radioactivity. As Keith Baverstock, formerly of the World Health Organisation, concluded at a low level radiation conference in Edinburgh, there is now a strong case for banning DU weapons under the Precautionary Principle.

As André Gsponer’s contribution, written specially for the English edition of the book, makes clear, DU weapons do have considerable military utility – though I was not convinced by his conclusion that they are preferred as a forerunner of ‘fourth generation’ nuclear weapons, rather than simply much cheaper than the alternative, tungsten. (DU is available in large amounts as waste from preparing uranium for nuclear reactors and warheads). Either way, it is more likely that they will not be given up willingly.

Moreover, the book says little about the many other possible causes for the illnesses in both veterans and Iraqi civilians – exposures including variously toxic smoke, multiple vaccinations, and chemical warfare protective agents. The insecticides sprayed *inside* the army tents are under suspicion of causing similar illnesses to ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ in farmers. Recent evidence to Lord Lloyd’s investigation into Gulf War illnesses (which is being boycotted by the Ministry of Defence) suggests that many veterans could have been exposed to low doses of chemical weapons released by bombing of Iraqi munitions dumps. The population of Basra could have been exposed to small amounts of the mustard gas (a known carcinogen), used by Iraq itself not far a way in its war with Iran. To complicate matters still further, DU could be synergistic with any of these factors.

The effects of anti-personnel land mines are clear and immediate, and eventually, despite resistance from the military, led to their being banned by the Ottawa convention. As this book makes clear, there are still uncertainties about depleted uranium, and there may never be consensus between governments, their militaries, and its opponents. As so often in preventing the harm that comes from war, the best preventative measure still seems to be stopping the wars in which DU weapons might be used.

Douglas Holdstock
World Disarmament Campaign Vice-President
World Disarm

Selling a war

John Prados, *Hoodwinked: The Documents that Reveal How Bush Sold Us a War*, The New Press (New York), 384 pages, paperback ISBN 1565849027, \$19.95.

Britons are becoming familiar with recondite arguments about the unreliability of military intelligence, as Tony Blair brought the so-called intelligence ‘community’ out of the cellars and on to the front pages, in order to justify his decision to launch a war on Iraq, in support of his American ally. John Prados neatly documents the same processes at work in the United States, showing how the Bush administration presented American intelligence to the public and the press, and how this was systematically distorted in order to create a threat out of thin air.

Prados takes the documents which the intelligence supplied to the Bush administration, and contrasts them with what the administration subsequently claimed.

A CIA White Paper on Iraq offers a powerful case in point. This document was prepared for the general public, and claims to summarise the classified National Intelligence Estimate on weapons in Iraq generated by the CIA itself in October 2002. Prados takes this to pieces, cross-referencing the sources with others, and demonstrates in detail that what was published did not reflect the conclusions that the same agencies had reached in private.

Hoodwinked demonstrates that the administration avoided the intelligence which it held which claimed that Iraqi weapons programmes were moribund or non-existent and lasered in on unlikely worse case scenarios which were speculatively appended to some reports, and served to argue a case for war.

If George Bush is a most practised hoodwinker, he has been cloned in Downing Street, as is made perfectly plain in the Butler Report.

It seems unthinkable that rich societies should stop wasting their money on the gathering of this kind of intelligence. The more contentious it is, the more necessary it becomes to throw better money after worse as a corrective. No wonder that the people believe none of it. And no wonder that they do not believe the politicians who mouth it all, either.

PJ

Going to law

George Farebrother & Nicholas Kollerstrom (editors), *The Case Against War: The Essential Legal Inquiries, Opinions and Judgements concerning War in Iraq*, Spokesman for the Institute for Law and Peace (INLAP) and the Legal Inquiry Steering Group, paperback ISBN 0 85124 692 3 £10

Nothing quite like this has happened since the trial of King Charles. Our then leader was put on trial for making an unlawful war. Cromwell the conservative joined with a radicalised soldiery to remove his head.

The Legal Inquiry Steering Group has no such hopes of Michael Howard. But this book shows how close they have got to lodging an indictment. Which, many thanks to the High Court, is not very close at all.

The book provides accounts of real and acted-out litigation in official and unofficial courts – an unusual but effective double-pronged attack. We start with committal proceedings before a Citizens' Inquiry. The case against the government is presented by Rabinder Singh QC and Janet Kentridge. Julian Knowles defends. Professor Colin Warbrick commits for trial.

The government is then prosecuted in the High Court, but Lord Justice Simon Brown will have none of it. The decision is appealed to shadow 'judicial review' (courtesy of the *Today Programme*) which upholds the prosecution.

There then follows a series of real legal opinions and government statements culminating in a real letter before action delivered in January 2003.

Government may take comfort: no citizen's arrest, just this book. But since January 2003, no new evidence has appeared to support the WMD theory. The continuing deficit may prove decisive in the court of public opinion, the court that the authors really mean to persuade.

Legalistic though this book is, anyone interested in the issues it deals with will find its clear exposition of principle illuminating. It contains models of draftsmanship as skillfully crafted as lawyers and law students might ever meet.

As King Charles found out, unofficial courts sometimes exercise real power. If the vision of rolling heads appeals to you, you'll find it irresistible.

Richard Lomax
Solicitors Journal

Make-believe

Duncan Brack and Iain Dale (Editors), *Prime Minister Portillo and Other Things That Didn't Happen*, Politico's Publishing, 372 pages, hardback ISBN 1842750690, £16.99

A whimsical idea generated this collection of essays: what would happen if Lee Harvey Oswald had missed? What if Harold Wilson had brought off an agreement with the unions on In Place of Strife? What if Ted Heath had stepped down in 1974? What if Benn had beaten Healey in 1981? What if John Smith had not died? These and other intriguing questions are tackled by journalists and commentators who can be presumed to have special knowledge of their areas of enquiry.

Not the least of the hares that it sets loose are provoked by the author's acceptance of the conventional mythology which is under attack. The acceptance of ethical foreign policy, for instance, was, to say the least of it, partial in the extreme. But if people believe that it happened, then it can all make its useful contribution to the make-believe that this amusing volume fosters.

JS