OTHER REVIEWS


In 1974 Jean Bérenger published an article in which he drew attention to ‘a European phenomenon’ of the seventeenth century: the rise and fall of the valido.¹ The term combines the meanings of ‘first minister’ and ‘court favourite’. As Bérenger observed, such ‘men of confidence’ seemed to be dominant in the major monarchies of Western Europe at around 1630, only to disappear some thirty years later. Perhaps the explanation of their emergence, as Roland Mousnier and Fritz Hartung had already suggested,² lay in the ‘progress of absolutism’, in the ‘growing complexity of the modern state’ with its councils and bureaucracy. Neither willing nor able to cope with all this, kings delegated responsibility for key areas of government to individuals upon whom they felt they could rely. But Bérenger found insufficient so ‘purely institutional’ an explanation. The phenomenon required investigation via a ‘sociological approach’, an approach taking full account of the valido’s inherent vulnerability to accusations of ‘tyranny’ from groups upon whose powers and privileges his role could scarcely fail to encroach, no matter how diligently he might endeavour to secure himself through placing clients in important positions around him. Having tested such an approach on the cases of France (the Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin) and Austria (Count Ferdinand Portia and Prince Wesselhard Auersperg), Bérenger declared the phenomenon to be significant enough to warrant a large-scale Europe-wide investigation.

The world of the favourite consists of seventeen papers originally presented at a colloquium held in Oxford some twenty-two years after Bérenger wrote, together with an introductory and a concluding essay. It is a stimulating collection with very few weak contributions, a useful concluding assessment by Laurence Brockliss who suggests avenues for further research, and some truly distinguished pieces along the way, perhaps most notably David Wootton’s on ‘Francis Bacon: your flexible friend’. Even so, and despite Bérenger’s presence, neither the colloquium’s organizers nor the editors of the resultant book have aspired to the kind of systematic investigation which he seems originally to have envisaged. As John Elliott observes, the intention was simply ‘to explore and develop some of the issues’ which Bérenger raised, not to provide ‘a comprehensive coverage of the favourite and his world’ (p. 7). It is a pertinent disclaimer, and especially so if ‘comprehensive’ were taken to signify the entire European continent. Each of the papers considers ‘some of the issues’ in a single country, apart from a few which engage comparatively with two or three. In no less than three-quarters of the papers, the authors’ attention is by and large limited to England and/or France and/or, to a lesser degree, Spain. The usual suspects – Richelieu, Buckingham, the Cecils, Olivares – are paraded time and again, while Austria, Denmark, Poland/Lithuania, and Württemberg get a single paper apiece. By

comparison with the ample attention that certain figures attract, Oxenstierna of Sweden gains in the body of the book only a few passing mentions; and Filaret, so powerful an influence in Russia for much of the reign of Michael Romanov, receives none at all.

In Filaret’s case it could, of course, be argued that the term ‘favourite’ does not accommodate the father of a tsar. The argument would suggest that editors and contributors all subscribe to an agreed definition of the term. But this is manifestly not so. As I. A. A. Thompson observes, the ‘language of favouritism is both imprecise and protean’ (p. 14). Whereas some contributors cite contemporary comment to vindicate Bérenger’s ‘minister-favourite’ equation (for instance, Antonio Feros, p. 213), Elliott himself amongst others notes how Olivares insisted upon being known rather as ‘minister’ than as favourite (privado) (p. 115), and Marc Fumaroli sees ‘favourite’ as ‘the antithesis of an institution’ (p. 240) such as ‘minister’ implies. Even so, the virtues of flexibility and a light editorial touch are also manifest. Pace Bérenger’s reservations, it emerges that the favourite’s rise did indeed owe much to institutional or at least to political considerations, to the need of a buffer between king and people as governments grew more onerous and bureaucracies more complex. Nevertheless, ample heed is taken of his call for a ‘sociological approach’. Considerations of clientage, patronage, friendship, relationships of groups and individuals within court society and beyond, are kept well to the fore. Thus the volume encompasses a rewarding variety not only of perceptions and explanations, but also of methodologies, as papers range from Ronald Asch’s elucidation of the fall of Matthaus Enzlin in terms of ‘the distinction between the private and public sphere’ (p. 107), to Wotton’s sensitive readings of Baconian and other texts, and to Jonathan Brown’s original attempt ‘to define the image of the favourite as a category of court art’ (p. 221).

But, for all the methodological diversity represented here, there remains the weakness – for weakness it surely is – of the volume’s geographical limitations. It exhibits yet again the notorious preoccupation of Anglo-Saxon early modernists, if not with English (or, now, ‘British’) history, then with Western and Mediterranean Europe, and their relative inattention to almost everywhere east and north of the estuary of the Oder. As long as this is the case, not only will the Bérenger paradigm in respect of the ‘favourite’ and his world be likely to remain more or less intact, but our understanding of the history of Europe will continue to lack essential dimensions, and major potential sources of vitality and renewal to languish unexplored.

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In these books by the director and deputy director respectively of the Centre of International Studies at the University of Cambridge, scholars will find a useful synthesis of late twentieth-century thinking on the course of modern history. Philip Towle’s work on enforced disarmament is ground-breaking and complements his earlier important work on international disarmament policy and its relationship to the Cold
War. He successfully finds a niche hitherto neglected by diplomatic and military historians and breathes new life into the debate about whether balance of power diplomacy and the maintaining of an equal balance of military force is the best way to ensure peace. He does not present a linear account of the international history of the last two hundred years but offers a series of case studies, some of which serve his purpose better than others. He is most convincing in his handling of the nineteenth-century topics that he selects, namely the demilitarization of the French fortresses in 1814–15 and the demilitarization of the Black Sea after the Crimean War. He successfully refutes W. O. Shanahan’s long-accepted views on why Prussia was kept in a weakened state in the early nineteenth century. Towle’s assessment of Metternich’s diplomatic judgements likewise suggests that long-held views about his statecraft merit reappraisal. Indeed, the freshness of Towle’s approach to the nineteenth-century material in his book makes one wonder why this period in European diplomatic history has remained unfashionable for so long.

Towle’s analysis of the disarmament of Europe after 1918 is handled with aplomb, but does fall victim to the complexity of the subject as he endeavours to balance analysis with adequate contextualization. Although immaculately researched and written, the reader is left with the feeling that there is still more to say. The middle chapters of the book end with a sometimes surprising abruptness. This part of the book should be read with Jon Jacobson’s reassessment of the importance of the 1920s to the study of international history. His signposting of the key issues of the period is more effective but Towle has a greater feel for the finer nuances of the debate over international disarmament.

Towle considers two principal types of enforced disarmament: that which stems from ‘limited wars’, and that which resulted from the two world wars. Both Towle and Ian Clark accept that the twentieth century gave birth to a radically new type of modern war and that the First World War marked the break with nineteenth-century means of making war. Towle then asks a series of questions to challenge the historical material in each chapter. They include whether enforced disarmament can maintain the forces created by war and the type of measures employed by the former enemy to try to evade compliance with the relevant terms of the peace treaty. He argues that the role of public opinion in determining the nature of the peace with a former enemy should be considered, as well as the enormous financial implications for those countries charged with shaping and maintaining peace after a war. Here Towle’s views are entirely consistent with recent work on the burdens of victory concerning Allied reparation policy after the First World War.

The closing chapters provide a very lucid, elegant assessment of Cold War diplomacy and its impact on international disarmament. Towle’s opinions have not changed significantly from those he expressed in the early 1980s, but this should not be interpreted as a criticism. His most recent book represents a maturing of the thought processes and a convincing exploration of his ideas within a larger historical period. It sits comfortably at the academic boundary between history and international relations

1 Philip Towle’s *Arms control and East–West relations* (London, 1983).
5 Towle, *Arms control and East–West relations*. 
and for the most part achieves that rare feat of demonstrating the best in the writing traditions of both disciplines.

Clark's book is equally excellent. Like Towle, Clark is offering an extension of work undertaken on a similar theme in the 1980s. It assesses the principal theories that have been put forward in the last fifteen years to explain international relations in the twentieth century. Clark also presents some well-rehearsed arguments which question some of the assumptions that scholars have made in studying this subject. Unlike Towle's, Clark's work is firmly entrenched in the tradition of recent international relations theory, although there is nevertheless much of interest to historians in this study. But there is evidence of a lack of academic discipline in places. The introduction is a fluent and erudite discussion about the different ways that the twentieth century can be viewed, but its range is so great that one feels that Clark is making the case for a number of books not just one. Although the book covers the entire twentieth century, Clark concentrates primarily on the period up to 1945. The assessments of international relations to 1914 and the interwar period are the most impressive, although he occasionally labours his points. It is not always clear who Clark's intended readership is, as many undergraduates would be overwhelmed by the sophistication of the argument while the specialist reader would not always require the level of contextualization and explanation that he provides.

The principal purpose of Clark's book is to examine the forms that the processes of globalization and fragmentation took during the twentieth century, to determine whether they were 'self-contained' phenomena or part of a continuing process and from these conclusions to determine the characteristics of the international system at a given time during this period. Clark sees globalization as being a long-term process linked to the growth of liberalism. He argues convincingly that the speed of the process of globalization increased significantly during the last twenty years of the twentieth century through the growing influence of international diplomatic organizations, the establishment of multinational corporations and through the communications revolution. Clark does not, however, view the trend towards globalization as irreversible, nor does he see it as a continuous process throughout the twentieth century. He claims that globalization has manifested itself in different ways in the world, for example, in Western Europe and Japan. But what he describes, by his own admission, is the gradual 'westernization' of the world, which surely provides what he claims is not possible, namely a 'global' explanation for globalization.

Clark views globalization and fragmentation as multi-faceted concepts and rejects the idea that globalization can only be clearly identified as a trend in international relations after the end of the Second World War. This conclusion is not new but the strength of Clark's case lies in his ability to argue that the balance between globalization and fragmentation in the twentieth century has been in a constant state of flux and that some of the great crises of the century have been exacerbated by these forces operating simultaneously. He sees the origins of the First World War in this way, identifying for example, the Hague conferences as examples of internationalism co-existing alongside the rampant nationalism of Germany, Britain, and France. Clark views the First World

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War in terms of a reformulation of the processes of globalization and fragmentation which had caused the war in the first place. He thus adds valuable comment to recent literature on the history of total war in the twentieth century. To see a connection between the origins and course of the two world wars is again not a new idea but Clark's study allows the reader to stand back from the massive literature on these subjects and see how the two world wars fit into the general picture of twentieth-century international history. His discussion of the interwar years as a period when the forces of globalization and fragmentation were in operation makes a good case for exploding the popular belief that the 1920s was an era of 'recovery' and the 1930s an era of 'collapse'. It clearly indicates that there is a need to write a comprehensive diplomatic history of international relations of the 1920s in particular. However, Clark's claim that Poland 'shielded Germany from Russia' during the interwar period does not hold up to even the most casual examination of the facts.

Clark's attempts to make us rethink the way in which we characterize the main eras of the history of the twentieth century then continues by dividing up the second half of the century into three periods: the Cold War until the signing of the SALT agreements; Cold War politics until the collapse of communism; and the post-communist world. These chapters make a very conscious attempt – perhaps too much so – to play down the significance of the Cold War (curiously written in lower case) in describing the international forces at work in the world after the Second World War. At the same time, he appears to be hinting at the need for a re-examination of the significance of the Cold War without making this case specifically himself. It is therefore inevitable that it is in Clark's discussion of the Cold War itself that most significant losses of focus occur. In an otherwise immaculately conceived book, we are suddenly plunged into several pages of exegesis on theories about the Cold War without their relevance being made clear or the arguments developed.

At the heart of Towle's and Clark's work is the contention that state behaviour has been one of the principal determinants in international relations during the last two hundred years. They demonstrate that as the world moved towards the use of global conflict in the twentieth century the task of explaining the origins and consequences of wars became overwhelmingly complex. Towle describes the more human face of governments and individuals attempting to grapple with some of the issues relating to both globalization and fragmentation described by Clark. Collectively, they provide a convincing case for exonerating those charged with failing to make peace at the end of both world wars by highlighting the near impossibility of their task.

The papacy of Giacomo Della Chiesa, Benedict XV, covered the years 1914 to 1922, the time of the First World War and the peace settlement. During the war he initiated one of the few serious attempts at mediation between the belligerents by a neutral, the papal

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9 Ian Clark: _Globalization and fragmentation: international relations in the twentieth century_ (Oxford, 1997); p. 79.
peace note of August 1917. In his reign, the new Code of Canon Law was issued on 27 May 1917, which transformed and centralized papal power. He initiated the modern diplomatic role of the papacy in international affairs. Yet John Pollard is surely right to claim that this very important papacy and its incumbent have been largely 'unknown'.

He was not much to look at. As Francis McNutt recalls, ‘In person, he was undersized, of a sallow bilious complexion…everything about him was crooked, nose, mouth, eyes and shoulders – all were out of drawing…Of brilliancy or originality I never perceived a trace’ (pp. 16–17). His career had been largely internal and administrative. He had a good diplomatic training and had risen to the top of the Vatican’s small bureaucracy. He served as archbishop of Bologna but received the cardinal’s hat very late in his career. Compared with Giuseppe Sarto (Pius X), Archille Ratti (Pius XI), or Eugenio Pacelli (Pius XII), Giacomo Della Chiesa lacked charisma, and stature both physical and spiritual. On the other hand, he came from an aristocratic family and had the bearing and reserve of the old Italian nobility. He knew the inside of the church very well, had good judgement and shrewdness.

Part of the fascination of Professor Pollard’s book is its story: the tale of a young, upper-class priest who became pope. By using the papers of the Della Chiesa family, Pollard can paint a vivid, sharply observed picture of that closed, embattled milieu of nineteenth-century Italian Catholicism, hostile to modern trends and at daggers drawn with the new kingdom of Italy, ‘the sub-alpine usurper’, as Pius IX had called it. Pollard catches that still, breathless, and shuttered atmosphere of embattled piety in a heathen and alien world.

After the tumultuous attacks by Pius X on ‘modernism’, the new pope, elected on 3 September 1914, brought an easier style to doctrinal issues. Pollard shows him to be neither a radical nor a reactionary but a deeply pious, liturgically conservative pontiff. He encouraged the Marian cults, the adoration of the Sacred Heart and other pious observances, which even the sensitivity of Professor Pollard cannot quite make plausible to non-Catholic readers.

The world war had begun when the conclave elected Giacomo Della Chiesa pope and the war dominated his entire papacy. When the kingdom of Italy joined the Allies in May 1915, the whole, unsatisfactory compromise by which the Vatican maintained its international status began to crumble. Benedict’s Vatican had not yet made peace with the secular, liberal Italian state, and until the Lateran Pacts of 1929 could not be sure of its complete extra-territoriality. It had no sovereign territory, no diplomatic passports, no immunities. Cardinals from belligerent powers were detained by their enemies and the Italian state demanded support from an Italian pope. Had it been given, it would have compromised the spiritual neutrality of the Holy See. No matter what Benedict did the other side blamed him. After the Italian defeat at Caporetto in 1917, he was widely known as ‘Maladetto XV’ (the cursed one), a bitter pun on ‘Benedetto’ (the blessed one).

Benedict XV understood instinctively how to manoeuvre the Vatican through the turbulence. He resisted all the demands from the warring states and came through the conflict with Vatican neutrality intact. The Great War began a process of globalization of humanitarian agencies in which Benedict XV’s Roman Catholic church was a pioneer. The church provided spiritual welfare and offered postal services to prisoners of war. The pope gave away the patrimony of St Peter to help the victims of war and continued to do so afterwards. He desperately wanted to see the Vatican represented at Versailles as it had been at Vienna in 1815. In the pope’s eyes the representation of the
Holy See at the peace negotiations would have amounted to international recognition of the Vatican’s temporal authority. For that reason, Sidney Sonnino, the half-Jewish, half-Protestant Italian foreign minister, opposed and successfully prevented it, which, as Professor Pollard points out, turned out to be a blessing in disguise, for the Vatican bore no responsibility for the ‘consequences of the peace’, economic or otherwise.

Here I have a reservation about Professor Pollard’s approach. The archival sources for this account are overwhelmingly papal and Catholic; yet, secular Italian sources were easily available. The Sonnino diaries, published by Laterza, began to appear in the early 1970s and Italian diplomatic documents on the war go back to the 1920s. It would have been a useful corrective to the view taken in the book to see the Vatican and Benedict XV from the eyes of the spokesmen of liberal Italy.

The most telling criticism of the papacy of Benedict XV came not from liberals but from his life-long opponent, Cardinal Rafael Merry Del Val, who was everything – handsome, brilliant, charismatic – that Giacomo Della Chiesa was not, everything, that is, but pope. In November 1921, he wrote to his friend, the archbishop of Boston, Cardinal O’Connell, that the Vatican had lost its way. It was ‘drifting’. Above all, there was ‘too much policy, worldly intrigue and diplomacy’ (p. 158). Merry Del Val noticed a trend to diplomatic worldliness which grew more marked under Pius XI and reached its zenith under the most diplomatic of all modern popes, Eugenio Pacelli, Pius XII. Benedict XV steered the Vatican on to a course which would lead to concordats with fascist states and silence about the murder of the Jews. This fluent, readable, and important work puts the papacy of Benedict XV where it ought always to have been: a central episode in the evolution of papal power and practice in the twentieth century.


Sometimes books bear hardly any surprises and this is a case in point. Anglo-American historiography of the Spanish Civil War (1936–9) has been heavily influenced by the writings of Burnett Bolloten, a correspondent in Republican Spain, who afterwards turned to writing the wartime history of the Spanish communist party. Across his lifetime, he produced and reproduced a single work, The grand camouflage: the Communist conspiracy in the Spanish Civil War (New York, 1961), each larger than before (The Spanish Revolution: the left and the struggle for power during the Civil War (Chapel Hill, 1979); The Spanish Civil War (New York, 1991). But his main arguments remained unchanged. First, that the Spanish communists, with support of the Soviet Union, sought to control the Republic; second, that they succeeded in doing so; third, that one of their main partners in his matter was the second socialist prime minister of the Republic, Negrín.

Esenwein and Shubert, though they put forth an accurate account of the development of the Republic up till the Civil War and of the Francoist zone during the war itself, largely follow Bolloten’s line of argument and therefore do not contribute anything new to the discussion on the political development of Spain during the Civil War. This is not entirely unexpected since Esenwein himself closely co-operated with Bolloten. Indeed, they follow his idea that Negrín was a close ally or even an agent of the communists during his premiership (pp. 232–6). They also take over the thesis that the communists
attempted to establish control over the Republican state with the backing of the USSR. Thus they maintain:

‘At the same time as Soviet aid was helping the communists gain a commanding position in the Republican military apparatus, it was helping them secure a foothold in the summits of political power. The communists believed that, in order to entice the democracies to join their struggle against the Nationalists, Republican Spain could not project a ‘red’ image. Thus it was necessary for them to use the machinery of the central and local governments to roll back the revolutionary movement that had begun in July [1936] [pp. 203–4].

It seems strange that the communists should be struggling for power, when it would be harmful to the Republican cause for them to do so, and since the ‘red scare’ of the British elite, leading to the policy of non-intervention, was motivated by the communists’ activities.

In addition, this line of reasoning involves a major methodological difficulty: there simply exists no hard evidence for this thesis. The historical school trying to prove the communists’ political role in the way characterized above relies mostly on sources which are highly doubtful in their provenance, as has recently been shown by Rutledge Southworth in a collection of essays, The republic besieged: Civil War in Spain, 1936–1939 (Edinburgh, 1996), edited by Ann L. Mackenzie and Paul Preston. The doubtful sources in this context are mainly autobiographical ones of anarchist or activists of the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM), such as Julian Gorkin, or of dissident communists, such as Jesús Hernández, Enrique Castro Delgado, or the actually illiterate El Campesino; also the memoirs of such eminent socialist politicians as Francisco Largo Caballero and Indalecio Prieto, who obviously had a personal interest in putting the blame for the Republic’s catastrophe on the communists. They are to be taken with caution. These socialist leaders tried to hide behind the communist party, though the socialists were initially the larger and more important party in the Spanish Republic, accusing the communists of being guilty of destructive infighting within their own party, leading to their decline. This has been shown in recent Spanish historiography, such as in Santos Juliá’s Los socialistas en la política española, 1979–1982 (Madrid, 1996).

Finally, Soviet documentation, now open to researchers, does not support the point of view which makes the Spanish communists the primary motor of the internal Republican development of the Civil War period. The communists certainly were a major political force in the late Spanish Republic, but they were only one of several. Antonio Elorza and Marta Bizcarrondo have commented on this in their new study Queridos camaradas: la Internacional Comunista y España, 1919–1939 (Barcelona, 1999).

The reality of the Republic in its defence against the onslaught of the reactionary forces supported by Germany and Italy was much too complex to be reduced to a simple conspiracy theory.

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The story of Britain’s decolonization of Malaya after the Second World War has been told many times. The standard account runs roughly as follows. After the disastrous defeat of December 1941 by Japanese forces and the subsequent fall of Singapore
Malaya experienced over three years of Japanese rule. There was relatively little resistance from the Malay community though much from the Chinese. The Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945 was followed by an interregnum of some three weeks before British military forces arrived, which enabled a number of ethnic and political parties to organize. Once back the British announced the establishment of a Malayan Union, a single centralized colonial state to replace the pre-war mixture of Federated and Unfederated States and to provide common citizenship for the Malays, Chinese, Indians, and others who made up that exceptionally complex society. The Union, which came into effect in May 1946, aroused immediate opposition from the Malay rulers, who lost most of their powers, and from many Malays, who feared that they would lose their political and social primacy. The immediate foundation of the United Malay National Organization (UMNO) marked the start of a campaign which persuaded the British in 1948 to end the Union and establish a new Federation which in fact retained some features of the Union but restored the structure of states and abrogated the uniform citizenship. This in turn outraged many Chinese, especially the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), who began with labour strikes and then retreated to the jungle and resumed the guerrilla strategy they had used against the Japanese. Despite a huge military effort by British and other Commonwealth forces, the Emergency lasted until after Malayan independence in 1957. Meanwhile, political parties proliferated with the common aim of ending colonial rule. In 1953 UMNO and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) formed an Alliance. After continued British resistance to a rapid movement to democracy, elections to the legislative council in 1955 gave the Alliance an overwhelming victory. UMNO's Tan Sri Abdul Rahman became chief minister, pressed for independence, and was given it in 1957. Thus Malaya appears to conform to the standard model of British decolonization after 1945: well-meaning but arbitrary schemes for betterment ('the second colonial occupation') prove unacceptable, and after a decent interval while the colonial subjects demonstrate that they are determined and sufficiently organized, independence is granted.

There is little in Dr Harper's book that totally contradicts this simplistic account. But his account is different in two main respects: the angle and depth of vision and the sources used. First, instead of seeing the historical process as one determined primarily by imperial policy, it treats it as integral to the history of Malaya. As he says (p. 362), 'This book has been a study of decolonisation as seen from Malaya and not from London, as an experience that shaped local policies and society.' That is, Harper joins the now dominant ranks of those who see the late imperial impact on colonial territories as significant but essentially marginal. In this account it is clear that whatever the British intended, it was indigenous forces that determined the outcome. In 1945 London, out of touch with events under the occupation, assumed that things remained much as they had been in 1941 and that their new strategy of integration could be imposed on apathetic unpoliticized colonial subjects. During 'the Malayan Spring' of 1945–7 the British attempted to combine relative liberalism regarding publications, parties, trade unions, etc., with the new Union constitution. They found that this was not acceptable to the majority of Malays and that acute economic and social problems resulting from the occupation created serious resistance. Conversely, the withdrawal of the Union coupled with attempts to reimpose control over land settlement and squatting alienated many of the Chinese and drove some of them, particularly squatters, to join the MCP in the terrorist campaign. This process is examined in detail in chapter 3, the counter-insurgency strategies, including the New Villages and their social
problems, in chapter 4. Chapter 5 then investigates the political, economic, and social consequences of the Emergency outside the areas of terrorist control. War greatly increased the power and functions of the state, particularly its punitive capacity, which became intrinsic to post-independence Malaysia. State paternalism reimposed controls on labour unions and the work force while also increasing public welfare functions. Wartime expenditure, coupled with the flight from dangerous areas, greatly increased the size and sophistication of towns and stimulated the growth of an urban bourgeoisie. War, deprivation, and growth in turn led to the growth of a strident new Malay consciousness and the popularity of the concept of the *butiong*, sons of the soil, which had two main drives: to improve the economic and social conditions of the mass of the poorer Malays, and to ensure that the future independent state was dominated both politically and economically by Malays rather than by Chinese, Indians, or expatriates. Chapters 7 and 8 examine, first, the social implications of such cultural nationalism (including the force of Islam), and then their impact on politics as, from 1955, democracy was born. In short, while the British may have thought they were calling the shots, the real dynamics of social, cultural, and political development were indigenous.

More briefly, the second main feature of this book is the depth of the research that went into it. Harper has worked through both the federal and all the state public records of the peninsula and Singapore, and a wide range of private papers there and in Rhodes House, as well as at the more conventional ‘Public Records Office’ (unfortunately printed as such). In addition, there is a very large list of published books, articles, and other material. No one, to my knowledge, has dredged so deep over so long a period of Malaysian history. If the detail sometimes makes the narrative very dense for the non-specialist, it provides full support for the argument. On minor points, the book blessedly has the footnotes on the page and there are useful lists of abbreviations and non-English terms. I have only two minor quibbles. There is no map, so one has either to know the peninsula very well or keep an atlas to hand; and the typeface is small, presumably to make so substantial a book commercially viable.

But these are unimportant. This is a very important study which, for the non-specialist at least, casts entirely new light on Malaya at the crucial point in its modern history. Others may develop particular themes but this particular job will not need doing again until and unless substantial new sources of information become available.