

Reviews

International Lawlessness

Philippe Sands, *Lawless World: Making and Breaking Global Rules*, Penguin Books, 432 pages, paperback ISBN 0141017996 £8.99

For more than a century, international law has been steadily developing. The process is charted in this book by Philippe Sands, a well-known international lawyer. One of its earliest landmarks was the 1899 Hague Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war and the distinction between combatants and non-combatants. The establishment of the League of Nations and the International Labour Organisation by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 was an important milestone on the road. The Atlantic Charter, formulated by United States President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in 1941, was a precursor of the Charter of the United Nations, approved at San Francisco in 1945. A world system, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous other amplifications, by different conventions, followed.

Under the UN Charter, countries agreed to refrain from the use of force except for the purpose of self-defence or when authorised by the international community, through the Security Council. Institutions were established and agreements made which were related to world trade and development, for example, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organisation.

US and British politicians were prominent in the development of the system and frequently claimed it reflected the democratic values on which their countries were based. This did not prevent them, or later political leaders, bending or ignoring the rules. No one has, however, flouted them more flagrantly than President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair. Philippe Sands meticulously documents and analyses their behaviour in this book.

He shows how the war initiated by American and British forces in Iraq was illegal under the UN Charter and quotes the usually compliant Secretary General, Kofi Annan, as saying so in September 2004. Tony Blair, who stated that Britain would only act within the limits of international law, realised the need for a new Security Council resolution to justify the invasion and, from November 2002 to March 2003, went to inordinate lengths to get one. The dropping of criminal proceedings against Katherine Gun, a translator, for leaking to *The Observer* an e-mail instruction to bug Chilean and Mexican diplomats, who represented swing states on the Security Council, indicated a desire not to rehash this in public (p. 201).

When efforts to get the second resolution failed, Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General, appears to have been pressurised to make a statement giving legal backing for the war, despite having advised previously that regime change would not be legal. Elizabeth Wilmshurst (Foreign Office Deputy Legal Advisor)

resigned, as she could not agree that a second resolution was not required to legitimate military action (p. 189).

In addition to challenging the legality of the war, Philippe Sands considers the ill-treatment meted out to detainees at Guantánamo and at Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq and argues that it breaches both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1984 Convention against Torture. He then describes the various means by which efforts have been made to justify what has been done.

President Bush has denied that detainees were prisoners of war and, therefore, that they were covered by the Geneva Conventions. The CIA was authorised to set up detention centres outside the United States so that they were not subject to American law. Richard Perle, a neo-conservative advisor, contended that, after 9/11, international law needed to be refashioned (p. 20).

Despite blatant infringements of international law, however, official representatives of the United States and of Britain still try to claim that they uphold the system.

Condoleezza Rice, at the international meeting of the American Society of International Law on 1st April 2005, declared that the United States ‘... has been and will continue to be the world’s strongest voice for the development and defence of international legal norms’ (p. 254).

This book not only exposes the barefaced hypocrisy of such statements; it also systematically destroys the arguments of those who have sought to justify the US and British military intervention in Iraq and associated policies as in conformity with international law. For those of us who opposed Saddam Hussein when the West was supporting him, and for the anti-war movement as a whole, it is an invaluable source which all who wish to argue the case against military intervention should read and absorb.

Stan Newens

Soviet Justice

Nikolai Bukharin, *Philosophical Arabesques*, translated by Renfrey Clarke, Pluto Press, London 2005, 448 pages, hardback ISBN 0745324770 £35.00

Nikolai Bukharin was arrested in February 1937, and shot in the back of the head thirteen months later. When he was not actually starring in the show trial which provided the culminating moment in Stalin’s purge of the old Bolshevik Party, he was engaged in a desperate negotiation with the secret police to save his young wife, Larina, and their baby son, from the executioners.

Evidently, the price of their lives was not only the extinction of Bukharin himself, but also a dreadful ignominy, in which he took upon himself responsibility for all sorts of imaginary crimes. The purpose of the Bukharin trial was to incriminate all the oppositionists which it destroyed in fictitious plots to dismember the Soviet Union in the service of the Nazis, thus making unavoidable the golden rule, so often since invoked: ‘there is no alternative’.

It was already evident to rational observers that by the time Bukharin was brought to trial, he was doomed. The fact that he wrote four books while he was being interrogated is remarkable testimony to his self-control and personal courage. But since he, above all, must have had a strong presentiment of the fate which awaited him, he must, at least some of the time, assumed that he was writing for an audience of one. The principal mystery which remains is how it came about that these four prison books were kept from the incinerator when their author was dispatched.

Helena Sheehan contributes an introduction to *Philosophical Arabesques*, under the title 'A Voice from the Dead'. It is a thoughtful essay. She sketches out the work programme that Bukharin had undertaken. The four manuscripts involved were: *Socialism and its Culture*, 'a sequel to his book *The Degradation of Culture and Fascism*' which he was in the course of writing immediately before he was arrested. This prison manuscript was intended to be published as the second part of a two-volume work called *The Crisis of Capitalist Culture and Socialism*. The second prison volume was a collection of poems entitled *The Transformation of the World*. The third was an autobiographical novel, and the fourth was the book we are considering, *Philosophical Arabesques*.

Thanks to the intervention of Gorbachev, and the eloquent prompting of Stephen Cohen, Bukharin's biographer, these books were exhumed from the archives. Two of them, the *Arabesques* and the autobiographical work, were published in Russian soon after, and have been translated into English very recently. The others may be expected when the publishing industry catches up with these forgotten events.

Whatever modern philosophers may think about them, there is no doubt that Bukharin himself regarded his philosophical manuscripts as central to his legacy.

'I wrote (them) mostly at night, literally wrenching them from my heart. I fervently beg you not to let this work disappear ... don't let this work perish ... this is completely apart from my personal fate.'

That he felt it necessary to address such a letter to Stalin explains how very far the criticism of events had already gone to falsify his philosophy. Stalin, here, disposed of absolute power, and could decide on the merest whim whether to extinguish Bukharin's life or not. He could also decide whether to extinguish what was left of Bukharin's philosophy. *Philosophical Arabesques*, the prisoner told his wife, Anna, was 'the most important thing'.

Long ago in his heyday, Bukharin had composed a primer of Marxist sociology, widely published under the title *Historical Materialism*.

This was a scholarly book, replete with modern instances, but it was squarely within the tradition of Russian Marxist thinking, established by Plekhanov. A thousand miles away from the later pieties which were so much esteemed by Stalin, this was nonetheless a somewhat mechanical work, and drew down a barrage of criticism from the most significant Marxian philosophers in Central and Western Europe, such as Gramsci, Karl Korsch and Lukacs. Their criticisms must have stung Bukharin because they all echoed somewhat comments by Lenin (in

his famous testament), to the effect that Bukharin ‘had never really understood the dialectic’. Now, in prison, this bruising apologia was Bukharin’s attempt to claim that dialectic. As a moment in the history of ideas it is interesting: but not anything like as interesting as it is poignant. It is as if Galileo were to seek to compose his testament within the mental framework of the medieval church. Bukharin begins his book with an obligatory proclamation of the proletarian confession, and a denunciation of his historical opponents.

‘These walking dead, these living corpses, remote from material practice, “pure thinkers,” intellectual human dust, still exist, and most importantly, continue to infect the air with the excreta of their brains, and to cast their nets, fine, sticky nets of arguments, which to many people still seem convincing.’

This is his general anathema pronounced upon ‘the devil of solipsism’. But that devil continues to exist, while Bukharin, himself genuinely enlisted among the walking dead, would soon stop walking.

During the First World War Lenin had devoted some time in exile to the study of Hegel’s logic. In his notebooks on that study, he had insisted that the consistency of thoroughgoing idealism was closer to the truth than mechanical materialism. In short, he recognised a greater affinity between Marx and Hegel than had become fashionable among most of the Marxists of the late nineteenth century. That is perhaps why Bukharin, seeking to claim the patrimony of Lenin’s view, was at pains to begin his work with an attack on solipsism, or ‘subjective’ idealism. In its classic embodiment, Bishop Berkeley had argued that our knowledge of the external world could not penetrate beyond the sense-data through which we received it. For those for whom it matters, it is possible to play quite a large number of word games based on this perception. Does the material world exist? Hegel and Marx were not concerned with unravelling word games, but with understanding the connections in reality, which one called ‘ideal’ and another ‘material’.

When refuting Bishop Berkeley’s earlier exposition of solipsism, Samuel Johnson was said to have kicked a stone, and proclaimed: ‘I refute it thus’. Bukharin cites a number of other such vulgar refutations. Stalin’s refutation, however, was even more vulgar and brutal. The annihilation of Bukharin guaranteed that the one-time numerous public which avidly followed the progress of his earlier thought would shrink to the merest coterie, while the principal interest of his book for scholars would be as a trigger to assist the understanding of the dictator’s aberrant psychology.

I was involved in the late history of this affair. Approaching the fiftieth anniversary of Bukharin’s execution, his son, Yuri Larin, drafted an appeal to Enrico Berlinguer, the leader of the Italian Communist Party, to intercede for the rehabilitation of his father. Since Berlinguer did not respond, Roy Medvedev sent a copy of this appeal to me, with the request that I do what I could to secure a favourable response.

Bukharin’s rehabilitation had been in train in 1956, but it was aborted by Khrushchev, because important Communist Parties in Western Europe had taken objection to it. Following the Secret Speech of 1956, they had lost very large numbers

of members, and they thought that the haemorrhage could even wash them away if it were not staunched. Evidently, Yuri Larin had rightly intuited that something was stirring in Italian Communism, which was made of different and more inquisitive stuff from the rigorous orthodoxy of the latter-day Stalinists in France.

A large part of the support for Bukharin's rehabilitation naturally came from those who approved of his economic policies. Their numbers had much increased in Russia itself, in Eastern Europe, and elsewhere. I did not share their view, but I did share the opinion that the rehabilitation of Bukharin was important in the struggle for the re-establishment of human rights, and for the reassertion of a measure of freedom of enquiry. So I drafted an appeal for the Russell Foundation, and we set about the systematic collection of signatures among Socialists and Communists in Western Europe and further afield.

Very nearly straight away, prominent Italian Socialists such as Riccardo Lombardi, Lelio Basso and Enzo Agnoletti signed the appeal, and announced that they had done so in the Italian press. There followed a rapid and generous response from leading Italian Communists. Others joined their voices, from Australia all the way across to the United States. Then came Berlinguer's answer to Larin's appeal: the Istituto Gramsci promulgated a seminar on the life and work of Bukharin, with keynote papers by Steve Cohen, his biographer, and by prominent scholars such as Alex Nove, Moshe Lewin, Wlodzimierz Brus, Su Shaozhi and Guiseppe Boffa.

As this argument continued to gather force, it found powerful supporters in the Soviet Union, and ultimately it brought about Gorbachev's decision to repudiate the infamous trial, and make belated amends to Bukharin's family for his destruction. So it came about that Steve Cohen established a major victory, and restored these books to the open library shelves.

But the political momentum of this restoration went far further, restoring greatly more of the market than anyone in Bukharin's time had imagined to be possible. Thus poor Russia endured a plague of oligarchs and speculators, who established new world records for cupidity and unbridled greed.

I cannot here digress into the impact of these events in China, which was in some ways even greater. There, my short booklet on the Bukharin case was translated into Chinese on the initiative of Su Shaozhi, later to become the head of the Institute of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Tse-Tung Thought, and one of the first exits following the confrontation of Tiananmen Square.

In a way, Bukharin's rehabilitation was too complete, even if it was at least as muddled as its own subject. Socialism with Chinese characteristics has at one level been incredibly successful, and owns a very large part of the American National Debt. But at another level, it would have been a great disappointment to Bukharin, since it can still only be promoted in smoke signals, and in the language of hints, nods and winks.

Solipsism may not avoid the reproaches levelled at it by those previous generations of Marxists: but compared to the depredations of capitalist Communism, it might seem relatively rational.

Ken Coates

No Man Is Good Enough

Phil Katz, *Thinking Hands: The Power of Labour in William Morris*, Hetherington Press, 188 pages, paperback ISBN 0954046218 £10

Jan Marsh, *William Morris and Red House*, National Trust, 160 pages, £25

‘William Morris had an abundance of ideas that were a constant challenge to workers in the Nineteenth Century and remain so for the Twenty-first.’

This is the thesis advanced by Phil Katz, in a book which is a celebration of Morris, and at the same time an affirmation of hopes which do not die, in spite of all the onslaughts of external capital.

‘Useful work’ was the credo that Morris gave to a Labour movement which was increasingly being shaped by people who were labelled as ‘unskilled’. Katz tells us that ‘Morris saw a need to bring the skills of both brain and hand to the work’. He believed ‘that everyone could acquire a range of crafts and that they should seek out work best suited to their talents, rather than let work define them’.

Today, useful work is harder and harder to find. Legions of wage slaves toil in call centres designed to foist unwanted consumer objects or services on reluctant targets, whose leisure and privacy are violated in the process.

Katz shows us how neatly complementary are the views of Morris and Marx. It was, after all, Marx who wrote that:

‘The worker feels himself only when he is not working: when he is working, he does not feel himself. He is at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working. His labour is, therefore, not voluntary but forced. Its alien character is clearly demonstrated by the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, it is shunned like the Plague.’

Phil Katz does not simply juxtapose thoughts from Marx and Morris: but he strikes sparks from them to invite us to develop their dialectic. The old Institute for Workers’ Control wrote on its banner a celebrated dictum of Morris’s:

‘No man is good enough to be another man’s master.’

Katz invites us to go beyond this in exploring how new generations can learn new approaches to work and skill, industry and technology, politics and trade unionism.

Thinking Hands invites us to explore the thought of William Morris as a guide to Twenty-first Century thinking.

Now William Morris is comfortably installed in the National Trust, which has recently bought Red House, or to be more strictly accurate, found a benefactor who has bought it for them. Volunteers enabled the house to be opened to the public, so that nearly twenty thousand visitors came in April 2003.

Now Jan Marsh has told the story of the only house that was built for William Morris by his friend, Philip Webb. The house had to live up to some very demanding specifications: more, it could not be furnished without the

establishment of a specialist design company (Morris and Co.) which could produce fit appurtenances to grace it.

Working from the top, the ceilings came first. Each had a pattern pricked into the damp plaster as a template for repeat painting. Morris himself, with Janey, worked on this: they vary from simple stripes to an elaborate series of arcs resembling peacock feathers. Working down, the scope expanded for murals, designs and embroidered hangings. In short, there was a great deal for the design firm of Morris and Co. to do. All this is profusely illustrated in Jan Marsh's impressive book.

A delight for the eye, this book will give its readers some remarkable insights into the practical skills of our greatest Communist artist-designer.

David James

Ending Public Services?

Dexter Whitfield, *New Labour's Attack on Public Services*, Spokesman, 176 pages, ISBN 0851247156, £11.99

Alison Talbot Smith & Allyson M. Pollock, *The New NHS: A Guide*, Routledge, 206 pages, ISBN 0415328411, £14.99

Now that owners of UK capital see little opportunity of making money in productive industries – mining and manufacturing – and the infra-structure of transport and power and water supplies is in their hands, they have turned their attention increasingly to the service sector. Distribution and retail services are theirs, apart from the struggling Co-op. But the public services remain to be captured, and with the enthusiastic help of New Labour that is what, under the deceptive name of 'reform', is now happening. The end is already in sight of any public services remaining – in housing, education, health, police or prisons – and with this the end of democratic control and social accountability to public bodies. The means adopted is that government – and increasingly central and not local government – commissions the provision and provides the funds and the private sector supplies the service, within some limited regulation of provision, such as is applied to private companies generally.

Dexter Whitfield has devoted his life to the defence of the public sector through research, writing, advice and organisation, not least through the Centre for Public Services, which he founded in 1973 and whose work he continues in the University of Northumbria. This the latest of several books and pamphlets he has written gathers together much earlier research in arguing the case against the drive of neo-liberalism which is encouraging the marketisation of public services. Whitfield emphasises the central role of the state in creating the conditions for successful marketisation. The market cannot function without laws to enforce contracts, financial concessions to business, such as export finance, tax relief, public subsidies,

local and regional grants, and above all the promotion of the ideology and value system of competition, personal greed and corporate power. Marketisation, moreover, involves the opening up of the in-house services of public providers not only to private suppliers at home but to giant transnational corporations.

What Dexter has done in this new book is to collect together the whole history of the way in which step-by-step the working of the market and the ethos of business competition has been brought into the public sector in the United Kingdom, replacing all practices and ideals of collective responsibility. The result is made abundantly clear in the growing inequality of provision for those who are well placed financially and those who are not. The emphasis on ‘choice’ simply means choice for those who live in the right places and know how to work the system, whether this refers to hospital treatment or school places. Only those who can see their way to affording or borrowing for university fees and maintenance charges continue into higher education. Business involvement in provision, whether in public private partnerships in hospital building and management or in the financing and running of schools, means that the bottom line is always profit. So-called parent power comes down to the influence of unelected managers and company executives.

The ideology of the market is based on the assumption that competition ensures that actions based on ignorance, domination or incompetence are simply ruled out. So it is argued that private is always to be preferred to public. Yet, the most extraordinary fact about New Labour’s marketisation is that nothing works. The total incompetence in the prison service, partly now privatised, is the most glaring example. Another was the famous computerisation of passports by a private company. But Dexter has drawn up detailed lists of the extra costs incurred in marketisation. These amount to £8.3 billion in one-off costs and over £3 billion of annual costs. But it is not just money that is wasted. The inspector’s reports on the new flagship academies, with all their extra funding, are abysmal. Many of the private funders have simply not paid up. Some of the new public private financed hospitals are not working after long construction delays. While grotesque profits are made in land speculation, and managers are paid more than many of the medical staff, whole wards are being closed down and the staff sacked, because budgets have been over-run. Nurses are so badly paid that it is necessary to replace them with temporary staff and with recruits from poor developing countries. Even as respectable a body as the Royal College of Nurses at its annual conference shouts down a cabinet minister who claims that the NHS has had its best year ever.

The last thirty pages of Dexter’s book are concerned with outlining in some detail an alternative strategy. This emphasises improving community well being with preventive action, democratic accountability, involving NHS workers and patients, equalities and social justice as the basis for advances, sustainable development through care for local and regional needs, protecting the public interest locally and regionally as well as nationally, financial transparency and economies of scale in finance and, finally, training and intellectual capacity building. Dexter proposes a whole sheaf of strategies to oppose marketisation and to support alternative policies by mobilising alliances and campaigns around

particular issues – many of them necessarily local. He does not forget at the end the important lessons for other European states, where marketisation and privatisation are less advanced than they are in the United Kingdom.

Much of what Whitfield writes will be criticised by New Labour as coming from an old Socialist, but, in relation at least to the NHS, everything he writes is supported by the conclusions of the new book by Dr. Alison Talbot-Smith, who once worked for the NHS, and Professor Allyson Pollock, who used to research and write for the British Medical Association and is now head of the Centre for International Public Health Policy at Edinburgh University. The book consists mainly of the most thorough description of the way in which, in their words, ‘a publicly-funded system of publicly owned and provided health care is being replaced by a health care market...’ Chapters deal with ‘Organisations with strategic roles’; ‘Organisations commissioning services’, ‘Organisations providing services’; ‘Funding and resources’; ‘Efficiency and standards’; ‘Research and development and research governance’; ‘The NHS workforce’; ‘Devolution of the NHS in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland’. They are full of valuable facts and figures.

When the authors come to looking into the future, they conclude that

‘The day when the NHS becomes mainly a funder of health care – a “logo” attached to the provision of health care by private hospitals and surgeries – no longer seems remote.’

Then they ask a series of key questions:

‘First, how far the new NHS will, or can, continue to serve the values and aims of the original NHS, namely services which are universal, comprehensive, and free at the point of delivery. Second how far the market-based system, adopted for the sake of efficiency, will actually be more efficient than what it is replacing.’

Their answers are given from here on in quotations from their last chapter. Universality, they argue, implies equity of resource allocation and service distribution, but they say that

‘Under the new system, control over resource allocation will be devolved to private or voluntary sector commissioners with no responsibility to meet the health care needs of a defined population ... providers will try to concentrate on the most profitable treatments, services and patients and avoid the least profitable... Some commissioners and some providers will be liable to make losses and have to cut services...(Already) cuts are making existing inequalities worse, both across areas, and between and within patient groups.’

A related issue is whether any part of the NHS is now responsible for relating services to needs and ensuring universal access.

‘Second, as regards comprehensiveness, what mechanism will ensure that services for patients with conditions that are inherently hard to predict and relatively costly to treat – older patients with several chronic diseases or the frail elderly, for example – will continue to be provided? The NHS no longer provides truly comprehensive care.

Third, as regards the provision of services free at the point of delivery; if many trusts and foundation trusts continue to find themselves in persistent deficits, what will stop this leading to a new demand (from all quarters) to find additional sources of funding in the form of ‘user fees’ – for so-called ‘hotel costs’ in hospitals, or for ‘enhanced services’? ... Another proposal is vouchers, whereby every patient would receive an equal entitlement to a fixed amount of treatment, but have to pay for additional care. Vouchers are already government policy for the young disabled and the 2006 White Paper proposes to extend their use in social care and long term care ... Once the market is in full operation then ‘topping up’ of one kind or another is likely to follow, undermining all the goals of the NHS.

As regards efficiency... Given that much of the healthcare budget is spent on staff and so much health care is labour intensive, depending on thousands of interactions between patients and highly trained and experienced clinicians, how far can ‘business efficiency’ be expected to improve the balance sheets without downgrading the service through reductions in funding of levels and quality of staff? ... Second, do the gains from adopting a ‘business-like’ approach to service provision outweigh the costs of operating in a market such as making and monitoring contracts, paying for capital, invoicing and accounting for every completed treatment, marketing services and dealing with fraud ...? Third, how will the answers to any questions about efficiency be known if the financial operations of foundation trusts, as well as of the private sector providers and commissioners, which are to become part of the NHS ‘mainstream’, are to be treated as ‘commercially confidential’ (as the independent regulator, Monitor, has already decided some of them will be).

All these questions raise the general question of public accountability ... Will any avenue then remain for the public to challenge the decisions made by private bodies and shareholders on their behalf?’

The authors end by hoping that the questions they have raised will encourage others to ask questions. They provide an excellent starting point.

Michael Barratt Brown

Unravelling the Politicos

Giles Edwards, *British Politics Unravelling*, Politico’s Publishing, 176 pages, ISBN 1-84275-152-2 £8.99

If you are looking for a blistering exposure of British political power in New Labour’s 21st century un-cool Britannia then this is not the book for you. If, however, you are looking for a cautious outline of the workings of the constitutional bodies and attendant political formations of that state, together with some of the national and international issues with which it has been pre-occupied, then it could be a good starting point.

The first section explains the historical hotchpotch that goes under the name of

the British constitution with its constituent elements covered, not forgetting quaint features such as Erskine May and the Royal prerogative. There are many enticing sub-headings to guide you through the thicket of information, such as ‘What does the Church of England Do?’ and ‘Where does the Mayor of London fit in?’ The arcane procedures of the Houses of Parliament are explained succinctly and the changes at Number 10 under the ‘presidential’ and ‘sofa government’ of the Blair dispensation are listed and the consequential veneer of cabinet government touched upon. There is not very much about the Downing Street press office, Alastair Campbell’s brush with the BBC, ‘doggy’ and ‘sexed-up’ dossiers, in fact surprisingly little on the BBC in general. But perhaps this is to be expected, as the author is a working BBC journalist and the book has a Foreword by Nick Robinson: dangerous territory – and who wants to end up like Greg Dyke? In fact all of the issues in the book get the ‘balanced’ BBC treatment with knobs on.

The constitutional changes of New Labour, from the 1998 Human Rights Act right through to the impending Supreme Court, are listed and the devolved Regional Assemblies and their varying and differing powers explained, together with electoral mechanism. The long-forgotten Blair espousal of ‘open government’ is hardly mentioned and the only reference to the Freedom of Information Act is in a listing of constitutional innovations. Perhaps that is as well, given its thirty-five individual categories of exemption. The final section of the book is about the state’s role in economic management, setting out the argument about private industry’s involvement in government activities in terms of the desire for it to be ‘done more efficiently’. The vast disparities in wealth and income contaminating our political practice are not touched upon, even when they undoubtedly feed the feelings of public political powerlessness and cynicism, which have intensified under New Labour with its sleazy antics and ‘news management’ proclivities.

In conclusion, the book will hardly act as a clarion call for increased political involvement for all those searching for political action to address big issues such as social inequality and the dangers of war, those whose involvement has been partly neutered by the New Labour take-over. But if you want to know about the responsibilities of the Privy Council and what an EDM is, this guide will be of help.

John Daniels

‘The Spy Who Came in from the Co-op’

Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive II: The KGB and the World*, Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 720 pages, ISBN 0713993596 £30

The Mitrokhin Archive began to appear in England at the very end of the last century. It burst into the British newspapers as the source of a host of stories about Melita Norwood, an old lady who stood exposed as the most persistent Soviet Spy in Europe, a great-grandmother who earned the intriguing headline in *The Times*:

‘The Spy Who Came in from the Co-op’. Mitrokhin was another intrepid spy, for the other side, and it was his revelation which brought fame to that one grandma.

Mitrokhin, by contrast, smuggled numerous documents from the KGB’s archives to his summer dacha, and thence to the West, when he took flight.

Now the second volume considers KGB successes in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Far East, Africa, Latin and Central America and the Middle East. According to Mitrokhin’s dossier, 10.6 million rupees were spent in the single year 1975 alone, in order to assist the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Further considerable sums were expended in manufacturing evidence of CIA and Pakistani intelligence machinations in the growth of Sikh separatism.

Mitrokhin claims that the Russians spent \$400,000 on subsidising the Communists in Chile as well as making a donation of \$50,000 to Allende. But, surprise, surprise: the CIA spent \$425,000 trying to undermine Allende. ‘Their dollars were targeted far less effectively than the KGB’s roubles’, claims Mitrokhin, which is apparently why Allende was killed and we got a prolonged period of terror at the hands of the victorious murderer, Pinochet.

The KGB appears to have been in similar difficulties to those encountered by Western intelligence agencies, in making sense of events in Iraq, and deciding whether it wanted to bring an end to Saddam’s rule in Baghdad or not. Support for the Iraqi Communist Party was therefore somewhat sporadic. According to Mitrokhin, it was the persistent advocacy of four members of the Politburo which persuaded Brezhnev to authorise Russian military intervention in Afghanistan. The KGB was then let loose, to get rid of the Afghan leader Amin, using all the wiles of which James Bond was an intimate familiar. Mitrokhin also records the adventures of the KGB in Cuba and in Southern Africa.

What emerges from all of this derring-do, and all this lavish expenditure, is a mixed result, but by no means a triumph for the spooks. Of course, the spooks will have got their wages, and, as in other countries, will very seldom come unstuck when their schemes misfire. But is it not the same the whole world over? Clandestine events bring clandestine happiness to a legion of happy conmen, without often changing political outcomes one iota.

Andrew James