

# Centre for Policy Studies

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25th October 1977

## CONFIDENTIAL

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher MP,  
House of Commons,  
London SW1.

*Dear Margaret*

your letter was most generous. It will serve as an encouragement to new efforts. Zazie, who bears the burden of my long working hours, and Elizabeth (my secretary) who has worked selflessly and committedly in these marathons, share the encouragement and sense of privilege in being enabled to serve.

### 1. Cross-lead      We are heirs to the Social-democratic Heritage

The time may be ripe for a new initiative in the evolution of our political philosophy, which could open up far-reaching scope for our political strategy. I propose that we differentiate sharply between social democracy and socialism, recognising social democracy as a legitimate element in the British political heritage. \*Viz page 3.

Now that the Labour Party is increasingly renegeing on this heritage in favour of Marxist or Marxoid socialism, the burden of incorporating its best features into a synthesis suited to our times and circumstances falls on the Conservative Party. In the past, the Party came to incorporate much of the best in Whig philosophy, and later when Lloyd George corrupted and ruined the Liberal Party, our Party became in fact the Conservative-Liberal (Unionist) Party.

Kier Hardie, George Lansbury, Ernest Bevin are part of British political history; they are as much everybody's history and tradition as Peel, Gladstone, and D'Israeli. They had their share of mistakes and fallacies; but then we Tories have never claimed infallibility for our Party. They would certainly find much more in common with us than with Benn, Mikardo and the Tribunites.

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To secure fuller understanding of the methods available to improve the standard of living, the quality of life and the freedom of choice of the British people, with particular attention to social market policies.

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To adopt this position would need strong and soundly-based argument. But it can be done, and we can expect help from many academics and writers who would argue that it is not so much a matter of their leaving the Labour Party as its leaving them. We do not try to tell them that they have been wholly wrong all the time and that we were wholly right. They are now seeking to extricate themselves from a false position.

If we forge such a position, we open a path to our door for many who are disgusted at Labour.

There are many who are unhappy about Labour's direction, but are hesitant to take the plunge. We can offer them a bridge without compromising our principles or overall politico-economic strategy. Some of them, e.g. both Hugh Thomas and his group of ex-Labour friends and Paul Johnson, have forcefully pointed out that they do not want a Conservative Party which is being dragged along leftward behind Labour; for that, there would be no point in the trouble of leaving Labour. (Did you read PJ's review of Gilmour? I enclose a photocopy.)

In a sense, the adoption of such a position would allow us to outflank the fainéant pseudo-D'Israelians, and give us a truly central position in British politics.

If the idea in general appeals to you, I shall begin to do some of the work, to prepare the basis for a substantial lecture-cum-speech for about the end of the year. I broached the thesis in general terms with one or two friends, including Douglas Eden, who assented.

## 2. European Intellectual Forum

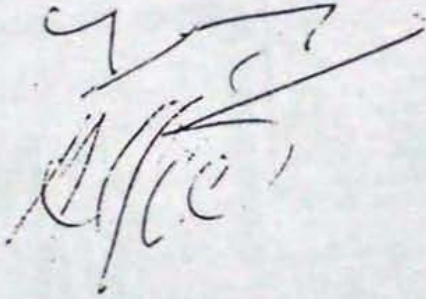
Last year, in my visits to France and Spain and meetings with friends from Italy, I laid the groundwork for a loose organisation of non-socialist liberal intellectuals in Europe (by which I mean the EEC plus Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Norway and Sweden.) As I saw it, the organisation would provide intellectual underpinning for the non-socialist alliance needed in the European Parliament and institutions and would provide for valuable exchange of ideas and experiences in fields which matter, e.g. planning, Christian Democracy; migrant labour; extremism and terrorism of all kinds; trade unionism and Social Democracy in transition, all subjects of live and practical interest.

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Raymond Aron, whose reputation and standing extend well beyond the "right", has agreed to be patron. I found lively interest in Spain. But so far, I have failed to find the finance, and therefore have let the matter lapse for the time being. RR thinks it worth reviving.

I await your reactions with interest.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Alfred Sherman', with a large flourish above the name.

Alfred Sherman

\* Note

Gilmour is basically at error in his writings on social democracy. He treats Crosland as a spokesman for social democracy, whereas in fact Crosland is one of those who reneged on social democracy principles and curried favour with Marxist left out of personal ambition. There are many other better and more consistent writers on social democracy whom IG ignores.

We should have no difficulty in restoring social democratic principles from the incidental and the dross, and making them our own.

Enc: