

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Break-Up of Tom Nairn?

Tom Nairn, *Pariah: Misfortunes of the British Kingdom*, Verso, 2002.
Hardback, 186pp, £13.00.

Reviewed by Andrew Coates

FOR SEVERAL decades Tom Nairn has been the Ben Nevis of The Nation. Peering downwards on the Isles, glimpsing Europe on the horizon, he has cast a long shadow over the UK's imperial yet insular "ancien régime", the Glamour of the British Crown, and the "feudal socialism" of the Labour Movement. His main refrain, Nick Cohen echoes, is that "Britain was a pre-modern state, closer to the multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire than a 'proper' nation. Its component parts were held together not by a written constitution but by a fading loyalty to the archaic and undemocratic institution of the Crown in Parliament. With the arrival of the European Union there was no reason why Scotland in particular shouldn't split off and join the ranks of small European nation states" (*Observer*, 7 September 2003). Emerging from Nairn's summit, a steady flow of books and articles, studded with literary embellishments, and transparent scorn, have lashed the Royal State's ageing, undemocratic fabric, and explored the renovation of Scottish self-rule. Lampoons on Marxism's failure to appreciate the beneficial role of civic nationalism reinforce the appearance of rocky Caledonian independence.

Pariah is the product of an "outsider" public intellectual, still largely identified as a man of the left, of unique weight. As befits a mountain of Theory, Nairn's silhouette looms large in many fields. His hinterland is broad, with degrees in Art, Mental Philosophy and Philosophical Aesthetics. Described as Scotland's foremost political philosopher, he has addressed the 30th Anniversary celebrations of the Scottish National Party, with a tenderness that contrasts with his acerbity towards

socialist internationalists. In pursuit of the neo-nationalist cause he has entered the creaking House of Commons to speak to the Scottish Affairs Select Committee.¹ On the *Observer*-reading centre-left, Nairn has had an enduring impact on campaigns for constitutional reform (notably through Anthony Barnett, the founding director of Charter 88). His influence can be seen in Will Hutton's once fashionable attempt to infuse republican virtue into Blair's premiership, and, through stakeholding (resonating through John Monks' TUC, and its puffing of "social partnership"), to reverse the economy's descending spiral. At the same time, as an original editor, under the Second New Left of Perry Anderson, Nairn has a regular outlet in *New Left Review*, and has shaped the common sense ideology of many once *marxisant* radicals.

The principal quarry of *Pariah*, as increasingly of the liberal constituency as a whole, is "Blairland". New Labour's last-ditch redemptive efforts to resist the ordinariness of middle-ranking Europeanisation, and preserve a world-wide commercial-financial base, are increasingly futile attempts to stave off an eclipse of British antiquated greatness. The result is a "degenerate parody" of Britain, and its "shrinkage and partial collapse" into a simulacrum. Having tapped this profitable polemical vein, the assault on political "archaism" is stretched to the global arena. Nairn now asserts that, despite modernist exteriors, the earth is strewn with ancient and obsolescent polities that buttress neo-liberalism. Not restricting himself to aggressively free-market Anglo-Saxon governments, he extends his range by a quick trot

through the latest products of France's still vibrant market in political invective. From having been used as a foil to British backwardness, the heritage of 1789 is now regarded as equally decaying. Nairn incorporates many of the – anti-Marxist – *Deuxième Gauche's* criticisms of the Jacobin Republican tradition, and the French élite's intoxication with “world-power delusions and vanity” (p.127). What is gained in breadth is lost in coherence. By extending condemnation of the pre-modern United Kingdom to such “proper nations”, *Pariah* has begun the break-up of Nairn's apparently resilient theoretical edifice.

Pariah was begun during the General Election of June 2001, and is threaded around Nairn's well-worn sarcasms against the Westminster political class, and the British protracted struggle against “normal statehood”. But too heavy a parochial focus has become untenable in the small audience for political pamphleteering. The furore around the anti-globalisation demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in 1999 had brought to a wide audience abundant evidence of a global movement, and reinforced academic interest (already mushrooming) in the phenomenon of globalisation. The “war on terrorism” has bludgeoned states inside the organs of Global Governance to confront the overweening ambitions of American hegemony. *Pariah* bears ample witness to the power of these incoming tides.² The Foreword asks, “Has ‘globalisation’ (inexorable if chastening March of Progress etc.) somehow rebounded upon its own forgers in the West?” (p.ix). We may reframe this: has bouncing-back globalisation implications for Nairn's claims about the “exceptionality” of the British State Constitution? Have, in a globalised framework, Nairn's reflections on the primordial reality of the Nation (particularity is a “universal condition”), and progress through a Constitutionalised dissolution of the United Kingdom, outperformed the Marxist perspective on capital and class formation? What are the *political implications* of globalisation for Nairn's preferred democratic nationalism? The (partial) answers that emerge in the pages of *Pariah* are profoundly ambiguous.

Whatever Happened to Constitutional Reform?

Before, and at the dawn of, the 1997 Labour election victory, the centre-left forces were united in the conviction that the time has come to enact a democratic “second revolution”. This would bury the “battering ram” strategy of the old left that sought to capture central authority intact. The objective was to modernise the land, devolve power (regionally and to the different “nations” of the Isles), and tame, by a written constitution

(with full separation of powers), the unlimited sovereignty of Parliamentary autocracy. Deeply sceptical about the prospects for success through the vehicle of New Labour, Nairn was nonetheless broadly sympathetic to these goals. For a while much of the British intelligentsia was overwhelmed not – as elsewhere – by the fall-out from the collapse of Official Communism, or the inroads of post-modernism, but by the apparent strength of support for this politically liberal venture. Only a minority questioned the role of judge-law in codified Constitutions, and its conservative potential.

Tony Blair's government, it is asserted by his party supporters, has enacted “the biggest and most rapid programme of constitutional reform in the UK's history”.³ Some of the most significant acts have led to a Parliament in Scotland, an Assembly in Wales, and in Northern Ireland, the replacement of hereditary peers in the House of Lords by appointees, and the legal incorporation of European human rights legislation. To no-one's surprise Nairn's hostility to the British State has not diminished. In 2000 he denounced Constitutional “virtual” reforms, built upon Thatcherite deregulated liberalism, “mummified economics”. With the liquidation of British socialism, we are left with an élite whose principal aim is “a last-ditch attempt at maintaining the United Kingdom by the formation of a pot-noodle ruling class”. In the end the “nations of the composite state” will end by “throwing it off”.⁴ However, he now concedes that, if the UK's “break-up [is] no longer a theory but a fact” (p.111), its progress is untidy and for the moment “cheap cunning” has won the day for “boundless central complacency” (p.87). Nairn admits, belatedly, that the British “house is taking some time to collapse” (p.87) – as a certain “Marxism” would no doubt say of world capitalism.

Many would agree that the effort being made to strengthen and overhaul legal and state institutions rests on the concentration of real power at the apex of government. Much of the Constitutional iconography is intact, a fragile construction, resting on a popular indifference and the midden of royalist sentimentality. Beneath the specious sheen of Cool Constitutionalism, the Leader retains Thatcher's “pro-business” creed (“the lasting achievements of the 1980s” – Mandelson and Liddle), dosed with an ancient Christian socialist “Anglican compromise” of hierarchical British communitarianism (p.29). The left, however, has not simply criticised “Labourite moderation” for “its wish to appease capitalism”, or “believed socialism to be mostly quite unrelated to constitutional matters” (p.56). Many have indeed come to realise that the rules that run the

state are of great significance. The problem is that these are changing in domains Nairn barely touches on: the division between a democratic public sphere and private interest is being entrenched in favour of the latter. Having spent most of his career pouring icy water over the “warm glow” of the past, Nairn has difficulty coping with the thoroughly up-to-date “secular faith” of globalisation, as its entrepreneurial heroes swarm throughout the finery of the British Polity.

It is evident to all that the architecture of the British State is being rebuilt. The mechanisms involved are complex, international and local, from the capital-flow driven hegemony of the “Washington Consensus” to the host of companies and consultants fed from the public purse. Of importance is the central place in the European Union of the Essential Rights of the circuit of capital (freedoms to move labour, capital, goods and services) and the weakness of efforts to pursue the claims of citizens. One thing is clear: whatever the specific role of New Labour plc and the Unwritten Constitution, economic liberalism, above all denationalisation, has spread regardless of state form, with or without crowns and coronets. What remains of the *sonderweg* of the United Kingdom when it has become a template for global privatisation schemes? At present Downing Street (with few directly productive state functions left to sell off) has adopted the American republic’s schemes to “reinvent government” by outsourcing public services. This, with endlessly mutating New Public Management, reaches into the heart of the “pre-modern” (that is, pre-market) and the most democratic aspects of the state.

Pariah displays ingenuity in trying to find a handle on this. He recasts (with little acknowledgement and less modesty) his state-theory and (partially) his Constitutional reform project. Nairn’s initial move is bold. The end of the Cold War has finished the conflict between rival economic systems (socialist and capitalist). What we are left with is the boundless ambition of *economism*: free-market fundamentalism. This has political props. Nairn writes that the political backwardness of UK Constitutionalism is “typical, as well as being highly peculiar” (p.148). The British State is both free-market fish, and fuddyy-duddy fowl. Further, that “the UK’s absurd microcosm rests upon the persistence of an *ancien régime*. But then, *so does the whole macrocosm of neo-liberalism*” (p.149). Indeed there is a “bewildering set of Atlantic seaboard political antiques” (p.151). Yet as globalisation is accompanied by mass migration (despite border fences), above all to the great metropolises, these aged states’ homogenous foundations are undermined. So, Nairn observes in 2003, “hybrid societies”, “myriad Byzantiums”,

and gigantic *Weltstädte* are mushrooming in every continent.⁵ The implication is that globalised fluxes sap the supports of the existing nation-states. But Nairn has a twist: this is not the creation of a borderless world, but the terrain for a new form of smaller civic nation-states.

Nairn believes that in these conditions the absence of an economic rival to capitalism frees people to fashion creative political projects. He then adds to his repertoire the collective awareness of the anti-globalisation movement, which is, he claims, “inherently democratic” and “inherently nationalist”, ultimately founded on “communities, or ‘nations’” (p.161). In 2001 Nairn announced his focus was “the terrain of nationhood and republican Constitutionalism – those resistant forms of collective consciousness and will which seem mostly likely to survive the information revolution and to humanise the ‘empire of civil society’”.⁶ As a “modest proposal” Nairn suggests a break-up of the British archipelago, “a ‘test-bed’ of emancipation from fossil-sovereignty, providential obsessions and the abscesses of radicalism” (p.161). This will be the seedbed of agency, as “modern” new civic nations will be built that “re-encounter nature. The resultant *rapprochement* is with pre-history and the bases of human society” that will lead to “political transcendence” (p.158).

This thoroughly modern vision looks suspiciously like the invention of tradition. Amongst the fluttering and louping shadows of the ancient hill people evoked in Lewis Grassic Gibbon’s *A Scotch Quair* (1946), we leave mundane concerns behind. As in the way of images so far above experience, we are no nearer finding concrete details. Nationalist movements have a mixed record in humanising civil society. Ethno-nationalisms in regions destabilised by globalisation, and engaged in a “survival battle with modernity”, have added another drip of poison to this process.⁷ However civic other forms of nationalism may be, they rest on the premise that membership of a political community rests on individuals being identical in some way, and that at least some national interests trump others. It is hard to see how this can be located within hybrid identities, global capital streams and migration, unless at some point there is a *demarcation* between those who belong and those who don’t. Nairn may eviscerate departure lounge internationalism, with its emphasis on abstractly demolishing national barriers. But it is hard to see how erecting new ones serves the cause of the peoples.

Nairn’s principal “reform”, through the dissolution of the United Kingdom into smaller parts, is, as a result, problematic. More dangerous snags arise from the nature of the emerging state, fettered by commercial interests. If the French Revolution

was irredeemably stamped by the centralisation of the absolute Monarchy it despised, what chances for escaping the grip of the equally powerful Privatising-state by further fragmented administrative structures? If the UK dissolves into “a collection of (relatively) small independent or near-independent states, eight or nine in number” (p.135), by what means will they disentangle themselves from much more experienced for profit or Resource Accounting bureaucracies? Social democratic projects for social justice funded by high taxation are already vulnerable to regressive competition for inward investment. Further dwarfed by transnationals, pressure on smaller states to adopt the neo-liberal *doxa* will probably increase. If decentralisation extends as far as nationalists desire, one could foresee the European Union presiding over a levelling-down of social rights through such a scramble for competitive advantage. Unless the emerging neo-liberal order is tackled, dreams of fine-tailored independent Constitutions heralding justice and vibrant civil societies are Castles in Spain.

Second Revolutions

Pariah is entangled in a much wider portrait of British political development, the historical role of nationalism, and a Second Revolution that will shake up the British ancien régime. I will not repeat in detail the Nairn-Anderson thesis (first set out in the mid-'60s), or its place in the Second New Left, familiar to most Marxists, and obscure to the most learned.⁸ Yet, without this backdrop, it is impossible to grasp the difficulties – from Commerce to Constitutions – that emerge through reading *Pariah*.

In a series of classic texts British pre-modernity was located in its early “bourgeois revolution” (Cromwell, and then the Glorious Revolution) and the rise of agrarian, followed by mercantile, capitalism. As Nairn still puts it, the “British state dated from the 1640-88 era” (p.151). This, while embedding the market, left the landowning aristocracy to preside over the levers of power, stamping a patrician mould on the country, and on what emerged with the Act of Union of 1707, as “Britain”. Under the Crown’s continuing auspices a “transitional” state had been thrown up by civil society, solidifying its enduring hegemony over the population. It was adaptable to overseas naval exploitation – colonialisation – which became by the end of the 19th century full-fledged imperialism. The First Industrial Nation was largely built outside of the state: the market conditions already established provided the humus on which it could grow; government did not (unlike in its rival states) co-ordinate and initiate development. Indeed its “founding moment” he

once wrote, “was the containment and curbing of the industrial revolution”.⁹ The (stunted?) bourgeoisie had no need for its aid, and reached a comfortable compromise with the aristocratic Parliament, ascending only gradually to direct representation, extending this even more slowly (in “homeopathic doses”) to the rest of the population. This, then, is the enduring “archaic state”, whose vectors persist in the unwritten Constitution, law, and a political system that subordinates the land’s inhabitants to the role of “subjects”. So aristocratic, indeed, that Nairn asserts that between Victoria and 1945 the UK was ruled by “a single hereditary élite complex enough to support different political parties” (p.33). One would be grateful for a Debret’s that detailed the lineage of this nobility, uniting Lloyd George and Ramsay Macdonald with Churchill and Bonar Law. Unfortunately Nairn does not provide a reference to one.

Nairn’s take on this perspective is also based on a *comparative* analysis with other capitalist economies and states. Up to the First World War many European lands retained similar features from their own “ancien régimes”. However, new developmental trajectories led them through a “Second Revolution”, a “‘Modernising’ socio-political upheaval” that would “recast” society, abolish all feudal fetters, constitutionalise and democratise. By contrast, the United Kingdom remained wedded to its own anachronisms. As Nairn stated in *The Enchanted Glass* (1988): “... this Crown-and-Capital land is not really a national state: it is more accurately described as Southern-lowland hegemonic bloc, uniting an hereditary élite to the central processing unit of commercial and financial capital.”¹⁰ A nation-state prostrate to the City’s hegemony, with its “extra-territoriality” in the “genetic code” of Britishness – trade and military imperialism – this is a formidable obstacle for Second Revolutionaries to storm! Given that the planet is now described as spanned by exhibits from the political museum (from France to the United States) a global permanent revolution is required to sweep away the historic débris.

Search *Pariah* for the forces a British Second Revolution is up against, and, amid the mist, some fairly outrageous claims emerge. That, despite elections, secret ballots, and Parliament, (relatively) free speech, all the paraphernalia of a flawed capitalist democracy, the structures of the ancien régime enabled Thatcher to lay down a system based on “unique *two-party* ‘dictatorship’” which requires one party “in unremitting charge” (p.26). That “Britain is not a democracy” (p.70). That the United Kingdom is “a diseased descendent of representative oligarchy, which has consistently

refused to reform central power democratically” (ibid.).

The objective conditions, Nairn asserts, for a new, modern wave of second revolutions exist in the dissolution of old multi-national states. Faced with autocracy (the dictators have not yet abolished the ballot box, or the freedoms normally associated with liberal states, but they are very cunning, as Nairn – above – admits), we can back nationalist parties. In *After Britain* (2001) he saw in Scotland that “self-confidence, collective optimism, a felt wind of change” were replacing the “underlying structure of the dismembered nation”.¹¹ Is this truly the force (and not at present a rising one) to confront an oligarchy whose power base in post-Imperial financial and commercial outreach is everywhere bolted into global capital? Will this disappear under the ban of Holyrood? Will the Welsh valleys cast off the yoke of international capital when they have a genuine Assembly? Scepticism about this has already been expressed. It grows with every dirge at the coming demise of Westminster.

Hostility to centralisation is as often the watchword of local cliques as of democratic aspiration. As John Stuart Mill once stated, of British “un-reasoning prejudice” of central reform, it is often “a blind feeling preventing or resisting even the most beneficial exertion of legislative authority to correct the abuses of what pretends to be local self-government, but is, too often, selfish mismanagement of local interest, by a jobbing and *borné* local oligarchy”.¹² It by no means certain that eight or nine (why restrict the number, what of the Napoleon of Notting Hill?) smaller states will escape this, if the record of municipal life in the UK post-Mill is anything to go by. And there are deeper difficulties. The principle of republican *equality* stresses a growing set of universal rights, not particularism. A common political authority makes this possible. A European-wide republic would try to equalise social legislation and material conditions. By its nature it is absolutely impossible to imagine any form of devolved government playing such an equalising role.

By contrast modern republican states, which aspire to equality, fraternity and liberty, are, according to Nairn, contaminated. Nairn deconstructs with zest a political heritage often felt to be the stem of modern Constitutional statehood: French republicanism. The Fifth Republic is run by “gangs”, not unlike the UK with its fixation with a global mission of Greatness, and “parallel with the anachronistic structure and statist attitudes of late ‘Britain’” (p.130). Nairn cites Jean-Marie Colombani’s *Les Infortunes de la République* (2002). This celebrates “differences and particularities” in the face of “un pouvoir unique,

omniscient et omnipotent en ultime rempart de la République” – an illusion which is the “le dernier avatar du bonapartisme industriel et, de ce fait, l’antichambre de la corruption et du trafic d’influences”.¹³ He could have referred to dozens of other near identical political pot-boilers: all straining at the leash to bite the head off the French élite in the name of civil society and decentralisation. But Nairn ignores the more interesting of these thinkers influenced by Alexis de Tocqueville’s second most famous book, *L’Ancien Régime et la révolution* (1856) (which revealed the debt of the First Republic to Monarchic Absolutism). That is the attempt, notably by Pierre Rosanvallon, to explore the “crisis of representation” of France, with the populist and media-led “people-opinion, le peuple-exclusion, et le peuple-émotion” taking the place of civil bodies capable of rationally and autonomously influencing the state.¹⁴ This is not la faute à Robespierre. A Marxist might consider that the causes of this development of a disembodied “people” lie in the deformation of the republic by globalising capitalism. From the decline of mass political parties, to the shaping of the state for capital’s needs at the expense of the old social-democratic compromises, the glue that held the Republic together, its “social” character, has begun to melt.

Largely ignoring the social movement that has grown in France since the great strikes of the mid-’90s, Nairn concentrates on one contradiction within the French state that corresponds to his own preoccupations: decentralisation. The attempt to give Corsica a large degree of autonomy attracted furious opposition from a variety of republicans, many from the socialist and also the old left-radical traditions that retain a base on the island. The successful resistance to Corsican autonomy (a stand for Nairn that symbolises the reactionary centralism of France’s political class) from those *in situ* reflected fears of a selfish outcome more dire than that sketched by John Stuart Mill. Perhaps Nairn has not delved deep enough to discover the violent Mafia behind the *indépendantists* of la belle île. Or maybe Nairn is simply rendered myopic by his fondness for “pre-history and the bases of human society” and, more than a dose of Barrès, by his loathing of the “déracinés” of the rationalist Republic.

Conclusion: Different Modernities

Pariah concentrates on the political contradictions inherent in the British State. Its focus is on its Imperial, aristocratic, anti-democratic, historical legacy, superautonomy, and failure to adapt to modernity. All are features undergoing profound change. For Nairn the universal domination of the “dismal science” of “reactionary economism”,

has “caused retrograde states and paleo-economics to bond” (pp.154, 155). From another standpoint neo-liberalism may be seen as far from archaic: it is the conscious development to the limit of tendencies inherent within capitalism. Blair’s inner Court appears carried away with this highly ambitious aim of attaining what Marx called the “highest development of capital”. That is when “capital has subjugated all conditions of capital production to itself”. Circumstances in which “social productive wealth has been *capitalized*, and all needs are satisfied through the exchange form; as well as the extent to which the *socially posited* needs of the individual ... are likewise not only consumed but also produced through exchange, individual exchange”.¹⁵ Perhaps we have yet to attain the neo-liberal utopia in which the “real community” is “constituted in the form of capital”. We certainly engage in private exchanges for many formerly public services (utilities, transport). Today’s dominant trend, however, is towards transactions between state and company, a transfer of un-productive (in Marx’s sense) activities to Capital (Contracting-Out, Public-Private Partnerships), financed through the market, but underwritten, and eventually paid for, by public revenue. These developments are not specific to Britain: they are at the core of capitalist state formation across the globe.

Faced with his own assessment of global changes Nairn focuses on national identity as “a necessary condition of tolerable modernisation”. In his latest pronouncements this is democratic nationalism, “interlocking human experience”, in tune with true globalisation, opposed to the “legacy of Empire” incarnated in the United States and “cosmocracy” (cosmopolitan élites).¹⁶ *Pariah’s* criticisms of the “metaphysics of globalisation” rest on challenging the “supposed dissolution of nations”, as opposed to an “actual extension of the world market and transnational industry” (p.156). We should, by contrast, follow Emmanuel Todd’s affirmation of nationality as the source of agency. In his *L’Illusion économique* (1999), Todd calls for “un protectionnisme intelligent” which Nairn translates as “protection” (p.156). This should be “intelligent”, allying economic and social protection, yet not hostile to private enterprise and the free circulation of capital, with flexible exchange rates.¹⁷ Nairn does elaborate on the details of these less-than-modest proposals, or on whether his national agents should follow suit. One assumes, however, that, as for Todd, since the extension of the world market is ineluctable, he favours what is in effect a moderate nationalist version of the “reform and regulate” stand on globalisation.

Pariah, however, does not primarily convince

anyone for a comprehensive course of action – a middle-of-the-road prudential nationalism – but tries to overwhelm with revolutionary rhetoric. The reader is wearied by constant recourse to striking and radical phrases. Proud of his label, “Ukania” (by analogy with Robert Musil’s description of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as Kakania), for decades Nairn has rarely missed an opportunity to wheel out that cack-handed comparison between the UK and a genuinely feudal régime. What serious links are given between globalisation, neo-liberalism, state backwardness, and the failings of New Labour, are similarly decked with distracting fioriture, the “ancien régime” birthing a family of Unwritten Mysteries, and, now, Blairland.

In *Immortality* (1991) Milan Kundera described the process by which socialist doctrine was simplified by its ideologues down to a collection of six or seven slogans and images, different coloured hands linked together, the dove of peace rising to the sky.¹⁸ No-one would accuse Nairn of simplicity. Yet, like any ideologue, he never seriously considers alternative views. For example, that the equality of a collective identity within a universalist social republic might be preferable to the “obverse of democracy”: a self-harnessed to group particularity. Or that a social system that extends democratic control over the economy can’t be one that leaves small polities and nationalism at the mercy of capital. That economy is not one ideological “ism” that will automatically evaporate with the political and cultural hegemony of another, nationalism. Or that repeating the same attacks on the “ancien régime”, Parliamentary Sovereignty, Great Britishness, Labourism and international socialism may tarnish their objects, but only obscures the dilemma of a thinker whose central thesis, that these are “exceptional features” of the United Kingdom, is breaking up and being redefined in the face of neo-liberal globalisation. In the end we are left with only one unchanged image: Nairn holding on to the Saltire.

Notes

1. “... Scotland’s most influential political philosopher ...”: Neal Ascherson, *Stone Voices*, Granta Books 2002, p.105. Speech to the SNP and submission to the Commons Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, in Tom Nairn, *After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland*, Granta Books 2001.
2. The academic debate is well summarised in David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldman and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations*, Polity Press 1999.
3. *Democracy, Political Engagement Citizenship and*

- Equalities*, National Policy Forum Consultation Document Labour Party, May 2003, p.13.
4. Tom Nairn, 'Ukania under Blair', *New Left Review* (Second Series) No.1, Jan/Feb 2000, p.93.
 5. Tom Nairn, 'A Myriad Byzantiums', *New Left Review* No.23 (Second Series), Sept/Oct 2003.
 6. Tom Nairn, 'Post-Ukania', *New Left Review* (Second Series) No.7, Jan/Feb 2001, p.71.
 7. Tom Nairn, 'Reflections on Nationalist Disasters', *New Left Review* (First Series) No.230, July/August 1998. Nairn's most virulent defence of nationalism and attack on socialist internationalism is in *Two Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited*, Verso 1997. A substantial critique of Nairn's views on nationalism is presented in Joan Cocks, *Passion and Paradox*, Princeton University Press 2002.
 8. See notably: Tom Nairn, 'The English Working Class', in Robin Blackburn, ed., *Ideology in Social Science*, Fontana 1972. Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, New Left Books 1977. E.P.Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English', in *The Poverty of Theory*, Merlin Press 1978. Michael Barratt Brown, 'Away With All Great Arches', *New Left Review* (First Series), No.167, Jan/Feb 1988. Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism*, Verso 1991. Perry Anderson, *English Questions*, Verso 1992. Lin Chun, *The British New Left*, Edinburgh University Press 1993.
 9. Tom Nairn, 'The Future of Britain's Crises', *New Left Review* (First Series) No.113-14, Jan/April 1979.
 10. Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy*, Radius 1998, p.243.
 11. Nairn, *After Britain*, pp.112, 102.
 12. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, Oxford University Press 1963, p.163.
 13. Jean-Marie Colombani, *Les infortunes de la République*, Gallimard 2002, p.167.
 14. For a typical Deuxième Gauche, and media-ideologue, pot-boiler see Jacques Julliard, *La Faute aux élites*, Gallimard 1997. More interesting is as cited: Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Peuple introuvable*, Gallimard 1998, p.448.
 15. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, Penguin 1974, p.532.
 16. On Open Democracy Forum: <http://www.opendemocracy.net>
 17. Emmanuel Todd, *L'illusion économique*, Gallimard 1999, p.383.
 18. Milan Kundera, *Immortality*, Faber & Faber 1991, p.127.

Coming Soon from Berghahn Books

SARTRE AGAINST STALINISM

Ian H. Birchall

"... an outstanding contribution to Sartre studies. There is nothing quite like it, and Birchall's scholarship is formidable ... The author has an mastery of his topic, the deep intellectual and political background needed for this study, and has gone into the many sources needed to answer his questions." Ron Aronson, Wayne State University

Most critics of the political evolution of Jean-Paul Sartre have laid emphasis on his allegedly sympathetic and uncritical attitude to Stalinist Communism due, to a large extent, to their equation of Marxism with Stalinism. It is true that Sartre was guilty of many serious misjudgements with regard to the USSR and the French Communist Party, but his relationship with the Marxist Left was much more complex and contradictory than most accounts admit. This book offers a political defence of Sartre and shows how, from a relatively apolitical stance in the 1930s, Sartre became involved in the politics of the Left; though he always distrusted Stalinism, he was sometimes driven to ally himself with it. Sartre was repelled by the Communist Party, yet powerfully drawn to it; he was unable to throw in his lot with the anti-Stalinist left, yet equally unable to disregard the force of its argument. *Sartre Against Stalinism* demonstrates that the continuing debate with the anti-Stalinist Left was an essential component of Sartre's political development, and provides an important key to the understanding of his work as a whole.

Ian Birchall, formerly Senior Lecturer in French at Middlesex University, is now an independent writer. His books include *Workers Against the Monolith* (Pluto, 1987) and *The Spectre of Babeuf* (Macmillan, 1997). He has translated works by Alfred Rosmer and Victor Serge and has published numerous articles and reviews, especially on French literature and on the history of socialism.

For details email: salesuk@berghahnbooks.com

Tom Nairn, *The Break up of Britain, Crisis and Neo-nationalism* (1977). This is a preview of subscription content, log in to check access. Cite this chapter as: Johnson R.W. (1985) Tom Nairn and the Break-up of Britain. In: *The Politics of Recession*. Palgrave, London. As Tom Nairn writes, "only a few years ago, the break-up of Britain was almost inconceivable". Not so much anymore. However, these words weren't written in 2019, but 1977. In this, the return of Verso's Weekend Reads, we republish Tom Nairn classic account of the nature, and the twilight, of the British state. Verso recommends. Marx. Sceptics have argued that the Break-Up thesis has been invalidated because the United Kingdom is still together all these years later. However, what Nairn shows us is that the present day nature of the country is untenable, and that devolution is too late and too small a change to alter power, culture and identities across these isles. The continuation of the UK in its present form, Nairn believes, is at a cost to all of us within it, and the wider world. Given the Blairite liberal imperialist project " which has seen the UK involved in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq " has contribu