

Britain. Incipient Fascist State

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I was born in 1929. Despite the prevailing poverty of the 1930's, followed by the horrors of the Second World War, there was a general spirit of optimism generated by the radical thinking of H. G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, and a host of left wing thinkers associated with the Labour Party. Despite the war this persisted, and led to the Labour Government of 1945, and I reached adulthood feeling that we had reached at least the beginning of a genuinely brave new world. Events have proved me very wrong. The only Brave New World around was Huxley's, and I read the articles about the impending decline of the U.S.A. into fascism, ('America Has Gone Away' by Paul Craig Roberts (ref.1), and the somewhat more recent, 'Does Fascism Lurk Around the Corner in the U.S.A.? by Danny Schechter (ref. 2), and realised that for some time I had been considering Britain in the same terms. I thought then that it might be worth sharing my thoughts with others; hence this article.

To begin with, it seemed to me that we need some criteria to justify taking such a view, and I thought it would be sensible to start from Tony Benn's catechism of questions for prospective candidates for power, and, to paraphrase, we might assert that the essential feature of any system which claims to be a democracy, is that the people who form the government are elected by the people they govern and serve their interests, and that the system of election allows also for the services of those who lose the confidence of the electorate to be disposed of. If we begin, then, by asking if the system in Britain serves these necessary conditions, it is fairly immediately obvious that despite the fact that we do from time to time hold elections and that there is a lot of noise about policies, and some new candidates are elected and some old ones disposed of, there are serious problems.

1). A basic requirement for a functioning democracy is an engaged, critical, and constructive electorate. To fulfil its role however, it is essential that the electorate understands the various threats which exist to its interests and to have a forum in which these matters are presented and discussed and its opinions are solicited. In fact as I shall argue, the media which supposedly have the responsibility for such a process are dedicated servants of a numerically small sector of society, for whose benefit they generate a steady stream of pernicious propaganda which suppresses criticism and silences dissent, and produces a supine body of semi- animate voters who cannot fulfil their proper roll. Without a properly informed and active electorate, everything is lost almost before we start.

2). Most of the persons elected to Parliament in the British system do not simply have an obligation to their electorate; they also have one to their political party. This latter obligation is strongly reinforced by the system of patronage and by the system of party whips, so that the obligation on an M.P. to act in the interests of his electors is seriously undermined. (How, for example, is a conflict to be resolved which exists between the interests of the party and a matter which an M.P. wishes to raise on behalf of a constituent? Clearly the interest of the party is the more important and the M.P. may have to be silent.) Furthermore, where the

party concerned also forms the Government, this obligation also becomes an obligation to support the Government, and this obligation may well be in conflict with the interests and wishes of his electorate. Obvious examples are the impossibility of arranging for the death of Dr. Kelly to be investigated by a coroner, for the activities of Mr. Tony Blair in the matter of the Iraq war to be openly explored, and for the appalling case of the destruction of the airliner over Lockerby to be properly investigated. This fault in our procedures is desperately serious, but it is never discussed where it matters. It is not, of course, in the parties' interests that it should be.

3). M.P.s have a variety of inputs to which they have to pay attention. There is the electorate, of course, but also there is the economy and the various organisations which affect it, and a whole deluge of matters deriving from domestic and foreign affairs. The paramount consideration in dealing with this welter of information should be that whatever action is undertaken to deal with a given situation is calculated to provide the optimum benefit for the electorate. It is a major problem with our system that there is nothing to require that this objective remains paramount. The concept of 'The People', in whose service the state was expected to operate in general socialist philosophy has disappeared, even from the mind of the Labour Party, and the system of values which has taken its place is not held to be a matter for discussion. There is not even any pressure for the matter to be discussed and resolved. There is, however, a system of value judgements in place. It is a system which is remarkably uniform across the whole country. It is a set of value judgements with which we are heavily indoctrinated in our schools and colleges and in our places of work and leisure, it is a matter for heavy propaganda in the media, and it treats the wealthy, the eminent the noble and above all the economically significant as much more worthy of consideration than the rest. Indeed, 'the rest' come close to being treated with indifference and even contempt. The existence of this system of values has several consequences:

A).The activities of M.P.s are directed towards the advantage and wellbeing of that portion of the society which is valued, and that of the rest counts for very little. Of course lip service is paid, but there are few Socialists even in the Labour Party these days and most of our citizens are cannon fodder or serfs to most of our politicians. In fact, the only section of the community which can hope to benefit significantly from the activity of our M.P.s is that section of the community which comprises what we might call Capital Britain: The Affluent, the Eminent, The Noble, and The Economically significant. Of these, it is the economically significant who matter most. The banks, the oil companies, the armament manufacturers, the chemical producers, the media, etc. etc. are the focus for the most profound regard and attention..

B). Because this system of values is held in common by all M.P.s, regardless of the party to which they belong, it ceases for most purposes to matter which party is in power, since the party in power is the servant of that group.

C). Although it is true that when an election takes place one person's vote is as good as the next, so that if you feel ill-used you can vote for someone else, the votes of individuals are pretty insignificant, and concerted action is difficult to achieve, (ordinary people do not have a politically audible voice) , so that it is difficult for one person to make any change. Plainly this is not an adequate safeguard.

D). Capital Britain has close links with similar groups in other failing democracies, like the

U.S.A., Canada and much of Europe. Such groups working together are in a position to control events to their advantage in other parts of the world like the Middle East, Africa and the Far East, and we are in the middle of an appalling sequence of wars, externally engineered revolutions and other, more local, disasters at the cost of millions of lives and billions of pounds to the advantage of the Capital Groups, and with total disadvantage to everyone else. Examples are the Iraq war, (for the benefit of the oil companies and armament manufactures), the war in Afghanistan (the same beneficiaries), the probable war in Iran, (the same beneficiaries) Korea, Pakistan and almost anywhere else you care to name, Egypt, Tunisia and South America. In addition to the major beneficiaries there are endless spin-off rewards for security firms, other businesses, and advisers on this and that, all floating upwards with the scum and the blood and the debris. We should be ashamed to allow this to go on.

4). Policies in theory are the constructs of political parties, informed by the input of information about the economy, domestic and foreign affairs, and the views of the electorate. In fact the influence of ordinary party members on policy, despite noisy argument in party conferences, is minimal, and even that of ordinary M.P.s is small. Indeed during my own short period as a member of the Labour Party in the 70's the rules on the input of policy making motions to Conference were deliberately changed to discourage the practice. In reality the only significant input to the construction of policy comes from the party leadership, and it is through them that Capital Britain gains its second and most significant access to the construction of policy and the control of events. It is at this level, in the cabins of expensive private yachts, in costly restaurants and clubs, and not at all in party conferences, that policy is decided.

It is in places such as these that the mutually advantageous intercourse between the great and the good and the politically adept takes place, to design the future for those who are entitled to enjoy it, and the rewards for the holders of office who are needed to bring it about. In fact there is not much limit to what can be achieved. Wars can be fought for the benefit of oil companies and armament makers; Prime Ministers can become multi millionaires, and the dead, hundreds of thousands of them, don't really matter. Most of them are foreign anyway, and those that aren't can painlessly be honoured by sticking a few more names on the Cenotaph. There is the question of what goes in the manifesto at election time, of course. A great deal of effort goes into making the manifesto mean whatever the reader wishes to hear, but our leaders are really quite clever and a few lies spread through the compliant media can alter the perception of truth. 'Sadaam has weapons of mass destruction,' they tell us. 'Were all in this together,' they say. And you can't get a hearing to prove them wrong and the M.P's who have the power are in the conspiracy to lie. In fact anyway, the last election shows very clearly that policy can be made on the hoof.

The establishment of the ConDem alliance after the results emerged led to a situation in which none of the manifestos had the slightest significance and the votes to establish tuition fees against the express undertaking of half the alliance, and the plans to demolish the N.H.S. which were and are opposed by the majority of the voters, show how contemptuously a promise can be treated. The contempt with which our M.P.s view their electorate is very well demonstrated by their election material, which has all the intellectual appeal of an ad for a soap powder. The Government is loyal to Capital Britain, and that is all that matters.

It seems to me that in respect of any or all of these matters our political system is a long way short of a democracy and that we are living with a power structure which is overwhelmingly dominated by Capital Britain, whose interests are the only matters of

concern and to the well-being of which we are deeply subservient. I see no reason to withhold the adjective 'totalitarian' from this society, and really it deserves not the slightest respect: the misery and loss of life and destruction of wealth that it is causing and which will affect all of us, (not just those elsewhere), is manifestly vastly greater than any previous regime of the kind has ever accomplished. Totalitarian, then, but in view of two other matters which I have not yet addressed it seems more appropriate to describe what is emerging as fascist.

a). the Media. It is clear, I think, from a great deal of the discussion which goes on in the web in such sites as Media Lens and Global Research, that there is a widely held view that there is no major publicly available news and current affairs radio or television channel and no newspaper which reports events in a manner free of bias. The reason that this bias matters is that it is invariably bias towards a rather ill-defined centre which is very close to Capital Britain, of which, of course most of the media form a part. This is not quite the same as the government, though the interests of the one are close to the interests of the other,, so that Capital Britain, in dictating the slant to be given to reporting, is not the latter day equivalent of Dr. Goebbels, nor indeed is it the voice of any political party or any other single centre of influence. None the less its voice is Funf to the media industry and what it emits is propaganda. Propaganda. There are books which describe in detail how the bias operates, (see refs. 3, 4, and 5), and I won't spend time here trying to summarise how it works, but the effect of the bias is to create an electorate of which the overwhelming majority do not question any situation which is presented to them. Just look at the litany of bland lies and deliberate misrepresentations emerging from the press and the B.B.C. even as I write, about the uprising in Egypt and compare it with the factual situation set out by Professor Chossudovsky (ref 6). This I find the most frightening aspect of the whole situation in which we find ourselves in Britain today, and it stamps the word 'fascist' across every aspect of Government.

b). The police. The horrors of living in a fascist state are already becoming apparent, and recent events have shown clearly that the Governments' view of the proper role of the police is a long way short of desirable. Schoolchildren find themselves 'kettled' if they protest against the imposition of tuition fees. The disabled are hauled out of wheelchairs and dragged across the street to encourage others to protest violently. Demonstrations are deliberately turned violent by police so that our bent media can show the public how nasty these kids really are. (And all this just outside the House of Commons, where lobby fodder are debating the cuts, but none venture outside to see what all the noise is about.). Small kids, (well, 12 years old) are bullied by police officers without a parent in sight for thinking they might have a little demonstration of their own against cuts. We have policemen in disguise joining protest movements acting as agents- provocateur, and going to bed with any of the protesters they can interest in joining them, to promote their credentials. We have proposals for I.D. cards to help keep everybody under control, and surveillance cameras to make prosecutions easier, and police forces doing funny things to sort out Mr. Sheridan, and more funny things to secure the future of Mr. Assange. And paid private armies of thugs involved in deporting and killing people who shouldn't be here. And all of it hush-hushed and not talked about.

Conclusion. Well; this seems to me like incipient Fascism. It hints very clearly at the way Britain is going. And I don't think it is the way it ought to go. It has no virtue - it is being sold to us as an inevitable part of the remedy for our economic troubles, but there are better ways of looking after the economic wellbeing of the country than thrusting most of us into

poverty and despair. It is good to realise that I am not alone in this desire. There are a few people in the media who are alert to what is happening. John Pilger is one. Jonathan Cook is another. There is also a much higher level of awareness on the web, where individual people can actually have an audible voice, but it is a voice which does not easily reach the world outside. Some people in the union movement seem to understand. The best thing to hope for in my view is that some of the Liberals in the Coalition see the evil that is breeding and bring down the whole shoddy enterprise. They could then go to the country for an election which has at its core the attempt to establish a system of government with a written constitution which eradicates the problems. It might, of course be very dangerous to play about with it. A lot needs to be said to make sure that the rules about access to whatever discussions take place is democratically decided, and that proposals are thought through with integrity, but it is premature to worry about that. If this does not happen, it seems to me that unless we begin as a people to engage seriously with what is afoot in some other way, there is no hope for any of us. Starving the poor to feed the rich is something we last started to get rid of at Runnymede, and it has been a long haul. We don't want to start again. Do we?

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