

Selected Articles from *The Individual* April 1995

Society for Individual Freedom

Since 2002, each new issue of the SIF's journal, *The Individual*, has been uploaded onto the SIF's website at www.individualist.org.uk as a PDF file. Before that, online availability was very limited.

To remedy this, we have reconstructed back-issues of the journal using only the core articles. We hope that you will find them of interest. Any comments should be directed to the current editor of *The Individual* at editor@individualist.org.uk.

Please note that views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the SIF but are printed as a contribution to debate.

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BYE BYE, EUROPE

Theresa Gorman MP

The EEC is yesterday's story. Created in the 1950s to meet the political needs of those times, its methods and organisations are as out-of-date as the postwar Attlee government. With its Euro-wide collective policies and its "us and them" attitude to labour relations, it's like watching that scratchy old black and white movie of Peter Sellers in *I'm All Right Jack*. He would have been wonderful in the part of the puffed-up pompous Mr Delors. No business organisation would expect to cling to the same structure and ideas for forty years. The thrust of modern technology enables people to realise their own goals through economic and personal freedom.

The Social Chapter would be more at home in socialist China where geriatric communists still believe that people can be programmed by governments onto certain kinds of behaviour. It is rooted in a deep-seated suspicion that labour must be protected from wicked capitalists who would otherwise exploit them.

Delors (and Santer has turned out to be no improvement) — whose idea of new jobs is another layer of Eurocrats — calls for Euro-wide Social Compacts to cut unemployment, banning overtime and sharing out existing jobs. He is oblivious to the fact that small businesses — in the forefront of creating new jobs — need freedom and flexibility in employment if they are ever to get off the ground. The Cohesion Fund, established under the terms of the Maastricht Treaty, is designed to force every country in the Community and every occupation in it into a similar pattern of hours and wages, thus destroying the comparative advantage of every country's specialities. Innovation is the lifeblood of economic progress. By definition it kicks over the traces of accepted rules.

The European Community was founded on the memory of food shortages — even starvation — experienced in the Second World War. Hence the domination of the Common Agricultural Policy to ensure that Europe would never again be dependent on imported food.

With Russia brooding on its doorstep, intent on taking over much of Europe, there seemed a real threat of a third world war. That, and the need to keep the Germans under control, provided a powerful incentive to adopt measures which overcame the natural reluctance of sovereign states to give up their independence.

But all that changed in 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down, the Russian Empire collapsed and, with it, the rationale for an artificial economic union. The end of the cold war provided one of the windows of opportunity which politicians love to talk about. But all we hear is the fear of Eastern Europe spoiling our rigged internal markets. Like some dinosaur in Jurassic Park, the Community lumbers on, peering in every nook and cranny of national life, trampling down national institutions. And attempting to convert 320 million disparate people into some amorphous new species known as Europeans. It would

take more than Stephen Spielberg to achieve that miracle. Little by little the EEC is destroying our lifestyle and draining our economic lifeblood. Out go the hedgerows, the butchers' wooden chopping blocks, and the Cox's Orange Pippin. In come the demands to take their forty-tonne lorries, which means spending £10 billion strengthening our bridges. In come threats to punish our fishermen for doing what they have been doing for centuries. Add on a whacking great fine of £28.8 million on our steel industry for failing to conform to the European rigged steel market and you have a microcosm of bureaucracy gone mad. British housewives fork out an additional £20 per week on the cost of groceries. Pensioners are forced to pay VAT on fuel as part of the European demand for a carbon tax. And we will all get a shock as our water bills escalate in response to ridiculous demands to take every last speck of nitrate out of the water.

The membership fee for this extravagant club costs the British taxpayer £50 million each week. The fees will treble when the Cohesion Fund comes into its own. Britain's largest earner — our bank and insurance industries — are being edged out of the City of London to Frankfurt. In exchange we are getting the European Medicines Evaluation Agency. Big deal. The whole thing is the biggest con trick ever perpetrated on this nation. So why do we put up with it?

We are portrayed by Europhiles as a small island clinging to the edge of Europe unable to survive on our own. This is a very Foreign Office view of life. Europe is only 10% of the world's population producing around 15% of the world's GNPs.

I have done business around the world for the last thirty years and I can assure you that there are enormous difficulties trading with countries with similar economies in Europe. But there are enormous opportunities round the Pacific Rim, in the United States, and in South America. Most of them still use English as the language of commerce and there is a legacy of respect — even affection — for Britain. Our reputation for honesty and integrity remains intact.

"Recession? What recession?", asked a Singapore businessman in response to my enquiry. "The economies of the Pacific Rim are growing 8% to 10% per annum. But where are the British these days?" There are enormous opportunities for us to sell them new infrastructure projects. Roads, drains, bridges, cable systems, construction, pharmaceuticals and education. The French and Germans would give their eye teeth for our commercial advantages. Yet we throw them away whilst cajoling our businessmen to trade in Europe. Now we have 60% of our eggs in one basket. What if the European recession goes on? How will our economy fare then?

Britain could be the Hong Kong of Western Europe. A low-cost, high-productivity, low-tax, high-tech, offshore island whose growth and dynamism would be in marked contrast to

the recession and sclerosis of the other major European economies.

The British are great individualists, innovators and traders. Historically we have always turned our eyes outwards, seeking new markets round the globe. But we cannot sell our goods abroad whilst protecting our own markets with a barrier of tariffs, quotas, and unrealistic standards. International trade is a two-way street. GATT — which the French oppose — is clearing the way.

The idea of Europe punishing us if we turn our back on its demands is laughable. We should tell them to go jump in the Channel. We have a £65 billion trade deficit with them, which

means — simply — that they need our markets much more than we need theirs. The EU may eventually turn into a free trade area but why should we wait that long? Let us reclaim our self-respect and our independence. No political empire has ever lasted. No political union, however big, is irreversible. But how to convert the Conservative Party? Under the present leadership it seems impossible; it would be ironic if Labour were to do it instead.

Bye bye, Europe. Hello, big wide world.

Mrs Gorman is the Conservative Member of Parliament for Billericay (now "mbipless").

OBSERVATIONS ON THE TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION INCLUDING THE PROTOCOLS & FINAL ACT WITH DECLARATIONS, MAASTRICHT, 7th FEBRUARY 1992

David Gibbon

According to a free booklet available from all public libraries, "the Government don't want, and won't have, a United States of Europe". The photograph of John Major on page one should be enough to expose this claim as a lie. But having now read my way through the whole Maastricht Treaty, I feel as certain as any reasonable being can that the twelve Member States of the European Community stand today where the thirteen American States stood in 1787. The only essential difference is that the federal administration will be far less liberal at its outset, and that far less than 150 years will be needed for Brussels to stand where Washington stood in 1937.

Bearing in mind what discussion the Treaty has already received, I will not waste time in describing the common European citizenship and the wide powers of compulsion set forth in its various articles. I will instead ask to what extent these ought to be deplored.

Now, I remain as patriotic and as proud of my country's past as when, at the age of five, I first opened my *History of England as Told for the Very Young*. This country was the birthplace of both liberalism and industrial capitalism. From this country was ruled one of the greatest empires — and certainly the most benevolent — that has ever existed. Take away the achievements and the example of the British people, and the world would be an incomparably more evil place, bereft alike of progress and of hope.

But note here the absence of the present tense. We live today in what was a great country. Our Empire, our power in the world, our comparative wealth — and far more important than these, the freedom from which they derived — are vanished. Our decline was astonishingly swift, and filled far less than the space of a single lifetime. But it has been accomplished. Whatever our grandparents and parents were — whatever we were born to become — we are the citizens of

an impoverished welfare state; and if present trends are allowed to continue, we shall assuredly die the citizens of an impoverished police state.

The European Community offers an alternative to this rapid and continuing decline. In one way or another, its internal market already includes the whole of western Europe, and will soon be extended sharply east. This hardly approximates to the whole world which was our market before 1931. But it is respectably large; and the treaties that created it restrain the protectionism that guided our trade policies between 1931 and 1973, and would certainly otherwise guide it now. Added to free trade is sound finance. The present Treaty prohibits excessive budget deficits and currency debasements. Again, this is a poor alternative to the fully convertible gold standard and balanced budgets that once were the unquestioned norm in this country. But it is a decided improvement on what we have suffered at least since 1945.

Of course, there are costs. We shall lose our national independence — or what remainder of this we have enjoyed since we joined the Community. We shall progressively give up the national habits and institutions that even now distinguish us from every other European nation. We shall be weighed down by an increasing burden of petty and vexatious regulations. I regret these costs. But once we look behind the uproar raised against accepting them, we shall see that they are often more apparent than real.

I have read much about the torrent of nonsense issuing from Brussels on whether carrots are fruit and on where window cleaners must pour their used water. I have read rather less about how these regulations are given substance and are interpreted solely by British civil servants. Enterprise is stifled beneath a mountain of bureaucracy — but only because we already have a bureaucratic state: stop the import of regulations, and the loss will be immediately supplied by home produc-

tion. Anyone familiar with the Environment Protection Act 1990, and the various forms of the National Curriculum, will appreciate the ingenuity of our own civil servants.

Regarding our national distinctions, these grow increasingly superficial. There was a time when — for example — the Imperial system of weights and measures was part of an organic whole. It was one of many institutions that had evolved over centuries; and what it lacked in abstract convenience was more than compensated for by its practical working and the feeling of community with the past that it encouraged and allowed. As with our Constitution and currency and other eccentricities, it indicated a respect for grown tradition more conducive to an overall harmony than the brittle rationalism that other peoples were seduced into accepting as their guide.

Today, this traditional cast of mind is almost extinct among us. The customs and institutions that proceeded from it are now only inconvenient. Without their nimbus of old associations, our pounds and inches are to the metric system as trial by ordeal is to the Napoleonic Code. Our habit of driving on the left puts up the price of cars. Equally, the Common Law tends to raise the price of justice — and can even make it harder to secure. So far as we now differ from our neighbours, we differ for the worse. Though a brittle guide, rationalism is all that we now have available to us; and the more European we become in our habits, the better we shall do as a nation.

All this being said, my comments on national independence will need little room. People have no right to their own gov-

ernment simply by virtue of their possessing distinct national characteristics. It must, before all else, be shown that their lives and properties will be better ensured by self-government than by alien rule. Of course, we have not brought ourselves to the same wretched state as the Ugandans, or even the Greeks. But our capacity to make good use of our independence is plainly in decline. I have mentioned the decay of our freedom. I have mentioned the incompetence of our monetary authorities. I loathe the almost certain shape of the emerging super-state in Europe, but I also suspect that it will govern this country with more benevolence and success than will a sovereign British state.

In the debate over the Maastricht Treaty, the British people stand much where the slaves and free Negroes stood during the American Civil War. The Southern leaders upheld the right of secession with endless talk of freedom and horrifying predictions of Northern misrule. Their predictions were only slightly exaggerated, and many slaves deplored the Yankee victories, and some free blacks even fought in the Confederate armies. Nevertheless, the Confederacy was a slave state, and its leaders' fine words were only a means of keeping it that way; and charlatan that Lincoln was, and racist bigots that his generals usually were, the North did have a greater degree of right on its side by most liberal standards.

I do not wish to be a European. Neither, though, will I play Uncle Tom to Lady Thatcher or her ideological successors.

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A BILL OF RIGHTS OR BIG BROTHER?

Brian Legge

We, the general public, are the victims of the Mass Media. Every time one listens to the radio, turns on the television, or reads a newspaper, we are at the mercy of the MIND SNATCHERS.

Whenever we read or switch on we engage in a battle for our minds. Each political party, and religious groups of all kinds, are after our minds, bodies and souls. Our minds are bombarded on all sides with instructions, thinly disguised as advice, as if we had no free will of our own. We can be any of the standard stereotypes, but not our individual selves.

They would love to enforce upon us when to eat, sleep, go to the lavatory, and how and when to make love. They want us to be all like dogs on a lead, controlled, obedient, at the command of our masters, reduced to quivering lumps of mindless jelly; automatons; zombies. Those who think for themselves or ask awkward questions become the main target for abuse [e.g. Norman Lamont? — ed.].

We are all on the way to being computerised and under constant surveillance and presumed guilty until we can prove ourselves innocent. It is assumed that we would become crimi-

nals or go berserk if they cut our leads. This could be true for a few perhaps, especially if they have relied heavily on religious values and an authority which is no longer taken seriously.

There needs to be something to fill the vacuum left by the ever growing change from the old religious values to the modern and more secular ones. A *Bill of Rights* is what we need. Individuals will have their rights defined and protected by law. Without such a Bill we are open to abuse from all sides.

In some areas the media seem to have taken on the role of government, judge, and jury by selection and sensationalising — the jury being composed of Ignorance, Prejudice, and thinly disguised Sexism and Racism.

It is not surprising that most of the honours, awards, titles, and Lordships go to the media and entertainment world because the public suffers most abuse from these areas.

But in spite of this influence, the media are effectively controlled in *serious* matters by the government. This is by two main devices. In the first place any newspaper/TV channel

which does not "play the game" can be denied titbits of inside information and planted "leaks" so it begins to lose credibility as a news channel. In the second place anything they don't want seriously discussed, politicians *et al.* simply don't mention in speeches and press conferences. That way sensitive questions of principle can be kept out of discussion and possibly awkward questions avoided.

A second chamber is necessary to replace one based on privilege and wealth which should be elected on merit by the public. [A "compromise" version of this was proposed in the September 1994 edition of *The Individual* — ed.].

Three bullies dominate our lives; the physical bully, the mind bully and the spiritual bully. We are all familiar with the first one. The second one — the Media — is by far the worst. The third is terrifying only to those of a religious leaning by threats of Hell and damnation if we do not turn away from the materialistic world and the sins of the flesh.

They teach that one should only have sex inside marriage and that it is against divine law to practise birth control. In a densely populated world what are the alternatives? Disease, starvation, and war most likely.

I believe that sex repression and not sex freedom is a contributing factor to crime. Of course this is another large area to cover, but I feel we need a more modern approach to the many facets of sexuality.

Certainly people should not be continuously spied upon and persecuted by puritanical sections of society and made outcasts, or be made prisoners of conscience because of political or moral views. Sex repression and poverty are two of the

main causes of crime.

Poverty of the pocket is one thing, but worse is poverty of the intellect and now we have a glut of it. People are measured more by the size of their bank accounts than their intelligence. The right to be and the right of free will and self-determination must be paramount in any Bill of Rights. None should be judged by race, religion, politics, or sex, but only by whether one is a criminal or non-criminal.

We are all under pressure from an interfering media. Everyone is criticising or being criticised because no one seems to know, or care, what another person's rights are. It appears to me that "civil-rights" is dead and that intelligence, free-will, and liberty are in chains. Only a democracy based on merit and a Bill of Rights can succeed and survive. The extreme right based on power and greed and the extreme left based on much the same in a different-looking package destroy the democratic centre in their eagerness to out-do each other.

Two ends devouring the middle is no answer on a dying planet. The main aim should be for all the world's governments to co-operate in saving this planet. Man is polluting the air we breathe and cutting down the "lungs of the earth" — the tropical forests. Mankind is largely the cause of his own suffering so men must learn to live together in order to ensure a better future. A Bill of Rights will lay down our modern "Ten Commandments" which would be more in keeping with the present — a morality made of the basic cement of "Live and let Live".

Brian Legge is now retired after working for 25 years in London Transport. His grandfather was an accomplished artist and Brian now devotes much of his time to writing and painting.

REVIEW OF PROFESSOR D.R. MYDDELTON'S *THE POWER TO DESTROY*

Dr Barry Bracewell-Milnes

The title of this book is derived from an observation by Chief Justice John Marshall of the United States; "The power to tax is the power to destroy". This is the second edition of a book first published in 1969. The new edition is not only radically revised and updated but also substantially abridged, for the excellent reason that so many of the reforms advocated by the author in 1969 have since been implemented.

The Power to Destroy is the first in the series of Armour papers being published by the Society for Individual Freedom on libertarian themes. The name of the series is that of a member of the Society whose generous bequest has made this publishing venture possible.

The author reaches his proposed reforms through a series of chapters on principles: progressive taxation; taxing capital; currency debasement; company taxation; avoidance and evasion; and government spending. This last is the key to reform.

As a proportion of gross domestic product (gross depreciation / capital consumption) general government expenditure was 44% in 1978-79 and 1979-80 and 44.25% in 1993-94, the last completed year at the time of writing this note; so after fifteen years in office the Government has not even succeeded in reducing the share of total output it appropriates for its own purposes. The more realistic comparison is between general government expenditure and net domestic product (net of depreciation / capital consumption); on this basis general government expenditure was, and is, absorbing half total output or more. What the Adam Smith Institute calls Freedom Day, the day in the year when the taxpayer stops working for the government and starts working for himself, is at the end of June or in July. After fifteen years of lip service to reform, government spending cuts still do not mean what "spending cuts" mean to any corporate or individual taxpayer, but merely reductions in the previously planned rate of growth.

Once effective constraints on government spending provide room for tax reduction, which forms of tax cut should have priority? Professor Myddelton identifies "progressive" (or graduated) taxes (the higher rate of income tax), inheritance tax and capital gains tax as prime candidates for abolition and corporation tax as a candidate for reduction and reform. The damage done by these taxes is disproportionate to their modest yields and their abolition or reduction would be the "best

buy", the best way of using a given amount of tax revenue foregone, both for the taxpayer and for the economy.

Professor Myddelton has succeeded in making a complex subject intelligible and interesting. This is a matter which affects everyone, and libertarians most of all. I warmly commend this book.

REVIEW OF THERESA GORMAN MP AND HEATHER KIRBY'S *THE BASTARDS*

Paul Anderton

This book was written in the three weeks following the House of Commons vote on the Maastricht Treaty. There are a few signs of this haste, for instance in giving 1941 instead of 1931 [p. 110] as the date of coming off the Gold Standard, and calling Edward Heath the Leader of the House rather than Father of the House [p. 121]. Also an index would have been useful in view of the large number of interesting people and events referred to.

But these are the most serious shortcomings and quite forgivable in the circumstances. The title is, of course, derived from the Prime Minister's indiscreet, but supposedly off-the-record remark referring to the cabinet ministers who were resisting European integration and the Maastricht treaty.

The account starts with the fall of Margaret Thatcher and ends, with the final defeat of the rebels by a vote of confidence, in August 1993. There are many frank and interesting comments on the personalities and behaviour of well-known political figures and associated characters, such as journalists. And, of course, an intimate and detailed account of the dramatic events surrounding the change of Prime Minister and the political in-fighting over Britain's place in Europe and the Maastricht treaty. A partisan rather than a strictly impartial

historical account, but the intelligent reader might, in fact, prefer this approach because appropriate allowances can be made using his/her own judgement.

Perhaps even more interesting, and significant in the long run, are the insights into the actual working of Parliament and the (supposedly) democratic process. Particularly significant are the accounts of the machinations of the Whips, the use of Ministerial appointments, and the prospects of knighthoods, to procure compliance with government policies. This resulted in numerous last-minute changes of mind and apparently paradoxical voting behaviour on the part of many "Honourable Members".

With one exception, due to legal considerations, all participants in the events described are identified and there are some revealing lists of members of various groupings such as Fresh Start and No Turning Back.

An easy, interesting, and revealing read which can be warmly recommended to anybody interested in the detailed workings of government as well as the particular events under consideration.

REVIEW OF PETER SHWARTZ'S *LIBERTARIANISM: THE PERVERSION OF LIBERTY*

Philip A. Loads

Easily the most important individualist philosophic thinker this century is the controversial and innovative Ayn Rand. Hated by collectivists, her clear systematic approach has given millions the "Philosophy for Living on Earth".

However, a little known but very important fact about Rand is that she totally rejected the Libertarian movement and saw them as advocates of a pseudo-liberty who ignore the essential philosophic foundations upon which a true individualist system would need to be based.

Essential reading on this is "Libertarianism: The Perversion of Liberty" by Peter Shwartz. Shwartz is chairman of the Ayn Rand institute and in this critique he identifies the philosophic failings of Libertarianism.

Beginning by identifying that libertarians do not hold a well defined and contextual view from which a position of anti-statism can be derived, Shwartz quotes Sheldon Richman, formerly vice-chairman of the (American) Libertarian party: "libertarian principle and the dynamics of social change dic-

tate that we be perpetual state haters"; and also from the ten points of the Libertarian party caucus: "there can be no other political objective consistent with individual liberty than the complete abolition of the state the idea of the minimal state requires the acceptance of a residual ruling class"

Libertarians, therefore are not anti statism, just dogmatically anti-state. And it was Richman who described the Reagan government's overthrow of the Marxist regime in Granada as "reckless and trigger-happy" and "having no foundation in international law"; further, "... the U.S. government should unilaterally abandon all *nuclear* weapons the desire to support the U.S. buildup is based on the faulty notion that the U.S. government is "on our side" — that it will use these weapons to defend the state; if libertarians truly regard the state as their enemy, they cannot support its holding of *nuclear* weapons". Well Hot Dog; if that doesn't take the biscuit; but how do you like this: Ed Clark, a former Libertarian party candidate; "in the libertarian point of view, we don't support any moral codes. We support political liberty" (!) This sounds like political correctness to me. What if I, as an objectivist, argue that I am a sovereign individual; will some non-state lynch mob picket my house until I change my selfish ways in the "greater" interests of a libertarian society? This is an important point, and Shwartz faces it head on; the concepts of reason and individual rights, he says ".... require a morality in which the standard of value is man's life. It requires a morality which recognises that human survival depends at root upon the use of the mind and which, as a result, holds rationality as a cardinal virtue. Under this approach, physical force — the obliterator of the very possibility of reason — is anti-life and is amoral. And liberty, the absence of force, is then indeed a prerequisite for virtue. But if reason is not a moral value, if virtue is based on dogmatically asserted duties or on subjectively asserted desires, then human understanding is irrelevant — is, in fact an obstacle — to morality. Which means not only that there are no grounds for barring force in human relations, but that force becomes indispensable in obtaining compliance with unprovable moral imperatives." These are crucially important areas for pro-individual debate, and ones which are never examined by the "do your own thing" libertarians

The uncrowned king of the libertarian left, Walter Block, who, in his book "Defending the Undefendable" actually praises blackmailers, is identified by Shwartz, not as the advocate of freedom as which libertarians blindly worship him, but as an activist subtly undermining standards of rational human judgement. Block lavishes his praise on pimps, blackmailers, counterfeiters, litterers, prostitutes, the lot, all in a "no-one understands them" adolescent manner. Never does Block put forward a weighty case for the repeal of laws against prostitution, for instance, he merely showers more praise on blackmailers and counterfeiters than he does for the struggling and talented.

To quote Shwartz; "Who qualifies for Block's accolades? Only the dregs of society. They are applauded, not in spite of their worthlessness, but because of it. It is because they are regarded as scum that Block wants to elevate them to respectability — in order to debase the very idea of respectability."

Therefore, the genuine, benevolent, pro-individual should think long and hard about the description they give their philosophic position: "genuine advocates of capitalism misrepre-

sent their own views if they use the word 'libertarian' to describe it. The term no longer has the positive connotations it once did, when it referred broadly to people holding an essentially economic defence of capitalism. While it is true that such individuals lack an appropriate philosophical foundation for their positions, they are none the less light years in intellectual distance from today's libertarians. They are not anarchists or nihilists, and they do not interpret liberty as the elimination of the 'constraints' of reality."

This is provocative stuff, well written, well researched, and in his parting salvo he concludes that "Libertarianism should be left to stand naked, to allow the public to see it for what it actually is, without any figleaf of respectability to conceal its brazen irrationality. Liberty is too precious a value for its genuine defenders to allow it to be claimed by libertarians."

A critique of libertarianism such as this is long overdue and has remained largely unknown to British free marketeers since first published in 1986. Reading this book will cause you to rethink exactly who are the true allies in the battle for individual freedom and liberty.

Philip A. Loads is the Northern Regional Representative for FOREST. He was a founder member of the United Kingdom Objectivist Association, and is the creative force behind the London-based rock band Izabella von Crippen.