

From the Earl of Longford KG PC
'SEMPER ALIQUID NOVI'

Founded 1908

SIDGWICK & JACKSON
Limited
PUBLISHERS

Telegrams: Watergate, London
Telephones: 01-242 6081/2/3
Telex: 8952953 SIDJAK G
Place of Registration: London, England
Registered Number of Company: 100126



Registered Office:

1 Tavistock Chambers

Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2SG

29th September 1982

The Rt Hon The Prime Minister Mrs Margaret Thatcher
10 Downing Street
WC1

I dear Prime Minister

I hesitate to approach you for obvious reasons, but I venture to hope that you will give sympathetic attention to my request. I am now engaged on a book, intended to be popular, for Rainbird Publications, entitled THE DECLINE AND FALL AND RESURRECTION OF THE WEST. I am summoning up courage to ask you whether you could spare time to see me some time before the end of November. I shall, of course, understand if you are much too busy for this to be possible. I enclose a draft of something that I have written about you for the purposes of this book, which I hope will show you how deeply interested I am in your new approach to national and international problems. It would be quite wrong to conceal from you the fact that I am very unhappy about the impact on the social services of Government policy. I speak as someone who has been, and is, much concerned with voluntary social service in a number of different ways, and was personal assistant to Beveridge when he drew up the Beveridge Plan.

On the other hand I have spoken out several times favourably in the House of Lords about the general defence policy of the Government. I persuade myself that you would be not uninterested in making sure that in a book of this kind your ideas and ideals were properly represented. But, as I say, you have so many preoccupations that it is hard for me to claim a high priority for this one.

I suppose that I am a little bit encouraged by your great kindness to Elizabeth in connection with her book on the Queen. We were very pleased with Carol's article about her, and still more with Carol herself when she came to lunch, and occupied the place at table which you honoured by your presence some years ago.

*With very great respect to Debra
The Secretary
Frank
Loyd*

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I see no harm in this but I do not know how you feel personally about Lord Longford. ^{FRB}

1. MR. BUTLER ^{FRB}
2. PRIME MINISTER

How would you like me to react to this letter from Lord Longford? *I have acknowledged it.*

es.

~~Marjorie~~ Stephen
Pl. arrange - over an evening drink? ^{FRB}

Will do -

1 October, 1982.

*Will do -
arranged Fri
15 = October.
will need Meeting
Folder with this
letter in it. C.P. 6/10*



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 October, 1982.

I write on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your letter of 29 September.

Your letter is receiving attention, and a reply will be sent to you as soon as possible.

CAROLINE STEPHENS

The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Longford, K.G.

LN

Mrs Thatcher's philosophy and politics matter even more than would usually be the case in a Prime Minister, for two reasons. In the first place no Prime Minister in this century has dominated a Cabinet in peace-time to anything like the same extent. One has to go back to Gladstone, or before him to Robert Peel for comparison; and in those days the area of life covered by Government policies was much smaller. In the second place, her policies represent a far more drastic break with the past, including the immediate past of her own party, than any since the Labour rule of 1945-51, when after a world war far-reaching changes were generally expected.

Indeed, there is a third reason why Margaret Thatcher is specially significant even among Prime Ministers. She must be described (in a complimentary rather than a pejorative sense) as a moralist politician, the first of that kind since Gladstone. I take for granted her private life with is exemplary, like that of all our leaders as far as we can tell since Lloyd George, who had other merits. I am suggesting, however, that Mrs Thatcher is a preacher of morals. She is deliberately setting out to improve the moral standards of this country by exhortation and where possible by government action. It goes without saying that no more than in the case of Gladstone are her political opponents prepared to accept her sermons as inspired text.

She has for some years, and long before the Falklands crisis, called for a return to ancient virtues such as self-help, self-discipline and self-sacrifice. No-one questions her own powers of self-help and self-discipline, and anyone who renounces, as she has done, a quarter of her salary must be listened to with respect on the subject of self-sacrifice. But when her

moral convictions lead her into the field of social morality they become extremely controversial. She leaves a clear impression that she considers that the principle of self-sacrifice has been undervalued for many years; that our attempts to be our brother's keeper has dragged down both our brother and ourselves into the pit; that the welfare state in Britain has been carried forward too far and too fast.

Having acted as personal assistant to Sir William (later Lord) Beveridge when he drew up the plans from which so much of the welfare state derives, I am well aware that his ideas were much less popular in Conservative circles than it was thought politic to acknowledge at the time. Sir Winston Churchill, who knew him well and admired his earlier work, refused to receive him. After the war I was trying to secure support for the Anglo-German Association from a high-minded merchant banker of great eminence. He told me that it was fatal to include Beveridge as a Patron: 'Beveridge! He is the cause of all the trouble'. For Beveridge, then and since, read welfare state.

Many of us consider that one example of the decline of Britain in recent years is our failure to develop our welfare provision, in which we were the pioneers, as fully as a number of European countries. Those who think like Mrs Thatcher would probably ~~not~~ believe exactly the opposite. We like to feel that in this country, compared with before the war, we have created a compassionate society. ^{Mrs Thatcher} ~~She~~/herself on becoming Prime Minister quoted from ~~Not~~ 10 Downing Street St Francis of Assisi's prayer for peace. We cannot equate St Francis of Assisi with ^{over} three million unemployed. It may be remembered that when Mr Norman St John Stevas, the Leader of the House

of Commons, was dismissed from the Cabinet, he ~~drawn~~ pointed out the contrast between the caring Conservatism which he stood for and the actual policies of the Government. All this is relevant if an attempt is to be made to unite Britain on a common path of recovery.

One of Mrs Thatcher's most powerful speeches was an address she gave in commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of Dame Margery Corbett. I touch elsewhere on its bearing on the family and the women's movement. I mention it here as one of the best examples of her passionate patriotism. It was no surprise to find her quoting President Kennedy's famous inaugural speech in which he called on Americans to ask themselves what they could do for their country. My mind goes back to a speech delivered by Lloyd George in celebration of victory in 1980 though I was a young boy at the time:

'Let us not demobilise the spirit of patriotism in our ranks. That spirit alone won us the war. That spirit alone can bring us a real and lasting triumph.'

Patriotism has enjoyed a mixed, up and down, reputation over the centuries since the Romans said: 'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori'. After the Falklands victory a hundred writers were persuaded to express their views on the policy of the Government (more of them were hostile than favourable). As the editors of the volume point out, many of them quoted Dr Johnson's definition of patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel.

But since the Falklands victory we are told that a 'new spirit of patriotism' is abroad throughout the land. At this point we must pause for a moment. Sunday after Sunday Mr Peregrine Worsthorne, Deputy Editor of The Sunday Telegraph, has delivered a panegyric on patriotism. He is ready to accept his role

as a lone voice among intellectuals, but he can point to the extraordinary improvement of the standing of the Government, and Mrs Thatcher in particular, since the short, successful war over the Falklands to justify his claim that it is he who at the moment speaks for the people. How, he cries out eloquently, could so many writers live through that period without sensing the almost tangible resurrection of Britain as a moral force, as a community with a proud idea of itself, for which individuals were prepared to die? For so many ordinary people it was an ennobling experience, even a religious one, transcending anything which they had ever felt before. For the first time, says Peregrine Worsthorne, they were conscious of belonging to something larger than themselves - other than a football club - something greater and immeasurably more significant. Time alone will show whether this new sense, real or alleged, of national identity will have any effect on conduct and thus play a part in the desiderated resurrection of Britain. At this stage I postulate only that a scheme of things depending on the restoration of the ancient virtues will achieve nothing, or less than nothing, unless it preserves and enhances the new humanity which Lord Denning admitted was the redeeming feature of a Britain in which so much else has gone wrong.

(Frank Lloyd)