

Patriotism in the hands of the labour movement is a powerful weapon. Patriotism in the hands of the Right is fraught with danger. The Falklands war sounded some alarm bells which the Left ignores at its peril.

Eric Hobsbawm
Falklands Fallout



More has been talked about the Falklands than about any other recent issue in British and international politics and more people lost their marbles about this than about almost anything else. I don't mean the great bulk of the people, whose reactions were

This article is an edited version of a talk given at the recent Moving Left Show organised by *Marxism Today*.

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probably considerably less passionate or hysterical than those whose business it is to write, and formulate opinions.

I want to say very little indeed about the origins of the Falklands war because that

war actually had very little to do with the Falklands. Hardly anybody knew about the Falklands. I suppose the number of people in this country who had any personal relations with the Falklands or even knew anybody who had been there, is minimal.

The 1680 natives of these islands were very nearly the only people who took an urgent interest in the Falklands, apart of course from the Falkland Island Company,

which owns a good deal of it, ornithologists and the Scott Polar Research Institute, since the islands are the basis of all the research activities in the Antarctic. They were never very important, or at least they haven't been since World War I or perhaps just the beginning of World War II.

They were so insignificant and so much out of the centre of interest, that Parliament let the running be made by about a dozen MPs, the Falklands lobby, which was politically a very, very mixed lot. They were allowed to stymie all the not very urgent efforts of the Foreign Office to settle the problem of the islands' future. Since the government and everybody else found the Falklands totally without interest, the fact that they were of urgent interest in Argentina, and to some extent in Latin America as a whole was overlooked. They were indeed far from insignificant to the Argentines. They were a symbol of Argentine nationalism, especially since Peron. We could put the Falklands problem off for ever, or we thought we could, but not the Argentinians.

A question of neglect

Now, I'm not judging the validity of the Argentine claim. Like so many nationalist claims it can't bear much investigation. Essentially it's based on what you might call 'secondary school geography' — anything that belongs to the continental shelf ought to belong to the nearest country — in spite of the fact that no Argentines had ever actually lived there. Nevertheless we're bound to say that the Argentine claim is almost certainly rather stronger than the British claim and has internationally been regarded as rather stronger. The Americans for instance never accepted the British claim, whose official justification changed from time to time. But the point isn't to decide which claim is stronger. The point is that, for the British government, the Falklands were about as low as they could be on its list of priorities. And it was totally ignorant of Argentine and Latin American views, which are not merely those of the junta but of all Latin America.

As a result it managed, by withdrawing the one armed ship, *The Endurance*, which had always been there symbolically indicating that you couldn't take the Falklands over, to suggest to the Argentinian junta that the UK wouldn't resist. The Argentine generals, who were patently crazy and inefficient as well as nasty, decided to go ahead with the invasion. But for mismanagement by the UK government, the Argentine government would pretty certainly not have decided to invade. They miscalculated and they should never have invaded but it's perfectly clear that the British government

actually precipitated the situation, even though it did not mean to. And so, on April 3 the British people discovered that the Falklands had been invaded and occupied. The Government should have known that an invasion was imminent, but claimed it didn't, or at any rate if it did know it took no action. This is of course being investigated at the moment by the Franks Commission.

An upsurge of popular feeling

But what was the situation in Britain when war broke out and during the war itself? Let me try and summarise it fairly briefly. The first thing that happened was an almost universal sense of outrage among a lot of people, the idea that you couldn't simply accept this, something had to be done. This was a sentiment which was felt at all levels right down to the grass roots and it was unpolitical in the sense that it went through all parties and was not confined to the Right or to the Left. I know of lots of people on the Left within the movement, even on the extreme Left who

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had the same reaction as people on the Right. It was this general sense of outrage and humiliation which was expressed on that first day in Parliament when the pressure for action actually came not from Thatcher and the Government, but from all sides, the ultra-Right in the Conservatives, the Liberals, and Labour, with only the rarest of exceptions. This I think was a public sentiment which could actually be felt. Anybody who had any kind of sensitivity to the vibes knew that this was going on, and anyone on the Left who was not aware of this grass roots feeling, and that it was not a creation of the media, at least, not at this stage, but genuinely a sense of outrage and humiliation, ought seriously to reconsider their capacity to assess politics. It may not be a particularly desirable sentiment, but to claim that it didn't exist is quite unrealistic.

Irresistible decline

Now this upsurge of feeling had nothing to do with the Falklands as such. We have seen that the Falklands were simply a far-away territory swathed in mists off Cape Horn, about which we knew nothing and cared less. It has everything to do with the history of this country since 1945 and the visible acceleration of the crisis of British capitalism since the late 1960s and in particular the slump of the late 70s and early 80s. So long as the great international boom of Western

capitalism persisted in the 50s and 60s even the relatively weak Britain was to some extent gently borne upwards by the current which pushed other capitalist economies forward even more rapidly. Things were clearly getting better and we didn't have to worry too much although there was obviously a certain amount of nostalgia around the place.

And yet at a certain stage it became evident that the decline and crisis of the British economy were getting much more dramatic. The slump in the 70s intensified this feeling and of course since 1979 the real depression, the deindustrialisation of the Thatcher period and mass unemployment, have underlined the critical condition of Britain.

So the gut reaction that a lot of people felt at the news that Argentina had simply invaded and occupied a bit of British territory could have been put into the following words: 'Ours is a country which has been going downhill for decades, the foreigners have been getting richer and more advanced than we are, everybody's looking down on us and if anything pitying us, we can't even beat the Argentinians or anybody else at football any more, everything's going wrong in Britain, nobody really quite knows what to do about it and how to put it right. But now it's got to the point where some bunch of foreigners think they can simply march some troops onto British territory, occupy it and take it over, and they think the British are so far gone that nobody's going to do anything about it, nothing's going to be done. Well, this is the straw that breaks the camel's back, something's got to be done. By God we'll have to show them that we're not really just there to be walked over.' Once again, I'm not judging the validity of this point of view but I think this is roughly what a lot of the people who didn't try and formulate it in words felt at that moment.

Decline of the Empire

Now in fact, we on the Left had always predicted that Britain's loss of Empire, and general decline would lead to some dramatic reaction sooner or later in British politics. We hadn't envisaged this particular reaction but there's no question that this was a reaction to the decline of the British Empire such as we had predicted for so long. And that is why it had such very wide backing. In itself it wasn't simply jingoism. But, though this feeling of national humiliation went far beyond the range of simple jingoism, it was easily seized by the Right and it was taken over in what I think was politically a very brilliant operation by Mrs Thatcher and the Thatcherites. Let me quote her in the classic statement of what she thought the Falklands

war proved: 'When we started out there were the waverers and the faint-hearts, the people who thought we could no longer do the great things we once did, those who believed our decline was irreversible, that we could never again be what we were, that Britain was no longer the nation that had built an empire and ruled a quarter of the world. Well they were wrong.'

In fact the war was purely symbolic, it didn't prove anything of the kind. But here you see the combination of somebody catching certain popular vibes, and turning them in a right wing (I hesitate, but only just, to say a semi-fascist direction). That is why from the right wing point of view it was essential not simply to get the Argentinians out of the Falklands, which would have been perfectly practicable by a show of force plus negotiation, but to wage a dramatic victorious war. That is why the war was provoked by the British side whatever the Argentine attitude. There's little doubt that the Argentinians, as soon as they discovered that this was the British attitude, were looking for a way out of an intolerable situation. Thatcher wasn't prepared to let them because the whole object of the exercise was not to settle the matter now but to prove that Britain was still great, if only in a symbolic fashion. At virtually every stage the policy of the British government in and out of the United Nations was one of total intransigence. I'm not saying that the junta made it easy to come to a settlement but I think historians will conclude that a negotiated withdrawal of the Argentinians was certainly not out of the question. It wasn't seriously tried.

A new alliance

This provocative policy had a double advantage. Internationally, it gave Britain a chance to demonstrate her hardware, her determination and her military power. Domestically, it allowed the Thatcherites to seize the initiative from other political forces within and outside the Conservative Party. It enabled a sort of take-over by the Thatcherites not only of Conservative camp but of a great area of British politics. In a curious way the nearest parallel to the Thatcherite policy during the Falklands war is the Peronist policy which, on the other side, had first launched the Falklands into the centre of Argentine politics. Peron, like Mrs Thatcher and her little group, tried to speak directly to the masses using the mass media, over the heads of the establishment. In our case that included the Conservative establishment as well as the Opposition. She insisted on running her own war. It wasn't a war run by Parliament. It wasn't even run by the Cabinet; it was a war conducted by Mrs



Thatcher and a small War Cabinet, including the chairman of the Conservative Party. At the same time she established direct lateral relations, which I hope will not have long term political effects, with the military. And it is this combination of a direct demagogic approach to the masses, by-passing the political processes and the establishment, and the forging of direct lateral contact with the military and the defence bureaucracy, that is characteristic of the war.

Neither costs nor objectives counted, least of all of course the Falklands, except as symbolic proof of British virility, something which could be put into headlines. This was

the kind of war which existed in order to produce victory parades. That is why all the symbolically powerful resources of war and Empire were mobilised on a miniature scale. The role of the navy was paramount anyway, but traditionally public opinion has invested a lot of emotional capital in it. The forces sent to the Falklands were a mini-museum of everything which could give the Union Jack particular resonance — the Guards, the new technological strong men, the SAS, the paras; all were represented

¹ This is from a press release of her statement in July 82, after the war had been won.

down to those little old gurkhas. They weren't necessarily needed but you had to have them just because this was, as it were, a recreation of something like the old Imperial durbars, or the processions at the death or the coronation of British sovereigns.

Clochmerle rides again

We cannot in this instance quote Karl Marx's famous phrase about history repeating itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce, because no war is a farce. Even a little war in which 250 Britons and 2,000 Argentinians get killed is not a matter for jokes. But for foreigners who didn't realise the crucial role of the Falklands war in British *domestic* politics, the war certainly seemed and absolutely incomprehensible exercise. *Le Monde* in France called it a Clochmerle of the South Atlantic. You may remember that famous novel in which the Right and the Left in a small French town come to enormous blows over the question of where to situate a public convenience. Most Europeans simply could not understand what all the fuss was about. What they did not appreciate was that the whole thing was not about the Falklands at all and not about the right of self-determination. It was an operation concerned basically with British politics and with the British political mood.

Having said that let me just say very firmly that the alternative was not between doing nothing and Thatcher's war. I think it was politically absolutely impossible at this stage for any British government not to do anything. The alternatives were not simply to accept the Argentine occupation by passing the buck to the United Nations, which would have adopted empty resolutions, or on the other hand, Mrs Thatcher's intended replay of Kitchener's victory over the Sudanese at Omdurman. The pacifist line was that of a small and isolated minority, if indeed a minority with a respectable tradition in the labour movement. That line was simply politically not on. The very feebleness of the demonstrations which were being organised at the time showed this. The people who said the war was pointless, and should never have been started, have been proved right in the abstract, but they themselves have not benefited politically and aren't likely to benefit from having been proved right.

A split in public opinion

The next point to note is more positive. Thatcher's capture of the war with the aid of *The Sun* produced a profound split in public opinion, but not a political split along party lines. Broadly it divided the 80% who were

swept by a sort of instinctive patriotic reaction and who therefore identified with the war effort, though probably not in as strident a manner as the *Sun* headlines, from the minority which recognised that, in terms of the actual global politics concerned, what Thatcher was doing made no sense at all. That minority included people of all parties and none, and many who were not against sending a Task Force as such. I hesitate to say that it was a split of the educated against the uneducated; although it is a fact that the major hold-outs against Thatcherism were to be found in the quality press, plus of course the *Morning Star*. The *Financial Times*, the *Guardian* and the *Observer* maintained a steady note of scepticism about the whole business. I think it is safe to say that almost every single political correspondent in the country, and that goes from the Tory ones right down to the Left, thought the whole thing was loony. Those were the 'faint-hearts' against whom Mrs Thatcher railed. The fact that there was a certain polarisation but that the opposition, though it remained quite a small minority, was not weakened, even in the course of a brief and, in technical terms, brilliantly successful war, is significant.

Nevertheless, the war was won, fortunately for Mrs Thatcher very quickly and at a modest cost in British lives, and with it came an immediate and vast pay-off in popu-

Mrs Thatcher in the meantime was on cloud nine and imagined herself as a reincarnation of the Duke of Wellington

larity. The grip of Thatcher and the Thatcherites, of the ultra-right, on the Tory Party unquestionably increased enormously as a consequence. Mrs Thatcher in the meantime was on cloud nine and imagined herself as a reincarnation of the Duke of Wellington, but without that Irish realism which the Iron Duke never lost, and of Winston Churchill but without the cigars and, at least one hopes, without the brandy.

Short term effects

Now let me deal with the effects of the war. I shall here only mention briefly the short term effects, that is between now and the general election. The first of these is likely to concern the debate on whose fault it is. The Franks Commission is at present inquiring into precisely this. It is certain that the government, including Mrs Thatcher, will come out badly, as they deserve to. The second issue is the cost of the operation and the subsequent and continuing expense of

maintaining the British presence in the Falklands. The official statement is that it is going to be about £700 millions so far, but my own guess is that it almost certainly will run into thousands of millions. Accountancy is, as is well known, a form of creative writing, so exactly how you calculate the cost of a particular operation of this kind is optional, but whatever it is, it will turn out to be very, very, expensive. Certainly the Left will press this issue and they ought to. However, unfortunately, the sums are so large as to be meaningless to most people. So while the figures will go on being much quoted in political debate, I suspect this issue won't be very prominent or politically very effective.

The third issue is the bearing of the Falklands on British war policy, or defence policy as everybody now likes to call it. The Falklands war will certainly intensify the savage internal warfare among admirals, air marshals, generals and the Ministry of Defence which has already led to one post-Falklands casualty, the Minister of Defence himself, Nott. There is very little doubt that the admirals used the Falklands affair to prove that a large navy, capable of operating right across the globe, was absolutely essential to Great Britain — whereas everybody else knows that we can't afford it and what's more it just isn't worth keeping a navy of that size in order to be able to supply Port Stanley. These discussions will certainly raise the question of whether Britain can afford both a global navy and Trident missiles, and what exactly the role and importance of independent British nuclear weapons is. So to this extent, they can play a part in the development of the campaign for nuclear disarmament which should not be underestimated.

Next, the future of the Falkland Islands themselves. This, once again, is likely to be of little general interest since the Islands will cease to be of any serious interest to most Britons again. But it will be an enormous headache for civil servants, for the Foreign Office and for anybody else involved because we have no policy for the future. It wasn't the object of the war to solve the problems of the Falkland Islands. We are simply back to square one, or rather back to square minus one, and something will sooner or later have to be done to find a permanent solution for this problem unless British governments are simply content to keep an enormously expensive commitment going for ever, for no good purpose whatever, way down there by the South Pole.

Patriotism and the Left

Finally, let me deal with the more serious question of the long term effects. The war

demonstrated the strength and the political potential of patriotism, in this case in its jingo form. This should not perhaps surprise us, but Marxists haven't found it easy to come to terms with working class patriotism in general and English or British patriotism in particular. British here means where the patriotism of the non-English peoples happens to coincide with that of the English; where it doesn't coincide, as is sometimes the case in Scotland and Wales, Marxists have been more aware of the importance of nationalist or patriotic sentiment. Incidentally I suspect that while the Scots felt rather British over the Falklands, the Welsh didn't. The only parliamentary party which, as a party, opposed the war from the start was Plaid Cymru and of course, as far as the Welsh are concerned, 'our lads' and 'our kith and kin' are not in the Falklands, but in Argentina. They are the Patagonian Welsh who send a delegation every year to the National Eistedfodd in order to demonstrate that you can still live at the other end of the globe and be Welsh. So as far as the Welsh are concerned the reaction, the Thatcherite appeal on the Falklands, the 'kith and kin' argument, probably fell by the wayside.

Now there are various reasons why the Left and particularly the Marxist Left has not really liked to come to terms with the question of patriotism in this country. There's a particular historical conception of internationalism which tends to exclude national patriotism. We should also bear in mind the strength of the liberal/radical, anti-war and pacifist tradition which is very strong, and which certainly has passed to some extent into the labour movement. Hence there's a feeling that patriotism somehow conflicts with class consciousness, as indeed it frequently does, and that the ruling and hegemonic classes have an enormous advantage in mobilising it for their purposes, which is also true.

Perhaps there is also the fact that some of the most dramatic and decisive advances of the Left in this century were achieved in the fight against World War I, and they were achieved by a working class shaking off the hold of patriotism and jingoism and deciding to opt for class struggle; to follow Lenin by turning their hostility against their own oppressors rather than against foreign countries. After all, what had wrecked the Socialist International in 1914 was precisely the workers failing to do this. What, in a sense, restored the soul of the international labour movement was that after 1917, all over the belligerent countries the workers united to fight against the war, for peace and for the Russian Revolution.



The British tradition

These are some of the reasons why Marxists perhaps failed to pay adequate attention to the problem of patriotism. So let me just remind you as an historian that patriotism cannot be neglected. The British working class has a long tradition of patriotism which was not always considered incompatible with a strong and militant class consciousness. In the history of Chartism and the great radical movements in the early 19th century we tend to stress the class consciousness. But when in the 1860s one of the few British workers actually to write about the working class, Thomas Wright the 'journeyman engineer', wrote a guide to the British working class for middle class readers, because some of these workers were about to be given the vote, he gave an interesting thumbnail sketch of the various generations of workers he'd known as a skilled engineer.

When he came to the Chartist generation, the people who had been born in the early 19th century, he noted that they hated anything to do with the upper classes, and would not trust them an inch. They refused to have anything to do with what we would call the class enemy. At the same time he observed that they were strongly patriotic, strongly anti-foreign and particularly anti-French. They were people who had been brought up in their childhood in the anti-Napoleonic wars. Historians tend to stress the Jacobin element in British labour during these wars and not the anti-French element

which also had popular roots. I'm simply saying you cannot write patriotism out of the scenario even in the most radical period of the English working class.

Throughout the 19th century there was a very general admiration for the navy as a popular institution, much more so than the army. You can still see it in all the public houses named after Lord Nelson, a genuinely popular figure. The navy and our sailors were things that Britons, and certainly English people, took pride in. Incidentally, a good deal of 19th century radicalism was built on an appeal not just to workers and other civilians but to soldiers. *Reynold's News* and the old radical papers of those days were much read by the troops because they systematically took up the discontents of the professional soldiers. I don't know when this particular thing stopped, although in the Second World War the *Daily Mirror* succeeded in getting a vast circulation in the army for precisely the same reason. Both the Jacobin tradition and the majority anti-French tradition are thus part of English working class history though labour historians have stressed the one and played down the other.

Again, at the beginning of World War I the mass patriotism of the working class was absolute genuine. It was not something that was simply being manufactured by the media. It didn't exclude respect for the minority within the labour movement who failed to share it. The anti-war elements and the pacifists within the labour movement were not ostracised by the organised workers. In this respect there was a great difference between the attitude of workers and of the petty bourgeois jingoists. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the largest single volunteer mass recruitment into any army ever, was that of British workers who joined up in 1914-1915. The mines would have been empty but for the fact that the government eventually recognised that if it didn't have some miners in the mines it wouldn't have any coal. After a couple of years many workers changed their mind about the war, but the initial surge of patriotism is something we have to remember. I'm not justifying these things, simply pointing to their existence and indicating that in looking at the history of the British working class and the present reality, we must come to terms with these facts, whether we like them or not.

The dangers of this patriotism always were and still are obvious, not least because it was and is enormously vulnerable to ruling class jingoism, to anti-foreign nationalism and of course in our days to racism. These dangers are particularly great where patriotism can be separated from the other

sentiments and aspirations of the working class, or even where it can be counter-posed to them: where nationalism can be counter-posed to social liberation. The reason why nobody pays much attention to the, let's call it, jingoism of the Chartists, is that it was combined with and masked by an enormous militant class consciousness. It's when the two are separated, and they can be easily separated, that the dangers are particularly obvious. Conversely, when the two go together in harness, they multiply not only the force of the working class but its capacity to place itself at the head of a broad coalition for social change and they even give it the possibility of wresting hegemony from the class enemy.

Extraordinary 1945

That was why in the anti-fascist period of the 30s, the Communist International launched the call to wrest away national traditions from the bourgeoisie, to capture the national flag so long waved by the Right. So the French Left tried to conquer, capture or recapture both the tricolour and Joan of Arc and to some extent it succeeded.

In this country, we didn't pursue quite the same object, but we succeeded in doing something more important. As the anti-fascist war showed quite dramatically, the com-



bination of patriotism in a genuine people's war proved to be politically radicalising to an unprecedented degree. At the moment of his greatest triumph, Mrs Thatcher's ancestor, Winston Churchill, the unquestioned leader of a victorious war, and a much

greater victorious war than the Falklands, found himself, to his enormous surprise, pushed aside because the people who had fought that war, and fought it patriotically, found themselves radicalised by it. And the combination of a radicalised working class movement and a peoples' movement behind it proved enormously effective and powerful. Michael Foot may be blamed for thinking too much in terms of 'Churchillian' memories — 1940, Britain standing alone, anti-fascist war and all the rest of it, and obviously these echoes were there in Labour's reaction to the Falklands. But let us not forget that our 'Churchillian' memories are not just of patriotic glory — but of victory against reaction both abroad and at home: of Labour triumph and the defeat of Churchill. It's difficult to conceive this in 1982 but as an historian I must remind you of it. It is dangerous to leave patriotism exclusively to the Right.

Rule Britannia

At present it is very difficult for the Left to recapture patriotism. One of the most sinister lessons of the Falklands is the ease with which the Thatcherites captured the patriotic upsurge which initially was in no sense confined to political Conservatives let alone to Thatcherite ones. We recall the ease with



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which non-jingos could be tagged, if not actually as anti-patriotic, then at least as 'soft on the Argies'; the ease with which the Union Jack could be mobilised against domestic enemies as well as foreign enemies. Remember the photograph of the troops coming back on the troopships, with a banner saying 'Call off the rail strike or we'll call an air strike'. Here lies the long term significance of the Falklands in British political affairs.

It is a sign of very great danger. Jingoism today is particularly strong because it acts as a sort of compensation for the feelings of decline, demoralisation and inferiority, which most people in this country feel, including a lot of workers. This feeling is intensified by economic crisis. Symbolically jingoism helps people feel that Britain isn't just foundering, that it can still do and achieve something, can be taken seriously, can, as they say, be 'Great' Britain. It is symbolic because in fact Thatcherite jingoism hasn't achieved anything practical, and can't achieve anything practical. *Rule Britannia* has once again, and I think for the first time since 1914, become something like a National Anthem. It would be worth studying one day why, until the Falklands period, *Rule Britannia* had become a piece of musical archaeology and why it has ceased to be so. At the very moment when Britain patently no longer rules either the waves or an empire, that song has resurfaced and has undoubtedly hit a certain nerve among people who sing it. It is not just because we have won a little war, involving few casualties, fought far away against foreigners whom we can no longer even beat at football, and this has cheered people up, as if we had won a World Cup with guns. But has it done anything else in the long run? It is difficult to see that it has, or could have, achieved anything else.

Saviour on a white horse

Yet there is a danger. As a boy I lived some formative and very young years in the Weimar Republic, among another people who felt themselves defeated, losing their old certainties and their old moorings, relegated in the international league, pitied by foreigners. Add depression and mass unemployment to that and what you got then was Hitler. Now we shan't get fascism of the old kind. But the danger of a populist, radical Right moving even further to the right is patent. That danger is particularly great because the Left is today divided and demoralised and above all because vast masses of the British, or anyway the English, have lost hope and confidence in the political processes and in the politicians: any



politicians. Mrs Thatcher's main trump card is that people say she isn't like a politician. Today with 3,500,000 unemployed, 45% of the electors at Northfield, 65% of the electors at Peckham, don't bother to vote. In Peckham 41% of the electorate voted for Labour in 1974, 34% in 1979, and 19.1% today. I'm not talking of votes cast but of the total number of people in the constituency. In Northfield, which is in the middle of the devastation zone of the British motor industry, 41% voted for Labour in 1974, 32% in 1979 and 20% today.

The main danger lies in this de-politisation, which reflects a disillusionment with politics born of a sense of impotence. What we see today is not a substantial rise in

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the support for Thatcher and the Thatcherites. The Falklands episode may have temporarily made a lot of Britons feel better, though the 'Falklands factor' is almost certainly a diminishing asset for the Tories; but it has not made much difference to the basic hopelessness, apathy and defeatism of so many in this country, the feeling that we can't do much about our fate. If the Government seems to hold its support better than might be expected, it is because people (quite mistakenly) don't put the blame for the present miserable condition of the country on Thatcher, but, more or less vaguely, on factors beyond her or any government's control. If Labour hasn't so far regained enough support — though it may still just do

so — it isn't only because of its internal divisions, but also, largely, because many workers don't really have much belief in any politicians' promises to overcome the slump and the long term crisis of the British economy. So why vote for one lot rather than another? Too many people are losing faith in politics, including their own power to do much about it.

But just suppose a saviour were to appear on a white horse? None is likely to, but just suppose someone were to appeal to the emotions, to get that adrenalin flowing by mobilising against some foreigners outside or inside the country, perhaps by another little war, which might, under present circumstances, find itself turning into a big war, which, as we all know, would be the last of the wars? It is possible. I don't think that saviour is going to be Thatcher, and to that extent I can end on a slightly up-beat note. Free enterprise, to which she is committed, is not a winner, as fascist propaganda recognised in the 1930s. You can't win by saying: 'Let the rich get richer and to hell with the poor.' Thatcher's prospects are less good than Hitler's were, for three years after he had come to power there was not much unemployment left in Germany, whereas three years after Thatcher came to power unemployment is higher than ever before and likely to go on climbing. She is whistling in the dark. She can still be defeated. But patriotism and jingoism has been used once to change the political situation in her favour and can be used again. We must be on the look-out. Desperate governments of the Right will try anything.