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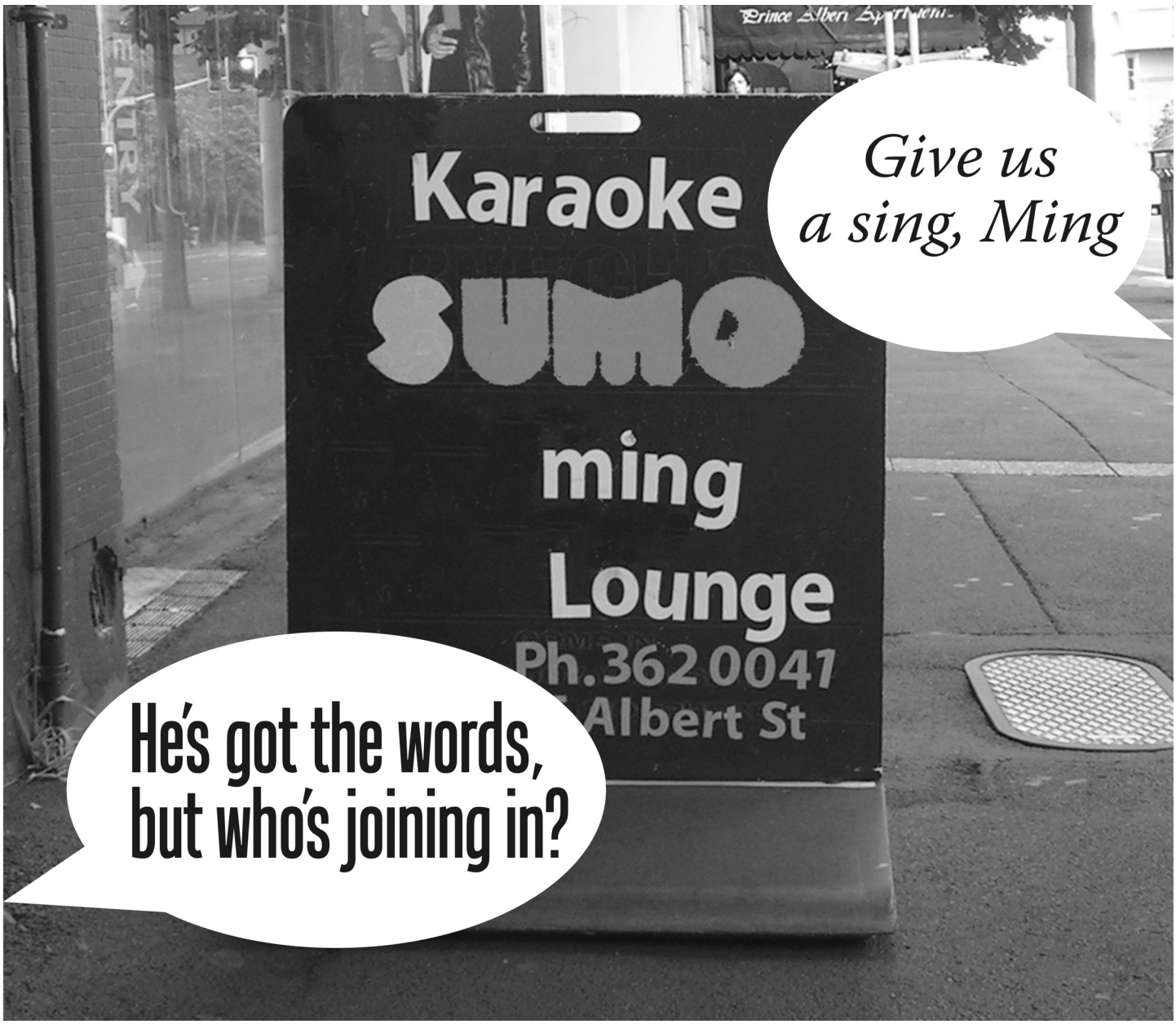

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CONTENTS

COMMENTARY

BROWN BOUNCES

It is no surprise, and no cause for panic, that Gordon Brown has enjoyed a spate of modest popularity since becoming prime minister.

Anyone coming new to the job would look good and appeal to the public simply by having replaced its previous discredited and blood-sodden occupant.

The Liberal Democrats have been fond of using the slogan "it's time for a change" and, after the Blair decade, voters were bound to look favourably on any change.

It is hard to remember now that John Major was once a popular figure merely by virtue of not being Margaret Thatcher, who exhausted the public's patience just as did Blair.

People tend to hope that a change of administration will mean that whatever they most disliked about the old one will be rectified, and so are willing for a while to give it the benefit of the doubt.

There was nothing much the Liberal Democrats could have done either to prevent the 'Brown bounce' or to gain traction with the public while it is in progress.

The party's position was hardly helped, though, by Ming Campbell's baffling behaviour over Brown's offer of cabinet posts to Lib Dems.

Brown: "I'm going to make you an offer that would tie your party to me, neuter it as an independent force and lose most of your MPs their seats."

Campbell: "How frightfully fascinating, I'll need a few days to mull that one over."

Nor has it been helped by the embarrassment of three peers taking formal advisory posts to Brown; they should have been told that, if they wanted to do that, the whip would be withdrawn.

These unedifying episodes damaged what has otherwise been a quite sound response by Campbell to Brown, which has recognised that, although the new prime minister may have a certain novelty value, in practice little has really changed or will.

Brown was intimately involved in every aspect of the Blair era and it is hard to believe that he will overturn all that he had said and done for a decade and set off in some new direction.

And one need not look hard to find the same old Labour Party. The assaults on civil liberty have been couched in more emollient language, the exchanges with George W Bush in less enthusiastic language, the direction of foreign policy in Iraq and elsewhere in more evasive language, and there have been a few populist moves over casinos and drugs, but that is about it.

With a few exceptions, even the same assorted deadbeats still sit in the cabinet as sat there under Blair.

Brown's political selling point is 'newness' and, by its nature, that cannot last very long.

The Lib Dems' job is to be ready to strike when Brown's doubtless brief electoral honeymoon ends, by pointing out how little has changed and that what people disliked about the Blair administration is still there and not very far below the surface.

Campbell's behaviour over the cabinet jobs offer means he is under double pressure – to perform well against Brown and to perform well enough to crush any speculation that he wants a deal with him, rather than to deal with him.

Much of the subterranean muttering in the party about Campbell's performance has been unfair – with a change of prime minister and a new media-friendly Tory leader, any Lib Dem leader would have struggled – and sniping Kennedy loyalists would do well to remember why their hero fell in the first place.

But Campbell does have to start reaching and inspiring voters, giving them an idea of the sort of country he wants to live in, and a reason why they should support him.

READING THE TEA-LEAVES

The Ealing Southall and Sedgefield by-elections were noteworthy mainly for the humiliation of the Conservative Party, in particular in the former seat, where it had imposed as candidate a local celebrity who had only just joined.

There was not realistically much chance of the Lib Dems winning either of these very safe Labour seats, and the second places with increased vote shares were good results and silenced what would otherwise have been a 'dump Campbell' media campaign had the party come third.

The Lib Dems are notorious for trumpeting by-election victories as being of near-global significance, when in fact it is usually difficult to deduce much from them about the state of politics generally.

But for what these two result were worth, they suggested that the Lib Dem vote has held up better than polls would suggest, that Labour is still vulnerable in its heartlands and that Cameron's make-over of the Tories has far to go before they can break out of their heartlands. All to play for.

LIBERATOR 321

The next issue of Liberator will be published at the Liberal Democrat conference in Brighton in September. Please visit our stall to collect your copy and renew your subscription.

And while your wallet is open, why not purchase a copy of the new improved edition of the Liberator Songbook? You know it makes sense.

RADICAL BULLETIN

IN THE BROWN STUFF

Do some people ever really leave the Labour Party? Shirley Williams's acceptance of a formal advisory post to Gordon Brown suggests that she cannot see a political trap without walking into it feet first and embarrassing the Lib Dems.

Williams's justification for taking the post is that she will advise Brown on nuclear proliferation in her capacity in the American charity Nuclear Threat Initiative.

Brown's creation of this post a matter of months after he supported the replacement of Trident is sign enough of government hypocrisy.

Williams's charity no doubt does worthwhile work, but prime ministers can secure advice from anyone they wish and, if Brown wanted to speak to NTI, he could do so without Williams taking a role half in and half out of his government.

His motive was obviously to try to salvage something from his failed plan to draw Lib Dems into his government and so neuter the party as an independent force (Liberator 319).

It was also embarrassing that Lib Dem peers Julia Neuberger and Anthony Lester accepted Brown's advisory posts, though both have some public prominence beyond being party politicians and are not as closely associated with the party in voters' minds as is Williams.

Labour is likely to find ways to imply that her advisory role means she endorses Labour, or at least endorses Brown, and the Tories to find ways of using her role to smear the Lib Dems as associated with Brown.

Williams should have refused Brown's offer, whether her motive for acceptance was nostalgia, vanity or altruism.

Lib Dem peers have been embarrassed by some of their number choosing to take these adviser posts, fearing it gives the rest of the party a poor impression of their loyalty.

"I just hope people noticed that lots of us turned up at Southall," one said.

The whole episode of Brown's offers to Lib Dems to join his government was appallingly badly handled.

It has since turned out that most MPs and peers found out about Campbell's discussions with Brown from the newspapers.

Even though it was obvious the story was about to break, no-one thought to warn them of this and shadow home secretary Nick Clegg, who missed that day's Guardian en route to a public event, found himself being asked (inaccurately as it turned out) about his new job with Brown.

The question has still not been satisfactorily answered of why it took Campbell two days to say 'no' to Brown, why Campbell was unable to spot the trap Brown had laid for him and why he lashed the whole thing up.

RED BENCH REBEL

When a newspaper troubles to refer to a party source as a 'parliamentarian' rather than 'an MP', it is usually code for the culprit being a peer.

So that is where people have looked for the origin of the disloyal attack on Ming Campbell made in the Daily Telegraph.

This is, of course, a ready platform for anyone wishing to undermine the Lib Dems.

The story alleged that a group of MPs and peers had decided to press Campbell to go, were the party to finish third in the Southall and Sedgefield by-elections, an eventuality it predicted on the basis on one YouGov poll.

It quoted the 'parliamentarian' as saying: "We are hoping he will go off on his summer holidays with a pearl handled revolver in his suitcase."

Since no-one in the Lords can reasonably expect the party to overturn the practice of 100 years and appoint a leader from the upper house, it must be assumed that the Telegraph's anonymous briefer was acting on behalf of an MP who entertains the idea of one day becoming leader and, no doubt, intends to reward his loyal follower were this to happen.

TURN AGAIN DICK WHITTINGTON

In the days when the Liberal Party had to search high and low for candidates, there were stories of PPCs who had agreed to join the Liberals and stand, not necessarily in that order, after meeting a party official on a train.

Something similar is happening with the Liberal Democrats' quest for a candidate to contest the London mayoralty next year.

The problem with the election (Liberator 318) is that it is probably unwinnable, given the party's weakness in large parts of the capital. The mayoral system puts a premium on celebrity above competence – it is, after all, a huge help if a candidate is already well-known in some capacity across such a vast electorate.

The Tories will probably run Boris Johnson, and some Liberal Democrats think the party ought to copy them and run its own in-house buffoon, Lembit Öpik.

Having subjected the party to the regular ridicule of his appearances in celebrity magazines, he was lucky to survive on the front bench in the recent reshuffle as shadow secretary for business, enterprise and regulatory reform.

The position of mayor might be thought to require some gravitas, not that that prevented Öpik soon

afterwards appearing on television with both Cheeky Girls, when he tried to decide which was which from pictures of their arses.

A more credible celebrity name in the frame is Brian Paddick, the former police commander who won wide admiration for his courage in being openly gay in this role and for trying to forge a more sensible drugs policy.

He has now left the Metropolitan Police but has various commitments and is understood to be undecided about whether to run, despite his candidacy being trailed in the media.

Another possibility, which probably owes more to Simon Hughes's imagination than reality, is that the party would support Big Issue founder John Bird, who has declared that he will run, but not for who, and has been courted by the Tories. Since Bird has never had the slightest connection with the party, and his views are unknown on most issues, this would appear even less likely than a possible resurrection of Greg Dyke's candidacy, which collapsed in May amid a row over his efforts to run as a join Tory/Lib Dem candidate (Liberator 318).

If all else fails, the party is left with the more conventional internal possibilities of Sally Hamwee, a London assembly member and peer, or Mike Tuffrey, also a London Assembly member but not as yet ermined.

Both would be safe candidates and could actually do the job, but sadly a mayoral election demands celebrity, not necessarily mere competence.

SAME OLD SONG

Both the Ealing Southall and Sedgefield by-elections turned in creditable results, with second places and increased vote shares.

They must have brought considerable relief to Ming Campbell, since the vultures would have been circling in the media, and elsewhere, had the party done badly.

But one piece of literature delivered to every home in Southall rather neatly illustrated the party's strengths and limitations.

It showed a giant picture of the February 2003 demonstration against the Iraq war, pointed out that candidate Nigel Bakhai had been there and that the party had participated, and quite rightly attacked those who had supported the war.

Iraq is still a live issue but that demonstration was four years ago, and there is going to be a limit to how long the party can live off the credibility it gained then. It is going to have to find some new issues.

HOOTS MON

Shadow Scottish secretary is not a very important job in these devolved times but, even so, holding the post provided some platform and profile for Jo Swinson, the new MP for East Dunbartonshire.

So why was she sacked in Ming Campbell's July reshuffle? Her successor Alastair Carmichael, who is also shadow Northern Ireland secretary, will surely do a good job, but isn't Campbell supposed to be committed to diversity?

Removing a young woman from the front bench seems a curious way to demonstrate this, particularly as only a week later Campbell gave a speech in which he urged the party's female research staff to consider putting themselves forward as PPCs.

Perhaps the decision was not Campbell's. Some shadow cabinet members were surprised to learn of their new role from chief whip Paul Burstow rather than from their leader.

HEART OF DARKNESS

David Cameron has delighted his enemies with his untimely and opportunistic stunt in Rwanda (the Economist said he was like a toff in *Carry On Up The Jungle*).

But few have queried the point of sending 40 Conservatives there to do unskilled work when their £600 airfares would pay a Rwandan building worker for a year. The original plan was for Tories to 'train' Rwandans (not in how to win by-elections, one assumes).

They even provided a cricket coach for a country that doesn't play cricket. President Paul Kagame is keen for his people to learn because, like joining the Commonwealth, this would annoy the French, who supported the previous genocidal government.

Rwandan politicians must surely have noticed that they cannot learn much about winning from the Tories, since just 16 out of 80 MPs turned up to hear Cameron address their Parliament.

RICH MAN'S BURDEN

Will the Liberal Democrats be willing to finance their international work appropriately? The job of chair of the International Relations Committee carries with it an inevitable workload of events abroad, meeting delegations of foreign parties and attending functions, all of which can cost the incumbent about £5,000 a year.

This has meant that the job is in effect limited to people with that sort of money to spare, and so rules out many who would otherwise be capable of filling the role.

The incumbent, Robert Woodthorpe-Browne, wants the post to come with an expense allowance.

He has offered a matching donation if the allowance is forthcoming during his term. Once the principle was established, his eventual successor would not need to be wealthy.

A LIBERAL APPROACH TO IMMIGRATION

Ignoring the impact of immigration is no longer an option, argue Nick Clegg and Simon Hughes

The public debate on immigration is changing. In part, this is because of a step change in the number of economic migrants coming to the UK since the mid 1990s, and a sharp increase in those coming from central and eastern Europe following the latest enlargement of the EU.

In part, it is because concerns on the left and centre-left of British politics about the impact of large-scale economic immigration on wage levels and working conditions have become more vocal. Immigration is no longer a preoccupation only of the right. Last summer, Polly Toynbee, Frank Field and John Denham led the charge against what they allege to be an excessively liberal immigration policy.

Finally, public opinion itself has hardened dramatically. According to Mori, until 1999, the number of people citing immigration as among the most important issues facing Britain stood at below 10%. That figure has now more than quadrupled, and immigration consistently features in the top three issues that voters say are of greatest concern to them.

How should liberals react to this fast changing and highly emotive issue? Simply ignoring it is not an option. No serious political party can remain silent on something that is of such importance to the public. Nor should we ever seek to play catch-up with tabloid driven hysteria about immigration. The last thing British politics needs is more policy populism on immigration.

But we do need to do more to set out the case for a liberal, managed immigration policy. It is no longer sufficient simply to assert that an open immigration policy is good for Britain. The truth is that the benefits of large-scale immigration only become possible if three conditions are met.

First, the system by which immigration is managed must be competent, and must work. The chaos and administrative incompetence of the government's Immigration and Nationality Directorate is now well documented. It is absurd that it took the government ten years to decide to introduce a fairer and more efficient points-based system, and to create a Border and Immigration Agency at arm's length from the government, as advocated by Liberal Democrats. That Gordon Brown should belatedly acknowledge the Liberal Democrat case for an integrated Border Force in a surprise announcement just before the summer recess – but do so without incorporating the police powers that will be essential to its success – is a measure of the government's stopgap approach to the organisation of our immigration system.

Second, we must plan for the effects of large-scale inward immigration. The slow and centralised allocation of money to local authorities from Whitehall, and the inaccuracy of official statistics, have failed to keep up with the demands made on local services by immigration. Government statistics suggested that there were only 300 new non-British citizens in Slough in 2004, yet the local Job Centre Plus issued 9,000 new National Insurance Numbers, of which only 150 were from British applicants.

Even when national statistics manage to pick up population changes, it takes years for those changes to be reflected in central government grants to local councils. Once again, our councils are having to pick up the pieces created by shortsighted central government policy. In some areas, particularly urban wards, there is evidence too that immigration may have exacerbated – but not caused – the long-term shortage of affordable social housing.

Third, we must be more proactive in advocating integration as well as immigration. They must go hand in hand if a liberal immigration policy is to win public confidence. Present government policy is all over the shop. Cutting public funding for English language classes, when language barriers remain the biggest impediments to integration, is self-defeating in the extreme. While there is some virtue in the newly introduced 'Life in the UK Test' for those seeking to live permanently in the UK, it has become a rote learning general knowledge test for most applicants rather than a practical tool for integration into day-to-day life in Britain.

Most worryingly, neither Labour nor the Conservatives have anything to say about the large number of irregular residents now in the UK who live in a twilight world of illegality and exploitation. It is impossible to say with precision exactly how many people are living illegally in the UK, but the government itself estimates that there are up to 600,000 individuals who are either visa overstayers, failed asylum seekers or illegal entrants now living in the UK.

How do the Conservatives and Labour seriously propose to deport them all, as they claim they will? This

is the politics of the madhouse, since there is not the faintest prospect of them ever doing so and, with enforced deportations costing around £11,000 each, efforts to do so would be hugely expensive. Any party truly concerned about an underclass of workers bereft of all rights and all representation, and cut off from access to any public services, needs to think anew about how some of these people could over time become legitimately integrated back into society.

For all these reasons, we are bringing a motion to Conference in Brighton to strengthen our party's policy on immigration. We have consulted widely with think tanks, campaign groups and others on our approach. Given the regular use of false or misleading statistics in the debate, the motion is explicit in setting out the facts.

We live in an age of global migration, with 191 million people now living in a country other than the one in which they are born. It is true that inward immigration into the UK in recent years is without precedent in the post-war period, rising steadily from the mid-1990s to a total net immigration of 185,000 in 2005 (565,000 in, 380,000 out), and over 600,000 workers from the new EU Member States have come to the UK to work (though we don't know how many have returned, or are likely to stay). We should never forget that we are a country of high emigration too, with more Britons living permanently abroad (estimated at around 5.5 million) than foreigners living in the UK.

"We must be more proactive in advocating integration as well as immigration"

We value the global freedom of movement for ourselves, so we should never lightly deny it to others.

The motion restates our belief in improved border controls through the creation of a properly resourced and empowered National Border Force, and the rapid reintroduction of exit checks at all ports so that we have a better idea of exactly who has entered and left the country.

There will be some, understandably, who believe that we should instead be moving towards entry into the EU's borderless Schengen area, rather than erecting new border controls. However, our existing party policy that entry into Schengen is not possible until the controls on the EU's external borders are improved remains valid. More importantly, in our view it is difficult to pursue a liberal strategy of integration and immigration within Britain itself unless we first put in place more effective controls at our own external borders. Internal liberalism requires workable external controls – eminently preferable to the government's strategy of imposing ever more stringent internal controls on all of us through the intrusive use of ID Cards.

The motion also suggests that work permits paid by businesses to employ immigrant workers should be increased in line with international trends. Irrationally, the government has raised visa fees to punitive levels in recent years, yet kept the price of work permits comparatively low. We believe that employers should be asked to pay a fair price, calculated as a proportion of the starting salary of the employee (so that a work permit for a city banker is far higher than that for a nurse), and that the money raised should go directly towards schemes to re-train British workers in those sectors which have been most affected by large scale inward immigration.

Other ideas included in the motion cover issues such as the need to boost English language learning among those presently unwilling or unable to learn; reforming the Life in the UK Test to give it greater practical value; spreading best practice in social housing allocations policy; and a radical improvement in the arbitrary and inefficient visa services at many UK consulates around the world affecting the rights of thousands of short term visitors to the UK such as relatives and students.

But arguably, the most controversial part of the motion is our proposal that there should be a pathway of earned citizenship made available to those who have been living here unauthorised for many years, subject to a number of tests. Importantly, we do not believe that a blanket amnesty is justified, as evidence from other countries such as Belgium and Spain suggests it simply becomes a catalyst for further illegal immigration. Instead, our intention is to set rigorous criteria by which legalisation of residency can occur: that the applicant should have lived in the UK for at least ten years; that she/he has a clean criminal record; that she/he can show a long term commitment to the UK; that the application is subject to a public interest test and an English language and civics test; and finally that a charge is paid that can be reduced or redeemed in full in return for a period of volunteering or service in the community.

If these various hurdles are passed, the applicant would initially be granted a two-year work permit before moving forward to the final phase of 'regularisation'. This measured, targeted policy to bring long-term residents out from the shadows, in which they live an illegal and often exploited existence, into a legitimate status would also produce economic dividends: one report estimates the total loss to the Exchequer of unpaid tax and NI contributions from people working clandestinely to be as much as £3.3 billion.

Our opponents might well attack us on this proposal. But our answer is simple: what do they suggest? If all they do is repeat the fantasy view that they will deport everyone, then they don't have a leg to stand on.

By adopting this proposal, and the motion as a whole, we believe that our party once again would be at the forefront of a major issue of public debate. It seeks to prove that a liberal, managed immigration policy can be both efficient and fair.

Nick Clegg is Liberal Democrat MP for Sheffield Hallam and Shadow Home Secretary. Simon Hughes is Liberal Democrat MP for Southwark North & Bermondsey and Shadow Leader of the House of Commons

PADDY TO THE RESCUE

Former Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown has produced a work on conflict resolution in failed states that is part textbook, part history, part polemic and part racy reportage, says Jonathan Fryer

In a recent op-ed piece in the Guardian, John Gray, professor of European thought at the LSE, declared "the era of liberal interventionism in international affairs is over".

Witnessing the all-too-predictable debacle in Iraq, it is easy to see why one might come to that conclusion, and one would like to think that there won't be any repetitions, for example, in Iran.

Yet I would be amazed if events prove Professor Gray right. Far more likely, I suspect, is the thesis put forward by former Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown, in his latest book *Swords and Ploughshares: Bringing Peace to the 21st Century*: that outside interventions into conflicts or failing states will increase. Moreover, he argues, they should increase – but they need to be carried out much better.

Paddy was of course one of the few Lib Dem parliamentarians (all of them in the House of Lords, incidentally) who were in favour of the invasion of Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein. As a former military man himself, he pays tribute to the swift success of that action, but he is damning about the lack of a real plan for what would happen next.

The mistakes by the US-led coalition are countless, from big ones (such as disbanding the Iraqi army, thus creating a vacuum for lawlessness, as well as a mass of disgruntled, unemployed former soldiers) to small ones (such as calling one of the newly established bodies NIC – an acronym which in colloquial Arabic means 'fuck').

The stated purpose of the book is to ensure that the world learns how to rebuild states after conflict better. Iraq is a copybook example of how post-conflict state building should not be done, Paddy asserts.

Moreover, the failure of post-conflict planning in Iraq was not the exception but a rather dramatic example of the rule. The implication of such failures is immense in our post-9/11 world, for, as the US National Intelligence Service noted in 2005, "failed states are a refuge and a breeding ground of extremism".

By indirectly demonising Islam in Western minds over the past six years, the propagators of the war against terror have alienated what should be our allies in the struggle against extremism: the great majority of Muslims who need help to prevent their religion being captured by fundamentalist bigots. In other words, they have made things worse. Paddy writes: "We have chosen the wrong mindset, the wrong battlefield, the wrong weapons and the wrong strategies to win this campaign. We have chosen to fight an idea, primarily with force."

So what's the answer? Before learning it, the reader is given a brief overview of some of the international interventions in modern times: Congo, Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia, Somalia, Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq.

It is a startling list when presented baldly like that. However, taken as a whole, the outcome is positive, Paddy believes. "Since the end of the Cold War, the effect of the accelerated pace of international intervention has contributed to halving the number of wars in the world, with an even greater reduction in the number of dead, wounded and displaced."

It is helpful to be reminded (as we are in this book) that this trend of interventionism is in direct contrast to practices set out by US President Woodrow Wilson in 1919, in the aftermath of the First World War.

Part of the Wilson doctrine was the inviolability of sovereign states. This principle was largely reinforced by the Charter of the United Nations, drafted towards the end of the Second World War, which strengthened the concept of non-interference in the internal affairs of UN member states (something that China often likes to stress). As former colonies achieved independence, that principle was underlined.

However, Chapter VII of the Charter does envisage the right – some would say the duty – of the international community to take enforcement action in response to a threat to peace, a breach of the peace or an act of aggression. But to be justifiable, an intervention has to have at least some chance of success (one reason why the world has not tried to intervene in Tibet, for example). At the same time, it is important to note that international law is something that has developed over many centuries, through customs and practice, and does not reside totally within the UN.

As articulated by Paddy, international law and practice have evolved to the point at which international intervention in the domestic jurisdiction of another state has the best chance of conforming to international law and receiving the wider support of the international community when *all* of the following conditions are met:

- there has been a gross breach of international law or standards, especially in respect of human rights, or a

humanitarian crisis, which demands an urgent but limited response;

- this threatens the wider peace of the region or the world (for example in the case of weapons of mass destruction);
- peaceful and diplomatic efforts have been exhausted;
- the action proposed is deemed to be proportionate;
- it is mandated by the 'lawful authority' – that is, UN Security Council authorisation has been sought and received;
- there is a reasonable prospect of success.

More controversially, Paddy then sets out his blueprint for success, which is neatly summarised in chunks at the end of each chapter in the first half of his book. Those little summaries could usefully be gathered together in a pamphlet.

First, he believes, it is essential to establish the rule of law, after which the second priority must be to get the economy going. When he was High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the nearest modern equivalent to a Victorian viceroy), he discovered to his astonishment that this sometimes meant espousing policies normally associated with Margaret Thatcher, which he had vigorously opposed while leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Commons.

Many Liberal/LibDem readers will be even more taken aback by his assertion that "elections should not be held as early as possible, but as late as the interveners can get away with". He goes on, "to work properly, democracy needs the rule of law, an independent civil service, institutions of government in which there are built-in checks and balances to prevent the abuse of power, a free and vibrant state and an active civil society capable of holding the executive to account."

An uncomfortable truth – not just for George W Bush – is that western-style democracy cannot be simply exported or quickly implanted in a post-conflict or failed state. Sometimes it will not even be appropriate.

It is instructive to recall that the Allied occupiers of West Germany did not introduce full democracy until 1949, recognising that the context had to be right first. There are many other lessons which modern interveners could usefully learn from the experiences in Germany and Japan, but sadly few people in positions of authority learn anything from history.

Readers who are directly concerned with the promotion of good governance round the world may well be discomforted by some of the lessons Paddy draws from his experience in the Balkans.

"Huge amounts of money were wasted in Bosnia importing well-meaning Guardian readers from Hampstead Garden Suburb to set up NGOs and civil society organisations.

"They made precisely no impact, apart from creating handy employment projects for the middle classes." Ouch.

As will have become clear, Paddy does not mince his words. Some, I suspect will make Liberator readers cheer, such as "In recent times, the Western interveners (chiefly led by the US) have pursued an approach to peacemaking and peacekeeping which bears a striking resemblance to British gunboat diplomacy of the nineteenth century." But others will make them wince.

The language used in the book varies considerably, from the rather dry prose of a diplomatic despatch or a peacekeeper's manual to the racier reportage of life on the ground.

Ex-soldier that he is, Paddy clearly relishes the earthiness of a Bosnian proverb that was quoted to him when he asked a local why he and his fellow countrymen often wanted outside interveners to do things, rather than doing them themselves: "it is easy to beat thorn bushes with other people's pricks."

The content, as well as the language, of *Swords and Ploughshares* is varied, sometimes to the point of disjointedness. It is a curious hybrid: part strategic textbook, part historical text, part political polemic, spiced with graphic extracts from the writer's diaries. For me, the most enjoyable part of the book was the 60-page 'Appendix B', which describes what Paddy calls the 'savage war of peace' in Bosnia in 2002-03. Talking about real people in real situations is inevitably more gripping than some of the more theoretical arguments deployed earlier in the book, even when some of the detail is extraordinarily focussed, such as the discussions in Sarajevo relating to the introduction of VAT.

But I suspect that, from the author's point of view, the really important part of the book is to be found in its prescriptive sections. These will be of interest to academic students of war studies (or indeed, peace studies), as well as international relations. But clearly Paddy would like the politicians to take note too, not just in this country and throughout the EU, but over the other side of the Atlantic as well. Some of them may find the tone of some of the writing insufferably didactic, but others will consider it inspiring.

Freed of his party responsibilities, Paddy has to a certain extent become Britain's answer to Al Gore, not in relation to climate change, but as a Man With A Mission. This book is in a sense his Inconvenient Truth, though it is not as seamlessly packaged. In recent months, Paddy has given related presentations at a number of literary festivals, as well as the LSE and the Cambridge Union. I heard him do one at Gresham's College in London and found him compelling.

Moreover, following through some of the themes in his book, he has made a number of radio programmes which looked in depth at the experiences of past examples of conflict resolution or state building in different parts of the world. And he is carving out a new career for himself as a television documentary writer and presenter. His Channel 4 programme on Israel/Palestine earlier in the summer was particularly memorable and level-headed.

Thus he is evolving into what some would see as a voice of reason in international affairs, though he is bound to attract detractors as well. One should therefore see *Swords and Ploughshares* as a stage in a much bigger process, perhaps not the most important or the best. But certainly not the last.

Jonathan Fryer is chairman of Liberal International British Group and has reported on conflict situations around the world for the BBC.

Swords and Ploughshares: Bringing Peace to the 21st Century by Paddy Ashdown, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £20

GREENS HELP RUN THE EMERALD ISLE

Ireland's liberals are split between different parties, but its Greens have entered government. Can they beat the endemic cronyism, asks Stewart Rayment

The 'winners' of the Irish general election on 24 May 2007 were Bertie Ahern and Fine Gael – perhaps a paradox of the STV system.

Ahern has the common touch and is genuinely popular amongst a wide cross-section of the Irish people. He also has tremendous kudos from his role in the Northern Ireland peace process and the years of prosperity he has presided over. His Fianna Fail was returned as the largest party in the Dáil with 78 members, a loss of three. Fine Gael though made the largest number of net gains, rising from 31 to 51 seats.

However, this gave neither party a majority. FG's declared partner, which paradoxically is Labour (since FF is the centre-left party of Irish politics), won 20 seats, a loss of one. The Progressive Democrats, FF's coalition partner since 2002, were comprehensively tonked, falling from eight seats to two, including their leader Michael McDowell. FF voters by and large did not transfer to their coalition partner.

The Progressive Democrats describe themselves as Ireland's Liberal party and are members of ELDR and the Liberal International. They gave Ahern's 2002-07 government a distinct neo-Liberal character. Ahern was deeply committed to PD Mary Harney's health service reforms (which all of the other parties had campaigned against) so the FF/PD coalition was going to hold.

But this time 78 + 2 did not give Ahern a majority, but 51 + 20 was even further adrift for FG, and even the six Greens would not have secured a Fine Gael led coalition. Since neither FF nor FG were talking to the four-strong Sinn Fein, who were down by one, some of the five independents (nine fewer in number) were likely to be the determining factor.

Ahern wooed four and rejected one Independent and passed the winning post to be re-elected as Taoiseach. The question remained of where would the Greens sit? Even in early August, this remained uncertain.

On 8 June the Greens walked out of coalition talks with FF, one spokesman saying they had looked at what was on offer and found it was 'nothing'. However, both parties claimed that the talks had been conducted in a positive and professional way and that they would be open to further talks. On 10 June Ahern set out his green aspirations in a newspaper article; the wooing went on.

With a 14 June deadline for the election of Taoiseach, it was obvious that Ahern was home. The question remained, 'why did he want the Greens?' To this might be added, 'how will he carry FF and their voters if he seriously pursues a green agenda?'

His stated reason was that he wanted a stable government that would last five years.

This is a load of bollocks; the remaining PDs and Independents gave him that. So what were the real reasons? I can think of two possibilities. Even more than the UK Labour Party, FF is just a machine for electing career politicians; it is largely devoid of its own ideas. It has raided junior coalition partners successively to this end, hence the paradox of a centre-left party leading a neo-liberal programme – the PDs were the think tank of the last administration.

RIDDLED WITH CORRUPTION

Secondly, Irish politics are riddled with corruption. Ahern's personal finances were an issue in the election that he managed to fudge. It was certainly an issue for the Greens, who perhaps pursued it more vigorously than either FG or Labour. At the same time as coalition negotiations were going on, the Mahon Tribunal was meeting and whether the Taoiseach allegedly received a six-figure sum or a five figure sum seems rather academic.

Unfortunately, there is a small time element in Irish politics and the public expects their politicians to be financially corrupt and thinks 'good luck to them' if they get away with it. If the Tribunal finds against Ahern, he may need the numbers stacked in his favour to avoid impeachment. One of his chosen Independents, Beverley Flynn (twice expelled from FF, yet it seems likely to be welcomed back at ministerial level) may be declared bankrupt following her unsuccessful libel action against television station RTE.

The Greens' special conference voted by 86.8%, well above the two-thirds majority needed, for the FF coalition.

Having said that he would not lead his party into coalition with FF, leader Trevor Sargent promptly resigned the post. Brian Cowen, who led the FF negotiators, is now clearly seen as Ahern's heir apparent.

So as the Greens follow their colleagues in Germany and Austria into power. what have they gained through negotiation? It has to be said that there isn't much in the final package that wasn't in the FF manifesto.

The annual 'Carbon Budget' will be a first and a benchmark for others to follow. However, as Labour leader Pat Rabbite pointed out, of the issues negotiated, the word 'review' appears 56 times, 'examine' 23 and 'consider' 14 times; how many of these will make it to the statute book?

The experience of the PDs suggests that a junior coalition partner can lead (and take the flak for) government policies. The Wall Street Journal's 2006 Index of Economic Freedom ranks Ireland third out of 157 countries as one of the 'most pro-business environments' worldwide.

What didn't the Greens get and what are the risks? In the general election, the Greens were adamantly opposed to the government's policy of co-location pursued by Mary Harney, the PD health minister, who was pushing ahead with privatisation of the health service, giving up space in public hospitals to private medicine. Ahern remained equally adamant in his commitment to this and to Harney, one of the PD survivors.

The Greens failed to end the use of Shannon airport by the US military en-route to Iraq, and the controversial M3 motorway route desecrating the seat of the High Kings of Ireland at Tara remains unchanged – indeed one of the last acts of outgoing FF environment minister Dick Roche was to sign it off. How new Green minister John Gormley will handle this remains to be seen,

Which brings us to the biggest problem. Gene Kerrigan wrote in the Sunday Independent that, while the Greens demand a ban on corporate donations, "Bertie Ahern would rather swallow his right arm".

He speculated, "talks with the Greens… collapsed over points like their desire to 'modernise the decision making and planning processes'." It gets better: "The Greens, being human, might yet sell out their values to get… probably a state bike. We can be certain that FF will not abandon their core values of unfailing subservience to builders and developers.

"The PDs are intellectual slaves to unbridled enterprise, but FF are organically linked to the swashbucklers – by instinct, by history, and by unyielding bonds of cash."

"PROGRESSION THROUGH INFRASTRUCTURE"

Writing in the Roscommon Champion, an FF TD Michael Finneran warned, "Many of FF's views are built around progression through infrastructure (i.e. development) and I feel that a number of the Greens' views may infringe upon that". The reality for the Greens is 78 TDs to six. That is the real writing on the wall.

Roscommon and South Leitrim (three seats) affords a typical situation of how local affairs dominate political change in Ireland.

The Leitrim part of the constituency had previously been linked with Sligo and its former FF TD was seeking re-election for the new seat, formerly 2 FF and 1 FG. This time it was 2 FG and 1 FF. The losing FF candidate had reputedly been involved in a controversy over a cattle company. Farmers in Leitrim had been paid just before the 2002 general election, but not those in Roscommon. Farmers have long memories and Irish politics are still parochial (as Bertie's deals with the Independents demonstrate).

Fine Gael sits with the Christian Democrats in the European Parliament, but has its liberal wing – not least when under the leadership of Garrett FitzGerald.

Where do they go next? Their partnership with Labour formally ends, but Rabbitte seems committed to a change of administration and as things stand FG is the only engine for this.

FG's leader Enda Kenny had a good election, but not good enough. Less is known of FG's attempts to form a government, but it would have required everybody but FF, not a likely scenario. The divide between FF and FG goes back to the civil war, but otherwise it is often said that there is little between them in policies.

A number of commentators have said that, if FG wants to overcome the likelihood of FF being the permanent party government in Ireland, they must become a post-civil war party (which possibly means dissolving themselves and reconstituting).

Kenny became leader in 2002, when FG was defeated and demoralised and had lost most of its front bench. The party was reconstructed from the bottom up. This resulted in electoral success at local government and the European Parliament and 20 gains in the Dáil – a rise from 22% to 27% of the vote. Its challenge will be to keep this momentum up over the next five years.

The first opportunities will arise out of the Mahon Tribunal reports. Kenny did not really play that card during the election – something he probably rejects, but he too has the flaw of many Liberals of being too reasonable. In this respect, Rabbitte makes a good partner. Like its UK counterpart, Labour no longer represents the working class and is largely a bourgeois party. Sinn Fein's performance in Northern Ireland will no doubt be watched as a monitor of whether it is acceptable within the Pale.

Mary Harney finally conceded that there was little choice but for her to be leader of the remaining PDs. They have been further plagued with high profile resignations to take up lucrative private sector posts. They took two seats in the upper house elections, where the result was FF 28, FG 14, Independent 7, Labour 6, Green 2, and SF 1.

With the affluence of the Celtic Tiger, Ireland is said at last to be moving to a post-famine mentality. Affluence has brought its problems, not least its booms and slumps, and immigration is a major issue that the country has yet to get its head round. The yob culture of many wealthy English towns is finding its way there. Scandal has rightly rocked the foundation of the Roman Catholic Church, many voting with their feet.

One wishes the Greens luck, with the certainty that they'll need it, and hopes for Irish Liberals to regroup and find solutions beyond the narrowness of neoliberalism.

Stewart Rayment is a member of the Liberator Collective

GOUVERNER, C'EST CHOISIR

This year's French presidential election has been widely misinterpreted in Britain, reports Simon Titley

"Gouverner, c'est choisir": "to govern is to choose" (Duc Gaston de Lévis), one of the wisest statements ever made about politics. In this year's French presidential elections, this wisdom was clearly understood. Voters had a real choice and the winner was prepared to make choices.

Unfortunately, the British media assumed its audience would not understand this election unless it were interpreted in terms of British politics. Thus we had Nicolas Sarkozy presented as a Thatcherite, attempting to replicate in France what Margaret Thatcher had done in Britain in 1979. This is wishful thinking by puritanical Anglo-Saxons, who have always resented the French for their long lunches and even longer holidays. Sarkozy is right-wing but not the conservative wet dream that observers in Britain imagine.

Nor is France in 2007 analogous to Britain in 1979. True, it suffers from chronic unemployment and has been experiencing the sort of existential angst that afflicted Britain in the late 1970s, when academics used to publish books with titles like 'Is Britain governable?'

On the other hand, the France of 2007 has just opened another high-speed rail line, connecting Paris with Strasbourg, whereas the Britain of 1979 had just scrapped its Advanced Passenger Train due to IMF-imposed cuts. Indeed, France possesses a highly modern infrastructure, the world's best health service, and the lowest level of poverty of any developed economy. And despite the spread of the dreaded *mal bouffe* (junk food), the French continue to know how to live and eat well.

MAYORS AND ÉNARQUES

To understand the French elections, one needs a basic grasp of French political culture. The most notable difference from a British point of view is that France does not have a stable system of party politics. Parties seem to be forever merging or splitting, and the two-stage voting system forces a myriad of pre-election pacts. In Britain, the party is always ultimately greater than its leader (as even Mrs Thatcher discovered to her cost), while in France, it can seem as though parties are little more than fan clubs for charismatic leaders.

France provides fertile ground for such individualistic leaders, who form or remould parties around themselves. This is helped by the importance of being a mayor, the basic building block of a political career in France. Most leading French politicians are mayor of some town or other, and retain this independent power base after becoming an MP or minister.

Then there is the powerful role of the École Nationale d'Administration. Graduates of the ENA, known as 'énarques', fulfil an equivalent role to products of Eton and Oxbridge in England, but with two important differences. First, there are far fewer of them (the ENA produces less than 100 graduates a year), and second, entry to the ENA is via a ruthlessly meritocratic examination system.

Charles de Gaulle established the ENA in 1945 as a means of ensuring that senior administrative posts in the French government would be filled in a more rational and democratic manner, yet this system has ended up making politics seem more remote to the average French citizen. The ENA retains a virtual monopoly of appointments to the most prestigious positions in the civil service. Significantly, there is no bar to senior civil servants transferring into and out of politics or business. For example, President Chirac's final prime minister, Dominique de Villepin, entered politics as an appointed official without ever having stood for office. The result is that, since the war, a small and close-knit elite of énarques has come to dominate politics, government and big business.

France's Napoleonic and Gaullist heritage is another significant factor. There is a strong belief, shared right across the political spectrum, in the power of the state. The key components of this belief are support for national independence and economic dirigisme, based on the idea that the state embodies the collective will and that elected politicians therefore embody the state.

The two-stage voting system also has a powerful effect on the political culture. In presidential elections, anyone may stand in the first round provided they collect the nominations of at least 500 elected officials (such as MPs or mayors). Only the top two candidates go through to the second round.

Parliamentary elections (which are based on single-member constituencies) also use the two-stage system. Unlike in presidential elections, qualifying for the second round requires at least 12.5% of the vote in the first round. In 2007, 110 candidates won over 50% in the first round, rendering a second round unnecessary. Most second-round battles are between two candidates and while three-cornered fights are theoretically possible, this year there was only one such constituency. This system polarises the parties and makes it virtually impossible for anyone to break through the centre.

SARKO VS SÉGO

Twelve candidates stood in the first round of this year's presidential election but there were only four serious

contenders: Nicolas Sarkozy (representing the mainstream right-wing UMP), Ségolène Royal (Parti Socialiste), François Bayrou (centrist UFD) and Jean-Marie Le Pen (far-right Front National).

Although Sakozy and Royal remained the frontrunners, there was a tantalising moment when it looked as though Bayrou might overtake Royal to become the main challenger to Sarkozy. This was the only scenario in which Sarkozy might have lost the election.

Sarkozy pulled off the trick of campaigning against the government while being part of it. Despite not being an énarque, he won the presidency through a single-minded determination that began with being elected a local councillor at the age of 22 and a mayor at 28. His only serious reversal was in 1995, when he miscalculated by backing Jacques Chirac's rival Édouard Balladur for the presidency.

Despite this setback, and a lasting mutual loathing with Chirac, Sarkozy returned to government in 2002 as interior minister (when, following riots in many French suburbs, he acquired a reputation for his tough stance on law and order), then finance minister, followed by a second term as interior minister.

Meanwhile, Sarkozy was preparing the ground for his presidential bid. In 2005, he took over as leader of his party, the UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire), which had been founded by Chirac in 2002 to unite the split forces of the right (principally the Gaullist RPR, to which both Chirac and Sarkozy belonged, together with most of the Giscardien UDF).

Sarkozy is a highly skilled politician and a formidable orator. His electoral appeal was based on being dynamic and different. As a non-énarque, he could present himself as an outsider challenging a discredited system. He also developed a raft of clearly worked out policies intended to modernise France. A flavour of his platform can be judged by his claim to represent "the France that gets up early".

Sarkozy's main rival, Ségolène Royal, is an énarque – indeed, she met her partner and the father of her four children, Socialist party leader François Hollande, at the ENA. Her distinctive appeal rested on being a woman and representing a 'modernising' tendency within the Parti Socialiste. However, much of her platform was vague or half-baked, and her party remained seriously split throughout the campaign, with most of its leadership bickering or providing only half-hearted support. The campaign was also coloured by rows between Royal and Hollande, culminating in their acrimonious split as partners at the end of the election.

AND THE WINNER IS...

One thing the French presidential election did was to demolish the concept of electoral 'apathy'. Faced with a real choice, the voters turned out in droves, with a turnout of 85% in both rounds. The fact that the mainstream parties were clearly differentiated also led to a drop in the vote for fringe candidates.

In the first round on 22 April, Sarkozy led with 31.2%, Royal 25.9%, Bayrou 18.6% and Le Pen 10.4%. In the second round on 6 May, Sarkozy beat Royal by 53% to 47% – Bayrou refused to endorse either candidate and his vote split fairly evenly between the two finalists. Sarkozy's party went on to win a comfortable majority in June's parliamentary elections, though it was not the landslide many commentators had predicted.

Sarkozy continued to outwit his opponents after the election. If anyone wonders where Gordon Brown got the idea of offering ministerial jobs to Lib Dems, they should look no further. Sarkozy gave top jobs to three socialist former cabinet ministers. Bernard Kouchner was made foreign minister, Jack Lang was appointed to join a commission to reform France's political institutions, while Dominique Strauss-Kahn has been nominated to head the International Monetary Fund. Sarkozy also contrasted with the Socialists' men in suits by appointing more women and ethnic minorities to his cabinet than any previous administration.

Although Sarkozy is a conservative in French terms, his policies will not necessarily go down well in London or Washington. True to his Gaullist roots, he is pursuing a highly nationalistic industrial policy and will resist attempts by the EU to open up France's energy market, while at the same time encouraging the French electricity giant EDF to expand abroad. He will also maintain French opposition to American and British policy in Iraq, a less difficult task now that the US Congress has stopped serving 'freedom fries'.

BYE BYE BAYROU?

The question that particularly interests British Liberals is the future of centrist leader François Bayrou. Following the acrimonious departure of the Giscardiens from ELD in the early 1980s, British Liberals had given up French liberalism as a lost cause. Hopes were revived in 2004, when Bayrou's group in the European Parliament agreed to join the Liberal bloc through the device of the ALDE, a coalition of ELDR with French and Italian MEPs who did not like to use the world 'liberal'. Here we face the first problem; that in France, the word 'liberal' implies classical liberalism, which is anathema because it offends the French concept of the state.

So where would one find people in France with similar views to British Liberals? It is not an easy question to answer. The Liberal tradition in France was originally represented by the Radical Party, which dominated French politics during the Third Republic (1871-1940). The Radicals' post-war history of splits is reminiscent of the People's Front of Judea and too complex to relate in full. Effectively, the left-wing eventually became the Left Radical Party (PRG), which is now in semi-permanent alliance with the Socialists. The right-wing ended up as part of Giscard's UDF, most of which merged with Chirac's UMP in 2002. A rump of the UDF refused to merge although it remained allied to the UMP – it is this faction that Bayrou led. However, 18 of its 29 MPs refused to fight on Bayrou's ticket in this year's parliamentary elections, fearing (correctly) that they could get re-elected only in alliance with the UMP. Bayrou set up a new party called the Mouvement Démocrate (MoDem), which won only three seats (including Bayrou's own), while those UDF MPs clinging on to the UMP have formed a new party called the Nouveau Centre, which won 22 seats. Bayrou's new party is therefore a rump of a rump.

My advice would be that if you want to see a Liberal revival in France, don't hold your breath.

Simon Titley is a member of the Liberator Collective

BEAT THE EURO-SCEPTICS AT THEIR OWN GAME

The public mood is shifting and there is fertile ground for pro-Europeans to counter the sceptics' myths, says Jeremy Hargreaves

Next year it will be 20 years since Margaret Thatcher made her 'Bruges' speech. That event definitively marked the shift of first herself, and then very soon afterwards the British public, away from being friendly to the European Community – in the wake of the 1975 referendum in which she played a leading part in the 'yes' campaign – to the hostility to anything emerging from Brussels, to which we have become so used ever since.

And the following year it will be 20 years since the Berlin Wall came down and the countries of eastern and southern Europe began their slow march towards membership of the EU, which finally ended for most of them with accession in 2004 or at the start of this year.

Those two events have been the cornerstones of both the development of the EU, and Britain's response to it.

Ever since the late 1980s, there has been a general perception, strongly reinforced by the ambitions for the EU of Jacques Delors, who was president of the European Commission in 1985-95, that the European Union is gathering ever more powers unto itself, in promotion of 'ever closer union' (even though, like many of history's best remembered lines, that phrase in the Treaty of Rome meant something rather different).

A series of inter-governmental conferences that generated new treaties reinforced this perception – helped by the fact that much of their substance concerned fairly technical and incomprehensible process matters, taken by many in Britain as proof that there must be something rum afoot. The perception of growing power of the EU was further reinforced by the former communist countries' determination to join it.

At a few times, this perception of growing power was real – the most obvious example being the creation of the euro, and associated architecture of monetary management such as the European Central Bank – but often it was simply a perception. No matter, however, the citizens of the EU, and of Britain in particular, believed it was growing.

The response of the British public, and in particular the media, has been unambiguous. In popular imagination, the European Union became synonymous with an image of anonymous if rather corpulent Belgians, sitting in a drab grey office block somewhere in Brussels, paid a lot of money just to sit there all day long identifying further areas in which they could impose their socialist control over Britain, and roll back the freedoms handed down from generation unto generation through 1,000 years of British history.

My favourite illustration of the British public's view of the EU is the story of the public meeting some time in the early 2000s, which was held to debate the upcoming referendum on the European Constitution, and turned to the issue of the difficulty of framing a neutral and fair question for the referendum.

"I think," said one tweedy lady who stood up, "that a fair question would be 'Do you want this country to be run by the Germans?'," and sat down to great applause.

This view of the EU has not grown up simply spontaneously. It is the product of a highly successful and very well organised campaign by those opposed to the EU since Delors. This movement has, since the Bruges speech, carefully crafted a message about the European Union, and relentlessly promoted it across a broad range of fronts in the British public debate. The secret of their success has been not making it an ordinary and relatively narrow political campaign – though they have had that through, successively, the anti-European wing of the Conservative Party under Major, the Referendum Party, and UKIP.

They have used a broad range of tools – most particularly the media, but also everything else from voluntary organisations to rural civic society – and with a wide range of powerful allies in business to help spread their messages in a highly effective way.

If we pro-Europeans ever want to recover our position to the point where we might be able to contemplate winning a referendum, then we are going to have to learn those lessons and follow the same route.

There is no better model than our triumphant opponents for how we should work. If we want to win a referendum on a European issue at any point in the next 20 years, then we need to start now.

So, we knew where we were, where the public thought European integration was going, and their opinion of it. Until now.

The French 'no' vote in their referendum put an end to one particular initiative – the constitution – but more importantly it got wide coverage and has been widely

understood across Europe as a sharp brake being put on the 'ever closer union' (even if the great irony is that it had more to do with French fear that the British were now in the European driving seat).

The relentless unstoppable march towards European integration had been, in the public perception, stopped. The British public's appetite for doing something to call it to a halt was partly vicariously satisfied, in the absence of a referendum of our own, by the French doing the deed for us. To some extent, the boil of the pent-up frustration of the British public about the EU, and their desire to interfere to do something to scupper it, was lanced.

It is well documented that the French 'no' posed the EU a new set of existential questions – where is it now headed? But it also posed a similar challenge to the anti-Europeans. The anti-European campaign has depended quite heavily on the perception of relentless integration. Now that that crutch has fallen away, they will find it more difficult to stir up opposition to it.

Anti-Europeans are of course still a powerful and effective campaign and they will still continue to oppose Brussels and all its works at every turn. But they will find it much more difficult to stir up public sympathy – because the public's opposition has never been so much to things that the EU is actually doing, most of which the public are remarkably favourable to – but because of their insecurity about a relentless conveyor belt progressively taking away their powers and Historic British Freedoms.

There is a second reason why the public and media are slowly becoming open to a different view of Europe. Public debate thrives on innovation and difference – and the media in particular don't, in the end, sell papers by reprinting the same story over and over again. For 20 years, stories attacking the institutions of authority in Europe – "Brussels' latest barmy idea" – have been a staple of most newspapers. But just as the public has an innate sense that, periodically, "it's time to give the other lot a go", eventually there comes a time when the public tires of reading the same story re-printed for ever. Eventually, this natural rhythm means that there has to be a new twist to the story on Europe.

These two factors create a potential opportunity for the British public story on Europe to take a new direction.

If the outcome of the recent negotiations, and the inter-governmental conference that will meet over the next couple of months to finish the work off, comes to be seen in the long run as some relatively minor technical and uninteresting changes to the EU's methods of working, then there is every chance that the British story on Europe might start to change.

It doesn't mean that everyone will become a convinced European overnight, and certainly not that the Daily Telegraph will start singing the praises of the EU. But the story might start to move away from attacking the endless moves to integration, and on to discussion of the merits of this particular or that particular action – much more like normal politics, in other words.

If the EU can indeed start to focus public attention instead on its activities to tackle climate change, tackle international crises such as Darfur, or its work on the Lisbon agenda, for example, then this could provide a historic opportunity to move Britain away from its anti-European obsession, and on to discussion of what the EU should do and how, not whether it should do anything at all. It would be based on broad acceptance that there are a lot of areas where the EU can act helpfully to promote the interests of all Europeans, including Britons.

Of course, this is far from certain. The outcome of the post-constitutional negotiations may continue to be seen for longer yet as a renewed move towards further integration. Propped up by this a little longer, anti-Europeanism, which remains a powerful force, would continue to hold sway. It would however just be postponing the moment at which Britain is prepared to take a different attitude to the EU, not preventing it for ever.

For although there is still a long way to go, there are already straws in the wind. Britain does now have one overtly pro-European campaigning newspaper, the Independent, which recently carried an excellent list of 50 things that the EU had done for us. Other newspapers are pro-European in a slightly more subtle way (the Financial Times and Guardian). And even the Daily Mail, on one day last year, printed a front page story all about something good that the European Commission had done, which would reduce mobile phone roaming charges for Britons (I was so astonished that I went out and bought a copy!). I don't claim that as a conversion but things are changing.

And anti-European politicians recognise it too. For all that they like to vent against the EU, there is now no longer a single serious mainstream democratic politician in Britain – or in fact almost in the whole continent of Europe, from the Algarve to Tallinn, from Connemara to Crete – who argues that their country should not be part of the EU.

Even the Conservative Party recognises it. I do not believe for a moment that David Cameron has changed his spots – he remains a convinced anti-European, and his party's 'negotiations' over leaving the European Peoples' Party and trying to set up a rival grouping are a great demonstration of how they have neither a grasp of, nor allies in, the EU debate.

But even the Conservative Party has recognised that, however much the British public might dislike the EU and want to stamp their feet loudly to show their resistance to it, the great majority of Britons recognise that it is our future. Cameron has acknowledged that the British public, in spite of everything, and in much the same way as they would never vote in a party which supported the majority's views on capital punishment, are not actually willing to vote in an anti-European party to govern Britain.

The EU's narrative is changing, and the story of British anti-Europeans is having, slowly, to change as a result. Much hangs in the balance about the speed at which it will change, but change it will. The question for pro-Europeans is whether we will be ready to make the most of that opportunity when it comes.

Jeremy Hargreaves is a vice-chair of the Liberal Democrat Federal Policy Committee and former chair of the Liberal Democrat European Group

IT'S STILL THE STUPID ECONOMY

Tony Beamish asks what kind of economy the Liberal Democrats should advocate – the one to attract votes, or the one which is most likely to save the planet?

Lynne Featherstone has put her finger on the crucial question that faces all political parties (Liberator 319); should a party that seeks to achieve power (and what party does not?) follow public opinion, or try to mould it? This question brings into sharp focus two of the great divides in the nation (and, indeed, throughout the developed world): first, the distinction between 'economic' and 'non-economic' issues, and the relative importance of each; and second, the question as to how seriously our 'economic' activities are affecting the global, social and personal environments.

The great majority of people do make these distinctions, consciously or sub-consciously; but the conclusions they reach are, in most cases, predetermined by the culture in which they live.

'The economy' is currently seen as an entirely material concept, which can be summed up in the phrase 'more is better'. This applies at every level – global, national, local, and individual. Hence Lynne Featherstone's argument that the Lib Dems should go with the flow, and put more emphasis on what she believes the voters want – more of the same.

'New' Labour and the Tories are currently fighting among themselves about their attitudes to certain issues, such as Iraq, immigration and Europe (the arguments about Europe are themselves expressions of the way they regard Europe; as simply an Economic Community, or as an institution intended to improve the governance of all Europeans); but they are united internally, and agreed between themselves, as to their support for the kind of economy they believe in. This is, of course, the 'more' economy.

However, a growing proportion of the community does not want this kind of economy. It realises that the economy we have now – geared to growth of GDP at the national level, and of consumption of material goods at the individual level – is impacting very seriously on the global and local environments; having disastrous effects on the structure and cohesion of society; and is not even succeeding, in many ways, to 'deliver the goods' it is so proud of!

The Liberal Democrats are sitting on the fence; we regard many non-economic issues as very important indeed, and are prepared to put forward arguments that are likely to jeopardise the smooth workings of the economy – in the interest of freedom of thought, speech, or action, or of social cohesion.

We are certainly streets ahead of the other two major parties in our enthusiasm for green ideas. But we (and I include here the 'social' as well as the 'economic' liberals) still at heart believers in the 'more' economy – or at least we give that impression to the rest of the green movement.

We appear to regard what are sometimes called 'zero-growth' arguments with great suspicion, although our multifarious green and white policy papers regularly put forward specific proposals which in themselves presuppose reductions in the rate at which our economy exploits renewable and non-renewable resources. What we fail to understand is that a growth-based economic culture, by its very nature, must not stop growing – and, if it does, it is thought to be failing.

A recent article by Jackie Ashley in The Guardian focused on the flooding in the Severn and Thames valleys in July. It contained the following:

"Here is the brutal truth: however good our flood defences, transport planning, emergency relief and so forth, it is all inadequate if we don't face up to the primary question: not "Why hasn't the government been better prepared?", but "Isn't our failure to respond to climate change by changing our economy and lifestyles simply idiotic?"

She also drew attention to the probable, in my view, undisputed, link between our socio-economic behaviour and climate change.

A pertinent response to this question was printed the following day, which included the following: "Our economic system is designed as if increasing economic growth were still the only legitimate policy goal. A low-carbon world, which can focus on making people's lives richer by means other than simply producing more and more consumer goods, is likely to be one which is more fulfilling and where people are happier." The writer was Caroline Lucas, Green Party MEP for the South-East.

Did our own press department see Jackie Ashley's piece? If so, whether it agreed or disagreed, did it respond? Be that as it may, our party does not seem brave enough to come out on one side or the other; we are, indeed, sitting on the fence in what is surely now the greatest politico-economic debate since the Corn Laws 170 years ago. For there is much more to the argument than the connection between fossil fuel use, CO2 emissions, and climate change.

Nobody would deny that our culture has developed as it has because of the availability of cheap fossil fuels. We have become hooked on them, and on the lifestyle they have made possible.

However, few people have paid attention to the fact that the fossil-fuel bonanza is coming to an end. If market-based economics mean anything, it is that, when a resource becomes scarcer while demand for it remains buoyant, its price will rise. Yet the great British public went berserk when this happened a few years ago. It is probably a bit more relaxed about the price now, but still assumes that there will always be enough petrol for it to travel as much as it wishes by car or plane.

But will there? It is not only personal travel which will be hit by the coming reductions in liquid fuel supply; our entire economy is predicated on abundant oil. Chemical feedstocks, electricity generation, and especially goods transport and agriculture, are all heavily dependent on fossil fuels. Experts in and outside the oil industry agree that the moment they call 'peak oil' is at hand – when the amount of oil extracted each year is not matched by new discoveries, and when output will start to decline. They do not agree just when this will be; some give us 30 years, others much less, even claiming that we are seeing it happen now.

The Soil Association has recently published a booklet called *One Planet Agriculture*. Its director, Patrick Holden, writes in his introduction: "[After Peak Oil] each citizen of the planet will have to manage (assuming equal distribution) with an oil/fossil fuel 'ration' which diminishes by 3% every year.

"Peak Oil is the train coming down the tunnel to hit us whether or not we take immediate action to reduce our carbon emissions. The cumulative impact of 3% a year adds up to a 50% reduction by 2030... The most frightening aspect of the end of the oil age relates to the production and distribution of food."

But the voters, and the political parties, just do not see it. Not a word is being said about the need to get more people actually working on the land, or about financial support for small farmers (particularly those trying to reduce chemical and energy inputs), or about making small parcels of land available for new entrants to the farming world, or about getting rid of the just-in-time delivery system – or, indeed, about any really long-term planning.

For that is what it is all about. A remarkable book dealing with this complex of ideas is Jared Diamond's *Collapse*, which is a comprehensive review of certain past and present societies and their relationships with the natural world. They all had, or have, environmental problems, and most of them collapsed; but a few did not, and of course our own society is currently very much at risk from its own short-sighted approach to growth, technology, and natural limits.

The book describes the similarities and the differences between our 'global' society and other societies in the past. He adduces a five-point framework of possible contributing factors for consideration when "trying to understand any putative environmental collapse".

Four of them may or may not be significant in any particular case; the quality and degree of the potential environmental damage itself; climate change; hostile neighbours; and friendly trade partners. But the fifth is always, in his view, significant; it is the society's own response to its environmental problems.

The vital ingredient for success in averting or overcoming the problem – whatever it is – is that the society should agree to make changes in its way of life. These changes are likely to be changes to the value-systems of the society, and therefore to be highly contentious.

So I come back to the dilemma facing the Lib Dems: should we follow public opinion, or try to mould it? If we are content to go with the flow, and propose nothing that could be seen as impinging on individual freedom or threatening the economy's right to grow, then we will certainly be seen eventually as part of the problem and not part of the solution.

On the other hand, we could put forward policies that would at the same time reduce inequity, help to combat climate change, and in the long run make people happier. But society at large must be persuaded of the necessity for such policies. As I suggested above, there is a growing constituency out there that not only does not need persuading, but is waiting anxiously for one of the mainstream parties to see the light. If they are voting at all, they will be voting for the Green Party – or possibly for one of the three main parties but for other reasons of their own unconnected with the great debate.

My own view is that they are disillusioned with the usual suspects, and have given up on the Westminster political scene altogether.

Tony Beamish is a co-founder of Green Liberal Democrats and has written widely on ecological economics

IT'S ALL IN THE LANGUAGE

The Palestinian territories are not merely 'disputed' but 'occupied' and so have the right to self-determination under international law, says John McHugo

Matthew Harris leaves me confused and very worried. He begins his article (Liberator 318) by contrasting what he calls an 'Israeli narrative' and a 'liberal left narrative' of the Six Day War, both of which he has written himself.

He does not attempt to produce an 'Arab' or 'Palestinian' narrative. This may betray something about his underlying attitudes, particularly as he also wants to deprive the boundaries of Syria and other Arab states in the area of the territorial integrity which international law gives to the boundaries of sovereign states the world over.

Contrasting historical narratives (even when they have both been written by the same person) can be a useful tool of analysis, but are only the start. If a commentator has anything to say, he must examine the narratives, compare, contrast and synthesise them, then come to conclusions. Mr Harris does not do this. Instead, he metamorphoses into an apologist for a particular Israeli narrative.

True, he expresses mild sympathy for the Palestinians, whose sufferings he seems to blame exclusively on the Arab states, and offers the most muted criticism of 'misguided' Israeli settlement policies: a choice of words which seem to indicate that he does not consider these policies illegal or immoral. I could find no hint of any other criticism of Israel in his article.

If dialogue is ever to have a chance of success, there must be good faith and intellectual honesty on all sides. Here he fails lamentably, for I cannot believe the secretary of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel is invincibly ignorant.

Three examples show what I mean. The first is a false statement of fact. He states that Israel has granted equal access to the holy places in Jerusalem for Christians and Muslims as well as Jews. I suggest he visits Bethlehem and tries telling that to any resident, including any who were born in Jerusalem but do not have the right piece of paper to satisfy the occupying power's bureaucracy, to go to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Dome of the Rock.

The other two are statements of historical fact, which are true, so far as they go, but are not 'telling the whole truth'. The first is when he states correctly that most of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were intended to form part of the Arab state in the original UN partition plan but were occupied by Jordan and Egypt in 1948-49.

He adds, "they [Jordan and Egypt] were brutal in suppressing the slightest stirrings of Palestinian national aspirations". Mr Harris is effectively telling us that Egypt and Jordan strangled the Palestinian state at birth, and gives no clue Israel had a part in it. Yet a few paragraphs later he is forced to admit that Israel also took parts of the territory intended for the putative Palestinian state. He does not disclose that the parts Israel took included roughly half its land area, most of its ports, its only airport and much of its best agricultural land and water resources. Mr Harris does not mention the significance of these territorial gains, nor the fact that, through a great exercise of moderation, the Palestinians are not asking for them back today. Does he seriously think Israel did not play at least an equal part in "suppressing the slightest stirrings of Palestinian national aspirations"?

He also states, perfectly correctly, that the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem was ethnically cleansed during the fighting in 1948-49, and that subsequently much was razed to the ground. This must be accepted by all as part of the historical 'narrative'. But he gives us these facts while omitting part of the narrative that cannot be separated from it.

The Jewish Quarter was only taken by the Jordanian Arab Legion after it entered the city to halt the advancing Israeli militias that had already ethnically cleansed most Christian and Muslim Palestinians from what is now considered 'Israeli West Jerusalem' but was then intended to be part of the international area which would not be part of either the Jewish or Arab state. Israel had accepted this international area when it agreed to the partition plan. Does Mr Harris seriously think that, if the Jordanians had not intervened, the Israelis would not have continued their ethnic cleansing of the rest of the Holy City?

He wrote to engage the reader's sympathies exclusively with one party to the conflict. Facts that do not fit the resulting narrative are either omitted or downplayed. He has descended into the blame game, but this will not do.

Yes, let us hear the pain all sides have suffered. Let us acknowledge those historical facts that are undisputed and try to investigate those which are still in dispute. With luck, we will narrow the gap between the different narratives, but this can only be done in an atmosphere of intellectual honesty.

And this brings me to my main reason why there is something sinister about his article. What exactly is he driving at when he says the territories Israel took in 1967 should be considered 'disputed' rather than 'occupied'?

He doesn't make clear what he means by these expressions. He tries to avoid using the word 'occupation',

preferring references to the territories Israel 'acquired' in 1967 or to 'holding' them. Why is he afraid of the word 'occupation'?

One of his purposes is to show that 'the occupation' is not the root cause of the conflict. I would accept this, if what he means is that it is not its source and origin. We all know the roots of the conflict go back much earlier (and not just back to earlier Arab terrorism or Arab refusal to accept the partition).

He seems to be suggesting that the issue of the territories Israel seized in 1967 is not the main question that needs to be addressed today if a peace settlement is to be concluded. Here, I believe he is wrong and that 'the occupation' is the root cause of the continuation of the conflict, although of course there are other issues.

Everyone interested in the Israel/Palestine problem should be aware that there is a battle for language going on here. The spin-doctors in the Israeli government, right-wing Zionist websites and propaganda tanks like the self-styled Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, are fighting a rearguard action against the use of the term 'the occupied territories' and trying to win respectability for their preferred alternative, 'the disputed territories'.

The expression 'the disputed territories' is woolly. All that a statement that a territory (or anything else) is disputed tells us is that two or more parties claim it. It does not tell us which has the right to it or, indeed, whether a particular party has any argument in its favour. This is why aggressors throughout history have used statements that a territory is disputed as a fig leaf.

We can only find out the strength of the rival claims if we carry out some legal due diligence on the dispute. Fortunately, there is sufficient in the public domain on this one for us to come to some conclusions.

The expression 'occupied territories' obviously raises what for Mr Harris is the unwelcome spectre of international humanitarian law, which he would clearly prefer not to discuss. Does this, and in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, apply to the 'occupied territories'?

Although the Israeli Government and supporters still bring arguments that the territories were not part of a sovereign state at the time Israel took them, and that Israel is therefore allegedly not strictly bound by Geneva IV, this position is untenable in international law.

Israel's public posture is that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the 'wall' was politically motivated and biased against it. There was unanimity on the bench of the ICJ that the territories are occupied territory for the purposes of international humanitarian law including Geneva IV, and that the Palestinian inhabitants of the territories have the right of self-determination, reflecting what is virtually a consensus among international lawyers who are not retained by the Israeli government.

There are two hard questions Mr Harris needs to answer if we are to understand what he is trying to say. First, does he accept that international humanitarian law and Geneva IV apply to the territories he describes as 'disputed' and that its people (and the land) are accordingly entitled to the protection provided under them? Secondly, does he accept the people of the territories have the right of self-determination?

Before replying, he should, however, be aware of some of the legal consequences that flow from affirmative answers. These include the illegality of all settlements for citizens of the occupying power, and the fact that the right of self-determination overrides any claim to sovereignty. The right of self-determination for the people of the occupied territories means, of course, that any territorial claims by Israel to parts of the occupied territories (such as the claim it brings to East Jerusalem for sectarian reasons) are inadmissible. Does he accept these legal consequences, and do the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel accept them? If the answers are 'no', I think we have a right to know.

Just as historians establish an increasing amount of common ground by debating different historical narratives, ironing out inconsistencies between different perspectives, lawyers do something similar when they investigate a dispute, sometimes even reaching agreement without the need for a case to go to court.

> *"If dialogue is ever to have a chance of success, there must be good faith and intellectual honesty on all sides"*

Sadly, when the Israel/Palestine problem is discussed, we hear little about the need for legal due diligence to establish the rights and obligations of the parties which are essential for serious negotiations to take place.

This is very odd. I believe legal due diligence would show that Israel must renounce its territorial ambitions in the occupied territories and that the parties should, using the 1949 armistice lines as their starting point, negotiate 'secure and recognised boundaries' as UN Resolution 242 requires. That would make possible territorial swaps to iron out the illogicalities of what was no more than an armistice line. However, this can only be done if the parties accept each other as equals in the negotiations. Judging by his article, the secretary of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel is not prepared for this and has not thought things through. The logical consequence of what he has written is that he prefers 'war war' to 'law law', if I may paraphrase Churchill.

I also think we have a right to know whether Mr Harris and the organisation of which he is secretary subscribe to the position of the Liberal Democrats as upholders of international law. The website of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel gives us no clue in answer to this question.

John McHugo is a member of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine and vice-chair of Putney constituency party. He is the author of an international law analysis of UN Resolution 242

SUMMER BOOKS

Liberator invited leading Liberal Democrats to recommend books to take on holiday this summer

Paul Marshall

On holiday this year I shall be re-reading one of my childhood favourites by Enid Blyton: *Five Go To School On Saturday and Do Mathematics*. No other book has had such an influence on my political opinions and it was the inspiration behind the report *Tackling Educational Inequality* that I recently wrote for CentreForum.

Graham Watson MEP

I discovered during the latest expansion of the EU that they have a joke in Slovakia. Only the one joke, mind, but it's a rather good one. So this summer I shall be reading my own modest little volume, the *ELDR Bumper Book of Multilingual Jokes*. Here's a good one: How do you make a Maltese cross? You cut off his subsidy from the European Common Fisheries Policy. It loses something in translation from the original in Latvian, of course, but you get the drift.

The Rt Hon Sir Walter Menzies Campbell QC MP

As a boy at school in Glasgow, I had the classics of English literature beaten into me with a leather strap; this has left me with a lifelong affection for the works of William Shakespeare in particular. I find that his plays constantly reveal new aspects to the attentive reader and often cast fresh light on contemporary events. This summer I shall be studying *King Lear*, in which a wise and experienced leader is forced to suffer the ingratitude of the younger generation, and *Macbeth*, in which a good man is driven to do terrible deeds by his overbearing wife.

Shirley Williams

I shall be reading *Zigzag: The Incredible Wartime Exploits of Double Agent Eddie Chapman*. It describes the exploits of someone who appears to be on one side in a conflict but is in fact secretly working for the other, while managing to convince both of their loyalties. Through amazing twists and turns, the double agent ends up by becoming an adviser to the prime minister, even while retaining their position in the highest counsels of his sworn opponents. The whole thing might sound far-fetched, but it has the ring of truth. Unfortunately the book ends before the invention of the nuclear bomb.

Norman Baker MP

Since I managed to sell my manuscript *The Strange Death of David Kelly* to a publisher, I have given up reading books: these days I write them. I am currently working on several others: *The Strange Death of Robin Cook*, *The Strange Death of the Princess of Wales*, *The Strange Death of John F. Kennedy*, *The Strange Death of Pope John Paul, Did the CIA Murder Kennedy?*, *Did Opus Dei Murder John Paul I?*, *Did Marilyn Monroe Shoot Shergar?* and *Did Shergar Shoot Marilyn Monroe?*

Mike German

I shall be looking forward to my summer relaxation more keenly than in previous years, due to the somewhat tumultuous debates within the Welsh Liberal Democrats in recent months. Obviously I will need to hone my skills in conflict management, so the books I shall be packing for the beach will include *So you reckon you can do this job better, do you mate?*, *Come on if you think you're hard enough*, and that old favourite, *Who asked for your opinion, you four-eyed Estonian git*.

Monica and Gabriela Irimia

Hello, we are the Cheeky Girls! Famous pop stars. We meet Mr Simon Cowell and have many gold disc. We read *Astronomy for Beginners* by your very famous Sir Patrick Moore. Now we can talk to Mr Lembit about what interest him. We say look at comet in sky or say with telescope it look like you can touch Uranus! Nasty old witch Sian Lloyd don't read this book. Too busy with sunny intervals yawn, yawn. This is big mistake by Old Miss Frump! Now we both Mrs Lembit!!

Lord Rennard

Summer holidays are out of the question for me, I'm afraid, since there's always another by-election around the corner. "How come Chris Rennard is always so well prepared for by-election campaigns?" I hear you ask. Well, funnily enough, it is all down to my summer reading! This year I can thoroughly recommend *Exposing the Sex Lives of Backbench MPs*, *Early Signs of Cardiovascular Disease in Ageing Politicians*, *Rummaging Through the Opposition's Dustbins Vol.8: Mysterious Payments into Tories' Bank Accounts*, the ALDC's *Bumper Book of Focus Artwork That Hasn't Changed For Over Thirty Years* and that evergreen classic, *Renting Disused Retail Property with Only One Disgusting Toilet in the Arse-End of a Marginal Constituency*.

Book recommendations compiled by Jonathan Calder, Mark Smulian and Simon Titley

REVIEWS

Murder in Samarkand by Craig Murray Mainstream 2006 £18.99

An honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country. When I read *Murder in Samarkand* by the former British ambassador who refused to lie for or to his country, I was moved to rage and tears.

Craig, a former Young Liberal and 1970s contributor to Liberator, does not pose as a hero. He makes no secret of his predilection for beer, nightclubs and beautiful young women, but as ambassador he also refused to make a secret of the corruption and torture he found in Uzbekistan.

After 20 years in the foreign and diplomatic service, mainly in Africa, Craig became British ambassador to Uzbekistan in 2002.

The Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's instructions were vague: "Craig, whenever you get to... wherever you're going... tell them I'm thinking about them."

The real unspoken brief was to back up the Americans, who were supporting President Karimov because they found him useful in their so-called war against terrorism. Craig was told to begin all speeches by praising Karimov as a force for moderation and stability.

In the book, Craig explains how he got to know the country, travelling far beyond the capital (apparently unusual for the local corps diplomatique), meeting the few British businessmen based in Uzbekistan and local human rights activists.

He soon realised that Karimov was the worst kind of dictator, running the economy for the benefit of his family while his people remained impoverished, and persecuting anyone who dared to oppose him. Worse still, Karimov played up to the American's insatiable appetite for so-called intelligence. His security services extracted confessions by torturing anyone who crossed their path or torturing their children in front of them.

As ambassador, Craig denounced the practice and repeatedly reported to the Foreign Office that intelligence provided by the CIA from Uzbekistan was obtained by torture. He argued not only that it was immoral to use this intelligence but also that it was inherently unreliable, because people would confess to anything to stop such torture. Jack Straw's Foreign Office responded that it was not illegal under UN conventions to use evidence obtained by torture as long as the UK did not carry out the torture. Even Margaret Thatcher had resolutely opposed the use of such information in her time.

The British and US governments wanted to restrain criticism of Karimov because they regarded Uzbekistan important as a future source of oil and gas (an alternative to Russia) and because of its strategic location in central Asia.

When Craig reported the torture, he was told, "We are concerned that you are overfocused on human rights to the detriment of wider British interests". When he persisted, it led eventually to his dismissal followed by attempts to silence and smear him. Craig concludes that the government is pursuing immoral policies and is prepared to lie about them. The collusion of civil servants and intelligence officers in this process is reminiscent of the German civil service during the Third Reich.

Craig stood against Jack Straw in Blackburn in the 2005 general election. The Post Office delayed delivery of his election address, he was denied access to public buildings for election meetings until the end of the campaign, and the local Council of Churches excluded him from their hustings. Craig complained to the police about a Labour leaflet advertising a rally with dinner for 300 people, 'treating', an election practice illegal in Britain since 1832. The Crown Prosecution Service decided it was a trivial matter.

If you still have any doubts about the moral bankruptcy of the Labour Government, read this book. It is a damning indictment of the conduct of Jack Straw, which may explain why Jack said, "Craig Murray has been a deep embarrassment".

David Grace

The Islamist by Ed Husain Penguin 2007 £8.99

A hangover from my fundamentalist childhood is a continued fascination with faith journeys of the "I was a sinner and then I found God" variety.

Husain's book fits the bill particularly well with the dynamic of a political journey through extreme politics and a different faith paradigm – that of Islamic fundamentalism.

Husain presents the book as an insight into the recruiting grounds and workings of radical Islamic groups, an examination of the risks of another terrorist attack after 7/7 and an attempt to explain extremist thought.

No doubt this works as a marketing pitch. The reality is that this is the story of a spiritual and political journey. The political journey is described with greater force and detail; the spiritual journey is described with more insight.

The book is written as a straightforward narrative. Husain, a Muslim, grew up in east London, was brought up in a Muslim tradition based in the Sylhet region of the Indian-Bangladeshi border, rejects the moderate faith of his parents and becomes radicalised at the East London mosque, quickly rising through the ranks to become a high powered leader within the Young Muslim Organisation based on the Jamet-e-Islami in the FE colleges of east London. He subsequently defects to the Hizb ut-Tahrir.

After narrowly avoiding being involved in the brutal murder of a young black Christian, he leaves the

movement, has doubts about his faith, resumes his education and marries. He re-engages with his Islamic faith through Sufism, eventually studying and teaching for the British Council in both Damascus and Saudi Arabia.

My brief précis completely fails to capture of subtle and gradual nature of Husain's departure from extremist organisations and Islamism and his transformation to a devout Sufi faith. Like all accounts of faith journeys, one longs for illumination on certain points and to question the perception of some events and their impact. As so often in this genre, the actual turning point is well described (the blinding light bit) but the actual walk along the 'Damascus Road' is less well explored. Husain is honest about his questioning of the double standards and thinking that are often required in radical Islam; the end justifying the means and his belief in the utter superiority of Islam over any other belief system.

As Husain describes this re-embracing of his faith, there is a richness and desire about his faith which is truly moving. One of his own few 'I was lost I'm now I'm found' musings is on the ritualistic and mechanical nature of his faith as a radical Islamist compared to the depth of understanding and sheer joy he has living within his Sufi paradigm.

Husain is at his best when he is describing his own religious and political journey, but this is not a book of great analysis on radical Islam and the issues that face the Muslim community in the UK. What this book does do superbly is describe what an Islamist government would look like and why its ideas have taken root so firmly among working class men and women of a minority community. The sheer aggression and self belief of adherents of political Islam is well described.

Also interesting was the description of how the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and Serb atrocities were used in radicalising young Muslims in Tower Hamlets colleges. However, there are a couple of startling omissions from Husain within the political sphere. Most obviously, there is little mention of the Taliban and their impact on the thinking of British-born Islamists, particularly bearing in mind the Wahhabi influence on Hizb ut-Tahrir. One longs to know if radicalised women really aspired to the lifestyle of their sisters in Kabul. And a theme only peripherally and implicitly examined is that of class within British Islam.

For any student of political ideology, especially Marx, there is much in this book that inspires discussion. Anyone who has ever spent time on the far left of British politics in the 60s and 70s will recognise – and possibly even reminisce – about the effectiveness the tactics and the energy of activists and activism. Those of us who survived extreme religious backgrounds will recognise the mind games and shudder.

Husain concludes by saying that it is up to British Muslims to reclaim their faith from extremists, but understands why most Muslims refuse to confront extremism. He blames in part the acquiescence of politicians and policy makers in tolerating intolerance and asks why should a minority population turn on its own people?

In response to this question, Husain is critical of aspects of multi-culturalism that have fostered the politics of race and religion – most particularly the BNP and Respect within the political sphere. At the same time, he is critical of aspects of British society into which Muslims are supposed to integrate, such as our lack of respect for elderly people and our culture of anti-social behaviour.

It is no accident that any debate around immigration is overwhelmingly framed in terms of economics rather than as a quality of life issue. The converse is true of migration. If our society really is perceived as lacking values and cohesiveness by immigrants, it raises the question of whether Muslims can ever truly live comfortably within British society. Husain sees signs that a distinct 'British Islam' is emerging. I suspect its direction and durability will be the subject of his next book. I hope he writes it soon.

Sue Simmonds

The Battle for Spain by Antony Beevor Phoenix 2007 £12.99

Outside of Catalunya (which arguably isn't Spain), Liberalism doesn't cut much ice in Spain. Attempts by the Liberal International, including the British Group, to foster a Liberal network in the country have not come to much.

Why is this? The Liberales of the Napoleonic era are generally reputed to be the first party to adopt the name. Yet despite the credibility of their role in driving out the French tyrant, throughout the nineteenth century Liberals largely betrayed their revolutionary principles and, while maintaining their anti-clericalism, became part of the establishment, with all of the corruption that entailed. The Spanish Civil War might be seen as their last throw of the dice.

As the Spanish monarchy spluttered to an ineffective end, the conservative Derecha Liberal Republicana, headed by Niceto Alcalá Zamora and Miguel Maura, brought together Republicans under the Pact of San Sebastian in 1930. Alcalá Zamora would go on to became president of the Second Republic in 1931, but was out of the country when the civil war broke out and chose to stay out. When the right won the general election in 1933, he called upon the leader of the junior coalition partner, Alejandro Lerroux of the Partido Radical Republicano, to form a government. Lerroux spent the civil war in Portugal, but his party sided with Franco.

As to the Left Liberals, the Unión Republicana of Martínez Barrio and Acción Republicana of Manuel Azaña and José Giral joined the Popular Front, Azaña serving as president throughout the war. Santiago Quiroga, whose Organización Republicana Gallega Autónoma (Galician autonomists) were part of Acción Republicana, was prime minister of the republic between May and July 1936, but resigned on account of his inability to hold things together. He was succeeded briefly by Barrio and then Giral until September 1936.

It needs to be said that these men were not cowards; they and their comrades had taken considerable risks in conspiring against earlier regimes in Spain, some enduring prison. However, Beevor makes the point that the Republic lost the Spanish civil war in the first 48 hours by failing to stamp on the military. It may be easy to say this, large sections of the army, the Civil Guard and

Assault Guard being hostile to the Republic.

But equally, fear of socialist revolution meant they failed to arm the workers who, until Franco brought his Moroccan troops over, were probably more efficient in their militias than the professionals. The socialist Largo Cabellero was able to bring more stability to the post of prime minister, but the liberal left continued to play a role in legitimizing the Republican government, not least in international eyes. Unfortunately, this does not leave them with much credit to pass on to their descendants. Suárez's Unión de Centro Democrático contained liberals and his Centro Democrático y Social was a member of Liberal International until its merger with the conservative Partido Popular.

Convergència Democràtica Catalunya of course had much more success in its homeland, but it was founded around 1974 by an activist just free from prison, Jordi Pujol, and had no links with any of the old Liberal parties. Later, Convergència merged with (or took over?) a party that effectively had certain links with the old Esquerra Republicana of Lluís Companys; the then named Esquerra Democràtica was a Liberal party.

At present, Convergència is (and has been in the last 25 years) in electoral alliance and party federation with Unió Democràtica (forming Convergència i Unió, CiU, the electoral coalition). This smaller party, the Unió Democràtica de Catalunya, was founded in the thirties, before the civil war, as a moderate, catholic but democratic party. Its leader and founder Manuel Carrasco was executed by Franco.

Salvador de Madariaga y Rojo, perhaps the best known Spanish Liberal in British circles, spent the civil war in exile in England from where he campaigned against Franco. Archie Sinclair certainly supported the Republican cause and sought to influence Churchill; he was also instrumental in setting up the Scottish Joint Committee for Spanish Relief.

Beevor's book *The Spanish Civil War* appeared in 1982. As he points out, it is one of the few wars that has been written from the perspective of the losers as much as the victor. The death of Franco was still a recent event in 1982, much has since come to light in Spain and the fall of Soviet Communism has opened up archives in Moscow.

There is also much personal or local history on the web. Consider for example Colonel Léon Carrasco Amilibia, who remained loyal to the government in San Sebastian; if you wish to get a sense of the terrible confusion in the first few days after the coup, look into his dispatches and communications. He was in due course executed by Franco. These have allowed Beevor to throw new light on the story.

The civil war remains important for our anarchist cousins; their gory betrayal by the communists is well known and now better documented; what is quite clear is that whatever end game Moscow had in mind (and it changed with the wind), the Spanish people and their revolution were just pawns. But anarchists have been betrayed by communists before and since. The real importance from the anarchist perspective should lie in that their reorganisation of latifundia agriculture in particular was reasonably successful in the circumstances. Their industrial organisation was frustrated from the outset by rivalries within the republican camp, not just the commies, so it is harder to comment on that.

The Spanish Civil War is a grim subject, the more so because we know how the story ends. Beevor's book will remain a standard in the English language, not least because it strives for balance – a difficult task when the nationalist side boasts it will kill ten republicans for every one of their side killed (and more or less achieved this). Those who boycotted Spain until Franco's death were right.

Stewart Rayment

Alfred Douglas: A Poet's Life and His Finest Work by Caspar Wintermans Peter Owen 2007 £19.95

Lord Alfred 'Bosie' Douglas is fated to be remembered as an appendage of his mentor and one-time lover, Oscar Wilde, and a poisonous one at that. But as Caspar Wintermans rightly argues, in this combined short biography and selection of the subject's poems, Douglas left a 'small but important poetic legacy'.

A few sonnets and the longer poem 'Two Loves' (which ends with the famous line 'I am the Love that dare not speak its name') deserve to last. And I suspect that, as long as the fascination with Wilde's downfall persists, so too will the debate about whether Bosie was the playwright's evil nemesis, or a sensitive artist much wronged.

The Dutch writer Caspar Wintermans supports the latter view. Moreover, he argues that people who have been nasty about Bosie are guilty of envy: of the young Lord Alfred's good looks, his aristocratic breeding and his literary talent.

Not surprisingly, the author therefore takes Bosie's side, and depicts Oscar's devoted friend (and another former lover) Robbie Ross as scheming and vindictive. The truth is probably somewhere in between. Neither was a saint, though I believe Bosie was the bigger sinner.

This book originally came out in Dutch nearly a decade ago. It gives a jaunty portrait of the major protagonists in the litigation that dominated the lives of all three main characters. One consequence was that Bosie was sentenced to six months in Wormwood Scrubs for libelling Winston Churchill.

Prison debilitated Wilde, whereas it seems to have done Douglas a world of good. He came out a much nicer and saner person. More detail of those later years would have given the book greater balance. But the inclusion of a good selection of poems is an agreeable compensation.

Jonathan Fryer

Lord Bonkers' Diary

Monday

This year's Uppingham International Film Festival opens today, and I am busy in my role as Patron. We have a particularly fine programme this year; notably, a series of lectures on the Liberal revival of the early 1960s and showings of British Realist films of the period, under the title "It's Grimond Up North". Beyond this, there is a strong selection of moving pictures: *Beith in Venice*, *Greg Mulholland Drive*, *For Huhne the Bell Tolls*, *The Colin Bulldog Breed*, *Braveheart* with our own William Wallace, of course, some episodes of *Mike Hancock's Half Hour* that were long believed lost, *Night of Mark Hunter*, *Danny Alexander the Great*, *The Killing of Andrew George*, *Adrian Sanders of the River* and many riches besides. The only fly in this particularly fine ointment is what to do with Michael Moore. I knew him first as a well-scrubbed young fellow who was often to be seen carrying Elspeth Campbell's shopping, and in due course he was elected to Parliament from a seat in the Scottish Borders. Something unfortunate then happened to him: he took to wearing a baseball cap, making films and, worse, telling all and sundry how wonderful those films are. I fear that he has not been invited. Incidentally, I met a fellow in the *Bonkers' Arms* last night who swore that Moore is now the Liberal Democrats' Shadow Foreign Secretary; but, as I pointed out to him, if this were the case, surely one would see his name in the papers more often?

Tuesday

The antics at Trent Bridge, involving as they did the scattering of jelly beans on a good length spot, cast dark shadows for those of us who remember Douglas Jardine's notorious "Peanut Brittle Tour" of 1934-5. I spend the morning in my Library writing a stiff letter to the President of the MCC demanding that he put his foot down.

Wednesday

What a worry these floods are! Today I visit Witney in Oxfordshire, where I meet the visiting leader of the Rwandan Conservative Party. A charming fellow, he feels it his duty to travel to help unfortunate people in other countries – notably those whose own elected representatives are not on hand to help. He also expresses a wish to meet "Ma Widdecombe" and I promise to put my good offices at his disposal. Incidentally, I was very worried a few weeks ago when I heard that Hebden Bridge had been affected by flooding. How, I wondered, would it affect the Spring of Immortality? I have since been assured by one of those fellows with beards from the Birchcliffe Centre that all is well on the chalybeate front, but this is a good opportunity for me to put it on record that my longevity and habitual rude health is entirely due to the influence of this spring; there is no truth to the rumours one hears locally to the effect that my great-grandmother used to dally with the elves of Rockingham Forest.

Thursday

A telephone call asks me to hurry to Bonkers Halt, where I find the Station Master in a state of agitation. "It's Mr Kennedy, you lordship," he explains. "We've tried everything. I've blown my whistle and waggled my flag at him, but he just won't stop smoking." English legislation does not pertain in Rutland, of course, so the celebrated Caledonian is at liberty to smoke until we reach the Leicestershire border, but he insists on smoking Golden Virginia Bottomley tobacco, which gives off the most awful acrid fumes – quite unlike my own Havana. I therefore seize the soda siphon from the buffet car and extinguish the former leader without further ado.

Friday

To Southall for a day's campaigning in the by-election. I meet a group of jolly Sikhs who, despite sporting Labour rosettes, are all decent chaps in their own way; I am grateful for the chance to practise my kitchen Punjabi. I know it is the height of bad manners to say that these fellows all look the same, but after luncheon I could have sworn I saw the same group all wearing Conservative rosettes. I return to the nerve centre of the Liberal Democrat campaign to find our people cheered by the publication of a photograph of the Tory candidate kissing Mr Blair at a recent Labour Party fundraising event.

Saturday

I was sorry to hear of the fate of Shambo the bullock – could not a good sanatorium have been found for him? Some have questioned the practice of keeping farm animals in religious communities, but here at St Asquith's it does not seem strange to us. For as it says in the Bible (and I think rightly): "And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den." We do not go quite that far – we did have a cockatrice once, but it had a foul temper and once bit the Bishop of Oakham on the buttocks – but we do keep pigs in the rearmost pews. When the Revd Hughes first came to us, he asked about the smell, but I was able to reassure him that they soon get used to the incense.

Sunday

Seeking respite from the hurly burly of the film festival, I go for a walk beside Rutland Water. I soon find myself in country I do not know well and the shore becomes unusually rocky for this part of the world. Eventually I come across a fellow wearing one of those hooded tops that are all the rage nowadays; he happens to have a chess set and challenges me to a game. I rather drift in the opening, and he soon obtains a strong attack. However, he rather overreaches himself and I find myself two pawns up. I return one of them to reach a textbook rook and pawn ending, and duly force his resignation. He gathers up his set and stomps off mumbling. So to the Hall, where there are crumpets for tea.

Lord Bonkers, who was Liberal MP for Rutland South-West 1906-10, opened his diary to Jonathan Calder