

nesses of the French way were calamitously revealed during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, when France's overly centralized system could not get troops to the front in time to stop the Prussians.

At various times during its history—notably during the revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848—the Corps and all it stood for were endangered by the brief ascendancy of politicians and ideas in the classical liberal mode of Adam Smith. Between the 1880s and World War II, these ideas did

prevail in France, but the Corps kept the *dirigiste* tradition alive. After the war, the engineers reemerged and their influence spread throughout the government and into the new para-public sector of electric power, gas, coal, banks, airlines, telecommunications, Renault, and other units that they did so much to create. True, says Smith, they continued to commit prideful blunders, but “it is no less true that for 250 years they sustained an ethos of public service rarely found elsewhere.”

China's Wishful Politics

The tragedy of Tiananmen Square, suggests MIT's Lucian W. Pye in *Asian Survey* (April 1990), is that it was so typical of Chinese politics.

The Beijing Spring of democratic hopes and the horrors of the Tiananmen Massacre brought out in bold relief the basic contradictions of Chinese political culture. The inspiring student demonstrations of April and May were a reminder of the degree to which modern Chinese politics has been carried along more by hope than by accomplishment. It is a politics of becoming, not of being. It was not just Mao Zedong but all Chinese leaders who, no matter what has happened, will say "the future is bright." Chinese leaders and intellectuals concentrate on describing how wonderful the "New China" is going to be and

how awful the past has been; thereby they avoid hardheaded analysis of the present. Students of China are equally caught up in this spirit of hope, so that wishful thinking often substitutes for critical analysis. The conventional wisdom, for example, is that a "Chinese revolution" has been going on for the last 150 years. Yet, for most of that time the country was getting nowhere and the ways of thinking of the majority of the Chinese people had not greatly changed. Were a member of the reform movement of the last days of the 19th century to return to China today, he would not experience a Rip Van Winkle effect; he could easily pick up on the current discussions of "building socialism with Chinese characteristics" and other wishful dreams about modernizing China while keeping China somehow "Chinese."

Goodbye to All That?

England is the last place on earth one would expect to find a national identity crisis, yet, like the Third World people they once ruled, write Witoszek and Sheeran, who teach at University College in Galway, the English are now asking, “What is my nation?”

The causes are various: Britain's post-war decline, the prospect of European integration, and the growing population in England of Third World immigrants who “insist on respect for and promotion of their own cultural values.” But at bottom

“Form and the Beast: The English Mystique” by Nina Witoszek and Patrick Sheeran, in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Summer 1990), One West Range, Charlottesville, Va. 22903.

the authors believe that the problem is England's loss of a sense of civilizing mission in the world. As the journalist Henry Fairlie put it in 1976, “Britain is missionary or it is nothing. It is an exemplar or it is nothing.”

Unlike many other nations, which define themselves in terms of a lost past, England, Witoszek and Sheeran write, has defined itself in terms of opposition, as the embodiment of adulthood, maturity, or what they call Form, in opposition to “the Beast.” As evidence, the authors point to

Fidel's Future

A Survey of Recent Articles

Since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, Fidel Castro has ordered a new slogan plastered on walls and billboards throughout Cuba: *socialismo o muerte* (socialism or death). But dissidents have discovered that it can be transformed by a few late night swipes with a spray can into something entirely different: *socialismo es muerte* (socialism is death).

The dissidents' handiwork is quickly painted over, notes journalist William Steif in *Nieman Reports* (Summer 1990), but other challenges may prove more formidable for Castro.

The Cuban economy is in shambles. Steif reports that one evening, 110 Cubans stood in line to buy three quarters of a pound of chicken imported from Bulgaria, half their monthly ration; the regime is now rounding up old jalopies that are still on the road and selling them to Western collectors as "classic cars" to raise hard currency. Castro refuses to contemplate reform and has even banned the weekly *Moscow News* because it brings tidings of glasnost and perestroika.

In *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1990), Susan Kaufman Purcell of the Americas Society confirms that the Cuban economy is deteriorating. Economic growth is negative; productivity is declining. And Castro is sustained by huge helpings of Soviet aid that he can no longer count on: Moscow's \$4-7 billion in military and economic aid account for 19-21 percent of the island nation's gross domestic product. Mikhail Gorbachev recently signed a protocol renewing Soviet aid for two years, not the five years Castro wanted; a new trade pact (Moscow pays twice the world price for Cuban sugar) has

yet to be negotiated. Moreover, Cuba is dependent on the nations of what used to be called the socialist world for 90 percent of its trade. Will they have the same appetite for Cuban sugar and rum now that the Cold War is over?

Purcell also detects many signs of political weakness in Castro's Cuba, from the summer 1989 execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa—officially for drug trafficking but quite possibly because Castro saw him as a rival—to the militarization last winter of the neighborhood Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. The defeat of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua and of General Manuel Noriega in Panama leave Castro politically isolated in Latin America.

Purcell believes that Castro soon will be reduced to choosing between "using Cuba's already weakened institutions to mobilize and control an increasingly desperate population or loosening political and economic controls in order to raise productivity." Both paths are fraught with peril for him.

But where Purcell sees weakness, Gillian Gunn, a researcher at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, sees only strength. Writing in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1990), she contradicts virtually every one of Purcell's points: increased repression and the Ochoa execution show how firmly Castro is in control; the economy is growing (albeit slowly), not shrinking; reductions in Soviet aid are unlikely; the fall of Noriega and Ortega strengthened Castro by refueling anti-American sentiment; and so on. A loud "Here, here!" is entered by Saul Landau in the *Nation* (June 25, 1990).

It is hardly surprising that Gunn sees con-

some great struggles in English literature: between Beowulf and Grendl, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Marlow and Kurtz, Piggy and Jack. "By the 19th century the heritage of Form could seem a biological endowment rather than a cultural artifact . . . such acquired Anglo-Saxon characteristics as self-control and respect for law, reason, restraint, and distrust of enthusiasm [seemed] heritable." The Gentleman became the English cultural ideal.

To a much greater degree than the Spanish, Dutch, or other "immature" imperial peoples, the English persuaded their subjects that they were a superior breed. To the English, the absence of Form in a society was, simply put, shameful. At home, the English maintained a "cult of adulthood," exemplified by their system of "public" schools and "Oxbridge," designed to speed the young along to maturity as quickly as possible. Form showed

tinued U.S. pressure on Castro as counterproductive: "Every new U.S. threat gives him another opportunity to wrap himself in the Cuban flag and another pretext for jailing dissidents." The real surprise is that in *Policy Review* (Summer 1990), a publication of the conservative Heritage Foundation, Georgetown University's Luis E. Aguilar endorses what used to be the "soft" line on Castro: Lift the U.S. trade embargo. He says that such a move "could deal a severe psychological blow to Castro, indicating to Cuba that the United States no longer regards him "as a power to be reckoned with." Meanwhile, in *Foreign Affairs*, considered the very embodiment of Establishment "moderation," Purcell declares that "the issue now is whether to maintain the current policy or toughen it." She favors the latter course.

But who can bring Castro down?

Steif saw scattered signs of dissent—a young man stood and shouted "Down with Castro!" at a televised boxing match in Havana in February before police dragged him away—but he thinks that most Cubans are still bound by "pride and nostalgia" to Castro. A few intrepid human-rights activists persevere, but many of Castro's natural opponents left with the more than one million emigres who have fled Cuba during Castro's 31-year reign. Castro "learned well the lessons of sociology," Irving Louis Horowitz of Rutgers observes in *Freedom at Issue* (July-

Aug. 1990). "Permitting emigration is the functional equivalent of tranquilizing a population." But he thinks the end is near, because Castro's rule has degenerated into pure *caudillismo*.

In *Policy Review*, Aguilar flatly states that "the military is the only possible source of change inside Cuba." He notes that some 40,000 troops are due to return from Angola by next year and are not going to like what they find. He also makes the interesting argument that the Cuban exiles in Miami must be restrained; they remember a Cuba that is no more—a Cuba that was, for example, 30

percent rather than 50 percent black. (The nation's blacks have not achieved full equality but have fared relatively well under Castro.)

Describing a visit to Cuba in the *New Yorker* (August 13, 1990), Argentinian journalist Jacobo Timerman depicts a grim land and a sul-

len, oppressed people and declares Castro's fate all but sealed. Yet he searches in vain for the "hidden movements" in the Cuban spirit which will bring down the tyrant. "It occurs to me," Timerman writes, "that *waiting* is Cuba's inner dynamic. Cubans are waiting for an outcome, a result, a finale."

The rest of the world is watching and waiting, too, but not with the same fascination that Castro aroused only a few years ago. The strutting Maximum Leader who boasted of being in history's vanguard is now bound for its dustbin. The only question seems to be when he will he arrive.



itself most obviously in the use of language: "In no other Western country has one's accent such power to elevate or downgrade socially."

Today, however, the empire that expressed the English mission is gone and Form itself is under attack from within. Its critics include foreign-born novelist Salman Rushdie (who is as hard on England as he is on Islam) and the "unrestrained, overimpulsive" leader of the La-

bor Party, Neil Kinnock. In England, the authors say, such liberation from the constraints of Form is not just a breach of decorum, "it implies a crisis of identity." Yet they do not underestimate Form's ability to survive. "By its very nature Form proves its superiority when under attack . . . To the very end it does the right thing at the right time, thereby morally embarrassing the rebel"—as it did by coming to the defense of Rushdie.