

## CHAPTER 1

# *Democracy and its Corruptions*

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'The one pervading evil of democracy is the tyranny of the majority, or rather of that party, not always the majority, that succeeds, by force or fraud, in carrying elections.' That sentence, so resonant with recent events all over the world and particularly in America, was written by Acton in 1877. The problems with democracy have a long pedigree.

One problem is that democracy has always had two definitions. The first definition is government by and for *all* the people. Since the word democracy means literally 'the people rule,' we may take this to be the true as well as the desirable meaning; but it is hard to implement in practice, because a 'people' will have many different interests, all clamouring to be heard and acted upon. In practice, the only way it can be implemented is for government to remain above and beyond the clamour of different interests; but this is not the route that has been travelled.

The second definition, easier to implement but potentially much less satisfactory, is government by a simple majority. And 'government by majority' is all too apt to degenerate into government by a minority, as disillusioned voters, who feel they are represented by no particular party, drop out of the voting altogether.

Common to all democracies in practice is a law-making body consisting of representatives elected by majority popular vote. If we prefer the more difficult definition of democracy –

government by and for *all* the people — it follows that minorities may require protection from the majority, which may be decent and well-meaning, but equally well may not.

The ‘tyranny of the majority’ is a phrase used by many writers on democracy since the days of Plato and Aristotle. When the majority seethes with malice towards a minority, it may only be the law that can hold the majority in check; but what protection is that, when the law can be changed or ignored? Tyrannies of a majority can be just as evil as any other kind of tyranny; perhaps even more so, as when a majority sets out to exterminate a minority completely. The frequency of such endeavours will surely be what marks out the twentieth century in history.

Those needing protection may be ethnic or cultural or religious minorities, or they may be a class. The rich have always been vulnerable in a democracy, because the less affluent majority is likely to want their money. The rich were the vulnerable minority under consideration when democracy was written about by the ancient Greeks. Solon, born around 638 BC, was a poet as well as a statesman; his reputation as the founder of democracy rests upon his even-handedness between rich and poor. He recognised that a measured redistribution of wealth is not only necessary for democracy to survive, it is also just. For those who manage to get their hands on large amounts of money are not necessarily the most admirable or the most deserving: ‘many curs are rich, while men of principle are poor’:

One man makes noble efforts, but despite them all  
falls into unforeseen calamity:  
Another acts badly, yet God gives him complete success,  
freed from his folly’s consequence.

On the other hand, Solon had no time for demagogues stirring up envy and greed in the populace:

By their foolishness, the citizens themselves seek to destroy  
our city’s pride,  
Unprincipled mob-leaders — may they suffer badly  
for their crimes! —  
They know not how to prosper modestly, nor to enjoy in peace  
the happiness they have.

Known as the 'law-giver,' Solon created the first constitution of Athens, which was designed to maintain a balance of power, and keep both rich and poor from acting tyrannically.

This principle of 'government for the good of all' underpinned the concerns of later Greek philosophers. Aristotle, born 384 BC, described three types of government; rule by one person, rule by a few, and rule by the many. Each type, he said, can exist in a good or a bad manifestation. When one person rules well, he is a monarch; when he rules selfishly, he is a tyrant. Equally, 'the few' can rule well or badly depending on whether they rule selfishly or in the common interest. The same factor determines whether rule by 'the many' is good or bad; does 'the many' want to tyrannize, or does it want to rule wisely and in the best interest of all?

Whatever the virtues and faults of Athenian democracy, we would hardly recognize it as democracy today. Excluded from its citizenship were women, foreign residents and slaves. Acton again:

A state which has only 30,000 citizens in a population of 500,000, and is governed, practically, by about 3,000 people at a public meeting, is scarcely democratic.

The history of democracy since then has included widening, in fits and starts, the franchise — to include eventually everyone except children, incarcerated criminals and the insane.

The Greek philosophers were generally sceptical, if not positively disapproving, of even their limited form of democracy. Yet by their various criticisms they established the principles which would underpin the successful workings of future democratic states. Socrates encouraged citizens to think for themselves and not take the word of the powerful on trust. Plato insisted that all civil authority should be held in respect of the higher authority of the public good and of the Gods, and so be limited and conditional. And Aristotle in his old age admitted that democracy must have a place in the ideal constitution; that power should be distributed among the citizens according to both property and numbers, so that no class should predominate. His ideal constitution was mixed.

The idea of a mixed constitution essentially adds components to a democracy to protect vulnerable minorities. This makes it less democratic as 'majority democracy', but more democratic as government by and for *all* the people. What components to add has been the subject of debate ever since, and various countries come up with various solutions. In Britain, the debate was rekindled recently in discussions over the composition of the second House, when it was thought no longer suitable that hereditary titles were a proper qualification. A commission was set up to decide on more appropriate criteria and its report recommended that various minorities should be formally recognised and represented in the second chamber. (This has not been implemented by the present government, who appear happier with the current mix of what historian Hugh Bicheno calls 'government placepersons and others having all the attributes of petty criminals save the minimum courage to rob the helpless openly'.)

Constitutional additions to protect minorities come under fire from politicians who prefer their power undiluted, and from voters who like simple solutions. In the words of Channing (1780–1842)

The doctrine that the majority ought to govern passes with the multitude as an intuition, and they have never thought how far it is to be modified in practice and how far the application of it ought to be controlled by other principles.

When politicians appeal for simple majority democracy and begin to absorb all civil institutions into the state, they are paving the way for tyranny – the familiar 'tyranny of the majority'.

### **Democracy in America**

When the American colonists won their freedom after the War of Independence, the most influential among them were sent by their various states to discuss what kind of constitution the new republic should have. There was widespread agreement on two things; the powers of the new federal government

vis-à-vis the states should be limited; and majority democracy was the great peril to be avoided.

Washington's concern was to avoid the dangers of party politics and factionalism, in which the tyranny of one party would oppress the rest. Madison agreed: 'In all cases where the majority are united by a common interest or passion the rights of the minority are in danger.' And Hamilton:

If government is in the hands of the few, they will tyrannize over the many; if in the hands of the many, they will tyrannize over the few. It ought to be in the hands of both, and they should be separated ... Representation alone will not do; demagogues will generally prevail.

There was great apprehension among those who wrote the constitution that it would not serve the purposes for which it was designed, i.e. that it would not protect the people from those waiting to exploit and abuse them. Their apprehensions were well-founded. One by one, their anxieties were fulfilled.

The first to be fulfilled was Washington's, that party politics and factionalism would dominate the affairs of state. The electoral college in particular was designed to resist the influence of party and faction, the idea being that each state should elect its most respected citizens to choose the president. Within ten years, political parties had taken over elections to the electoral college. (The original intention being lost, the electoral college now seems a strange anomaly, whereby a president may be elected on a minority popular vote.)

A second anxiety, that parties on coming to power would dish out favours to the factions which had elected them, was not fulfilled for another twenty or so years. During that time, the interests of the South and the North had diverged, and between 1824 and 1832 pro-Northern interests, riding on the back of widespread popular revulsion against slavery, legislated tariffs which favoured its industrial powerbase over and against that of Southern agriculture. The Civil War was fought as much over this principle as over slavery. Ever since victory of the North over the South, distributing favours among supporters has been the norm for incoming governments.

A third anxiety of the founding fathers was that the US would turn into a scheming imperial power. Towards the end of Washington's farewell address (1796) the following paragraph occurs (it is oddly missing from the version of the text currently posted by the State Department on the internet):

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish; that they will control the usual current of the passions, or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations. But, if I may even flatter myself that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism; this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare, by which they have been dictated.

When the North won the Civil War, the newly powerful central government was tempted to just these mischiefs of foreign intrigue. Seward, the leading spirit among the pro-North, pro-industrial faction, argued to his fellow-countrymen:

You are already the great continental power of America. But does that content you? I trust it does not. You want the commerce of the world, which is the empire of the world.

How prophetic were his words! And another pattern was thereby established: of a 'fight against evil' being the best opportunity for federal and robber-imperial power to extend itself. This theme will be investigated in a later chapter.

### **Censorship in America**

The great French commentator on America, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) puzzled over another feature of American democracy which survives to this day; its success at managing dissenting voices, and the lack of any need for formal political censorship.

Every now and then, a great groundswell of popular opinion in America actually succeeds in changing policy, as it did in the Vietnam War. Outside of these occasions, dissent rumbles away and can be published for the most part freely in small-

circulation journals. It never even reaches the majority of the public, so there is no need for any authoritarian reaction. There is the further reassurance that even if it does reach a wider audience, public opinion is more robustly conformist in America than anywhere else on earth. Those, for instance, who object to the activities of the CIA in destabilizing foreign countries, financing murder and torture and propping up corrupt regimes are dismissed as irritants or radical crackpots by the majority of voters, who want two things passionately: prosperity, and a belief that America is good. Only when a spectacular outrage shakes the feel-good factor of being American is there any mainstream objection.

Censorship is unnecessary because the mainstream media censor themselves, for commercial not political reasons. 'We give our readers what they want to read' is a principle which applies also to TV, film, and any popular medium. If an item might offend 'consumers' — thereby tainting advertisers and their products with unpatriotic odium, it will not be disseminated.

This genius of American democracy, to make dissent for the most part simply irrelevant, was noted by de Tocqueville in 1835:

There is no freedom of opinion in America. The ruling power (i.e. the majority) in the United States is not to be made game of. The smallest reproach irritates its sensibility, and the slightest joke that has any foundation in truth renders it indignant; from the forms of its language up to the solid virtues of its character, everything must be made the subject of encomium. No writer, whatever be his eminence, can escape paying this tribute of adulation to his fellow citizens. The majority lives in the perpetual utterance of self-applause, and there are certain truths which the Americans can learn only from strangers or from experience.

He noted that the power of this censorship was more powerful even than the censorship of the European tyrant Louis XIV:

Labrouyère inhabited the palace of Louis XIV when he composed his chapter on 'The Great', and Molière criticized courtiers in the plays that were acted before the court. But the ruling power in the United States is not to be made game of.

De Tocqueville summed up the attitude of America to its dissidents, shunned and deprived of esteem:

You are free to think differently from me and to retain your life, your property, and all that you possess; but you are henceforth a stranger among your people. You may retain your civil rights, but they will be useless to you, for you will never be chosen by your fellow citizens if you solicit their votes; and they will affect to scorn you if you ask for their esteem. You will remain among men, but you will be deprived of the rights of mankind. Your fellow creatures will shun you like an impure being; and even those who believe in your innocence will abandon you, lest they should be shunned in their turn. Go in peace! I have given you your life, but it is an existence worse than death.

Since de Tocqueville wrote, the main difference is that there is now a flourishing small industry of dissident writers and publications which are all the more strident and fierce for the impossibility that they will have any influence on the majority.

In between de Tocqueville and today was the case of Mark Twain. During the Cold War, American academics were astonished to hear that Soviet Russia was accusing it of political censorship of its most popular and celebrated writer. Mark Twain, so the accusation went, had spent the last years of his life writing passionately against US imperialism; and these writings had been suppressed.

A little investigation revealed that it was indeed true; he had spent his last years thus, and none of those writings were in print. A little further investigation revealed that the Mark Twain Company, which owned all his writings, was indeed suppressing them; but for commercial reasons, because they would spoil his image as a good American and threaten sales of his work. So a book was allowed to be published to remedy this situation, a compilation of his more acerbic writings under the title *On The Damned Human Race*. The mass public ignored it – the whole affair was a storm in a teacup. The selective attention of the great American complacency was robust.

### **American democracy today**

America is now a democracy ruled by a small minority whose factions – represented by the two parties – diverge only

slightly in their interests. Each party regularly hands out favours to the interests which finance it, and central government seizes ever more power over the lives of its citizens. Half those eligible to vote do not bother,<sup>1</sup> so the president is elected by roughly a quarter of eligible voters. Many of those who do vote do it somewhat despairingly, wondering why democracy cannot produce a better choice, often voting more against the other candidate than for their own,<sup>2</sup> so the proportion of real enthusiasts for the president or for particular Senators and Congressmen may be very small indeed.

Who or what is the minority that runs America? Cobbett called America 'an aristocracy of the rich — the most damned of all aristocracies.' The huge amounts of money needed to mount a political campaign exclude all except the rich, with their two party factions. In such circumstances it is patronising cheek to criticize poor people for failing to vote. For whom would they vote? However, two centuries of being ruled by the rich, with the important caveat that they must share it out and please enough of their camp followers to win elections, has helped the country grow very rich indeed, in spite of its enormous foreign debts. Thus, popular dissent is quiet.

### Democracy in Europe

Democracy in America developed from English roots under the restraining influence of a constitution. The constitution was designed by conscientious and deliberate thinkers, committed to ideas of liberty and responsible government, in a process of argument and compromise and in the urgent necessity of immediate requirement.

The development of democracy in Europe was quite different. It emerged gradually, making progress by degrees and in constant political struggle with what was already there — the

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[1] In 1996, 49% of eligible voters voted; in 2000, a closer and more dramatic election, 51%. Figures for the Senate and Congress are consistently even lower.

[2] For instance, voting *against* Dole because he might tax gasoline; *against* Bush because he would cut social programmes.

ancient system of monarchs, nobles and people. In the old system, a sort of balance existed in that the monarch and people shared a common interest in preventing the nobles from exercising too much power. Also moderating the exercise of power was the principle that the laws of God should hold sway over the laws of man; however much hypocrisy accompanied it, the principle was a significant restraining factor over monarchs, nobles and people alike. Even the church, itself an enormous temporal power, was occasionally restrained by it. Extreme and pervasive tyrannies of the kind common in the twentieth century found it harder to flourish in an age when all agreed that God would punish those who transgressed.

As the educated middle classes became more significant, so pressure grew for representative democracy as we might recognize it today. Middle class demagogues set about persuading the people that the old system was not in their interests. The people themselves were not easily persuaded, for monarchical government provided certain assurances which people were reluctant to abandon. In England for instance, the capricious and overbearing Charles I provoked civil war; but when the parliamentarians won it, they had to suppress simple democracy right from the start, because most of the populace and the elected assembly wanted a return to monarchy. According to the historian Conrad Russell:

It was impossible to have a republic based on free elections in a predominantly royalist country, in which the king's accession day was still greeted with spontaneous public celebrations.

Cromwell, seeking stability as well as a form of workable democracy, found himself reluctantly adopting more powers than the monarch ever had. When he was asked to take the title of king, the intention of the proposers was to reduce his power, not increase it. Parliament 'knew what a king could do, but not what a protector could do, and the restoration of kingship could mean the restoration of the rule of law.'

In continental Europe, democracy met with more intransigent resistance. Partly in reaction to pressure for democratic change, the theory of the 'enlightened despot' was born. If government were conducted according to reason — as opposed to

religion, hierarchy and superstition — then a ruler could rule in the best interests of his people with the help of other ‘reasonable’ people. Democracy would never be necessary; in fact it would be counterproductive, because ‘the people’ were in the nature of things less reasonable and less educated than the mixture of philosophers and bureaucrats whom the monarch would choose to administer them.

Using reason and unlimited power, a well-meaning despot could, so the theory went, maximize the happiness of all, exercising a maximum of power and control over the lives and institutions of his subjects. This new rationalist justification of tyranny would be later adopted by revolutionary political movements inclined to claim absolute power for the state, to be exercised on behalf of ‘the masses’ by self-appointed enlightened representatives, who would — of course — be the revolutionaries themselves.

The first victorious attempt at democratic revolution, the French Revolution, collapsed in disorder. It had been inspired by the example of America, but in the chaos which ensued those who wished to adopt a new constitution were defeated by political manipulators and demagogues. As a result, first France then Europe was turned into a bloodbath.

The example of the French Revolution haunted attempts at democracy in Europe for a century and a half. In the meantime, industrialization was giving power to a new class, for whom exploitation of large numbers of depersonalized workers was just part of the industrial process. So a further new class was born, the industrial proletariat, whose degrading living and working conditions became the scandal of European civilization.

### **‘The masses — what masses?’**

‘Anyone taken as an individual is tolerably sensible and reasonable; as a member of a crowd he becomes a blockhead.’ Such is Schiller’s explanation for the behaviour of people *en masse*, doing things they would never do as individuals.

In the nineteenth century the term ‘the masses’ was coined to denote the new aggregations of industrial workers living in

penury and desperation around the new factories of mass-production. Their desperate situation and their concentration in small areas made them ideal material for revolutionaries to work on. What way forward did they have in the old order of things? What else but total upheaval could better their condition?

The answer to these questions in England was 'organized labour,' which gradually became possible by changes in the law, but on the Continent the tradition of enlightened despotism put up a more brutal resistance to trades unions and to self-organizing labour.

Meanwhile liberals, seeing the injustice and the oppression in the situation, took up the cause of the workers, and conservative Europeans became nervous about the consequences. Burckhardt wrote to a friend in the 1880's:

Everything is possible in Europe since the Paris Commune, chiefly because there are everywhere good, splendid liberal people who do not quite know the boundaries of right and wrong and where the duty of resistance and defence begins. It is these men who open the doors and level the paths for the terrible masses everywhere.

Opposing attitudes to 'the masses' put intellectuals into many different camps, and between them a battleground of ideas which remains alive to this day.

One camp insists that even to think of large numbers of people as a 'mass' is to dehumanize them and thereby pave the way for mass murder. John Carey wrote, in *The Intellectuals and the Masses*:

Contemplating the extermination of the Jews was made easier by thinking of them as a mass ... In this sense the Holocaust may be seen as the ultimate indictment of the idea of the mass and its acceptance by twentieth-century intellectuals.

The twentieth century intellectuals of whom John Carey disapproves saw 'the masses' as repulsive and vulgar, deadly to culture, swarming insects, faceless worker-robots, ineducable, stupid; or even like a mass phalanx of the walking dead, as in a modern computer game. T.S. Eliot's line from *The Wasteland* on people walking to work across London Bridge — 'I had not

known death had undone so many' – compares the masses, by stealing a line from Dante's inferno, to those already in hell.

The philosopher Michael Oakeshott had a milder version: the 'masses' are those who find it hard to thrive in an individualist world, who long for a sense of belonging and community, and who therefore look to the state for protection and also to tell them what to do. Furthermore each of us, to varying degrees, contains this element of anti-individual or individual *manqué* who wishes the state to be (in Freudian, not Oakeshottian, terms) a gigantic breast, nappy-changer and authority figure, all rolled into one. The state remade in this image is what is popularly called the nanny state, though wet-nurse state or even Mummy-and-Daddy state might be more appropriate.

A less sympathetic view comes from the biologist C.D. Darlington, who wrote objectively of humanity as if it were another species. Upon the subject of political control being removed from the professional classes and given to the masses, he wrote:

The twentieth century, we were told in 1905, was going to be the century of the common man, and so it turned out to be. It was devoted to submerging impartially nature and civilization, art and individuality, under the festering sores of economic growth.

Yet another camp, the middle class demagogue-intellectuals, sensed the possibilities of power latent in the masses for a new class war in which they could be leaders. They tended to see the masses in mystical terms, as humanity writ large; the 'people' or the 'proletariat' in whose name they would establish a new millennium. The fulfilment of the individual in this new order would be not the cultivation of his own personality, but according to Fabians like the Webbs: 'the filling, in the best possible way, of his humble function in the great social machine.' Where and when these middle class revolutionaries succeeded in persuading 'the masses' to revolution, they proved to be more ruthless and adept at oppressing them than the old order; but that is another story. The point here is that democracy now had another competitor besides the old order; it had to compete with revolution, with the idea that slaughter

and appropriation could lead the way forward to a new age of happiness and prosperity.

The revolutions inspired by these writers and orators are now a matter of history. The most terrible century of all has left us; the mass movements inspired by intellectuals have done their worst; the piles of dead, the burnings the shootings and gassings even worse than the slaughters of Genghis Khan and Tamburlane. Whether the destruction of European civilization will be as profound as the destruction of Eastern civilization wreaked by those two men remains to be seen.

From all this, democracy emerged as the only realistic option. Criticism of the fundamental idea was henceforth irrelevant. 'The masses', or the people, the majority, are now in charge. They are affluent, educated by the state of which they are masters, and in these circumstances they have proved to be not malicious. This fits with Edmund Burke's observation:

the people have no interest in disorder. When they do wrong, it is their error and not their crime. But with the governing part of the state, it is far otherwise. They may certainly act ill by design, as well as by mistake.

From this perspective, the most pertinent accusation levelled against electorates in modern democracies is gullibility. They believe the promises of rascals and of an even more dangerous type, the messianic self-believer. For a politician to be in with a chance of election he must be prepared to make false promises. From this comes the deterioration in political life, as it empties of honest men and women. The electorate may be guilty only of gullibility, but it is gullibility on a massive scale, capable of reducing the status of citizens to state- and corporate-owned serfs, and of turning the planet into a desert.

But there is another account implicit in the above, which is this. Human civilization has prospered first and foremost by the achievements of a few of its members, scattered individuals who, like Pushkin, arise out of unpredictable combination into propitious circumstances. The stability of society is provided by those with talent but no genius who carry forward what is valuable in civilization. The vast numbers of humanity whom civilization now supports have flourished in the wake of the

abilities, inventions and ideas of these others, including ideas of governance and freedom. The masses and their unscrupulous leaders have created and won a class war which leaves them in charge, and this unholy collusion is now reshaping the world in its own interests and in its own image. Distrustful and misunderstanding of the conditions of freedom and responsibility, only able truly to enjoy 'bread and circuses' — that is affluence, entertainment and power — the majority and their leaders offer a choice to talented individuals: find yourself employment in the provision of bread and circuses, or find yourself ignored.

The situation is exacerbated because in each one of us to varying degrees there exists the individual *manqué* referred to above, who wishes to be looked after and handed Paradise on a plate. Whereas this powerful persona used to be expressed — and the hopelessness of its condition felt — in religion, it now looks fully expectant to the state for the impossible fulfilment of its needs.

In this account, the truth of which is uncertain because the drama is not yet played out, items such as 'freedom of speech' and institutions such as the environmentalist charities exist as tokens of conscience, acquitting the sentimental majority in its own eyes of any wrongdoing. Meanwhile the actual and vicious business of suppressing freedom and conscience and plundering the planet carries on unabated, and our productivist society continues to supply us with all the shoddy paraphernalia we are so familiar with, delivered by corporations and governments where sense, conscience and responsibility are alike absent. This is the form of totalitarianism represented in Britain as the 'Third Way' and in the United States as the 'New World Order.'

The heart of darkness in this tale is that the majority in all civilized countries now actively prefers this arrangement to any condition of responsible freedom. Civilization to the majority means principally a source of goods, novelties, services and comforts. Their political leaders reassure them there is no need for restraint; their favoured courtiers, masquerading as intellectuals, academics and creative types, supply them with an

endless supply of flattery. Just as the Greek love of war is reputed to have destroyed that civilization, so the blind love affair of the majority — a majority that is in all of us — with its own comforts and stimulations is destroying ours.

The irony seems rather bitter when one reflects that the whole glorious endeavour of civilization is being destroyed without a great deal of pleasure being had by anyone.

### **Times of plenty**

In theory, with machines making so much wealth for us, we should all be able to sit back and enjoy ourselves a bit. That was how it seemed to the science fiction writers of the 1950s; by the year 2000 we would all be dressed in aluminium suits and travelling around on monorails. Our leisure time was a bit of a puzzle — what would such lofty creatures do for fun? But in reality that problem didn't arise. People with time on their hands are searching for another job; and those with jobs work longer and longer hours.

Mechanization has transformed all our relations — with each other, with the natural world, with work and production — in ways we have yet to understand. One side-effect of the prosperity we now enjoy was described by Willa Cather in a novel written in 1925:

With prosperity came a kind of callousness; everyone wanted to destroy the old things they used to take pride in. The orchards, which had been nursed and tended so carefully twenty years ago, were now left to die of neglect. It was less trouble to run into town in an automobile and buy fruit than it was to raise it.

Overproduction is most clearly evident in the fact that war is now good for economies not for the old-fashioned reason of plunder, but because it stimulates production at home. 'America's defence spending,' according to *The Times* (Aug 1<sup>st</sup> 2003), 'grew so strongly in supplying the war against Iraq that it propelled the US economy to a spring surge.' In other words, production of goods (tanks, missiles, ammunition etc) destined only to be destroyed or to become redundant is good for the economy. On the face of it, to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, it might be better for the government just to pay manufacturers

to make stuff and smash it up. More simply still, it could adopt Keynes's suggestion and distribute money to those most likely to spend it, the poor.<sup>3</sup>

As far as democracy is concerned, the emancipation of the majority from skilled hands-on labour, most of which is now undertaken by machines, has resulted in a large number of people available for other work. Two expanding concerns have been happy to make use of this work force: corporations and governments. Corporations manage the machines that make us wealthy, and also the wealth that is thereby created. With that wealth electorates can afford states employing a quarter of the workforce and absorbing half of all gross national product – which is roughly the situation in most Western democracies.

Our huge democratic manager-states are not as tyrannical as their forebears – the communist and fascist states – but they borrow many of their techniques and they share common origins, which is why I have made communism and fascism the subject of the next chapter.

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[3] Keynes's actual suggestion, included in his *General Theory*, was this: 'If the Treasury were to fill old bottles with bank notes, bury them at suitable depths in disused coal mines which are then filled up with town rubbish, and leave them to private enterprise on the well-tried principles of *laissez faire* to dig them up again, there need be no more unemployment and, with the help of the repercussions, the real income of the community and its capital wealth also would probably become a great deal greater than it actually is.' Whether the money and/or bottles would ever reach the holes, let alone the poor who would actually spend it – that being the point of the exercise – seems not to have been addressed. My thanks to N.M. and R.S. for this information.