

## **SCOTLAND AND NEW LABOUR'S EXIT**

### **RULING SCOTLAND FROM LONDON**

Once upon a time there was a Scots King who ruled from London. He surrounded himself with sycophantic courtiers, whose career prospects came from telling him what he wanted to hear. He sold honours – because he was very prudent over money until his funding crisis – and gave the courtiers new titles. He was very clever at inventing and hiding new taxes. He didn't think much of parliament. He only bothered to attend when he wanted to justify raising more money – usually for fighting wars that the people did not really want to fight. But it took quite a long time for his MPs to stand up to him – 15 years in fact. For the Scots King and his party believed that they had the divine right to rule, especially in Scotland. But discontent about his rule was growing. It took the form of a new national party which stressed its dislike of his client rulers. They distrusted the common spin and the new systems that always accompanied his every statement of values. Some suggested that a wind of change was blowing.

The first protests in Scotland had been seen in Edinburgh, but quickly spread to Fife, to Glasgow Govan to Dundee and Stirling and even to Gordon in the North East. The new national covenant had difficulty in getting most of the noble political elite to sign. It appeared at first as if the King had mislaid his powerful ring, rather than lost it. His party had certainly lost whatever moral authority and hope it had once given the people. Perhaps the ring should be thrown away into the waters of the new lake at the Holyrood concrete bunker that the King had financed. But this was a step too far for our rulers. The Scots King lost England two election terms later. Then he tried to use the Scots to win back his power in England. But the English new model army was a lot bigger. And when he could rule neither England nor Scotland anymore, he lost his head. His name was King Charles I (1).

Any similarities with Gordon Brown are a tragic co-incidence.

## CELTIC RESISTANCE

I first came across the words of Tacitus in Negri's work on Empire: 'They make slaughter and they call it peace'. Written before Iraq it was an accurate prediction of what was to come, because this is the way that Empires operate. Tacitus had taken the words from a Caledonian King – as the Romans called what is now Scotland. Calgacus - 'sword wielder' - was busy 'Defying Rome' the 'robbers of the world'. 'To robbery, butchery and rapine they give the lying name of government' (2). Calgacus' words in an imperial writer's pen, critical of the excesses of Nero, aptly summarises the anarchist case against Empires. Calgacus has become a symbol of the Celtic resistance to the centres of imperial and hierarchical power.

Scotland - now with only a tenth of the population of its big Southern neighbour - can claim the nearest thing to the foundational thinker of the Labour Party - Keir Hardie from Lanarkshire; the first two terms Labour Prime Minister - Ramsay MacDonald from Lossiemouth (3); and today's hope of left Labour from Kirkcaldy. It has been a long waiting for Gordo to arrive. It is on the Celtic fringes that the socialist tradition has taken its most radical course in Britain. For Scotland, besides a host of other major figures from the ILP and Glasgow of 1919-1931, it had the most radical member of the 1920s Labour Government in John Wheatley, and the ILP's failed radical, Jimmy Maxton. The death of Wheatley and the political destruction of Maxton mark the end of the all British, but Celtic driven, revolutionary up-surge of the 1920s. Even the Labour Prime Minister that never was, John Smith, was a Scot with an English sounding name, despite his Argyll roots (4). Wales also had its important radicals in Cook and Nye Bevan. Even the great socialist and Irish nationalist thinker - James Connolly - was born in Edinburgh (5).

I have been looking to find and reformulate a socialist discourse, when the actually existing 'socialisms' have been discredited by the triumph of capitalism. In the search for long term alternatives for a socialist theory which has been undermined by these experiences, I am often drawn back to the Scots experience. For if Scotland provides a way into future British possibilities, it should enable us to ground any alternative ideas into a concrete historical situation. As in the movements counter to the old left client rulers of Communists and Socialists in France, Italy and Spain, a small opening potentially further to the old left has occurred in Scotland, in a way - underpinned by Scots nationalism - that has not been possible in England. Is it possible that a Scots popular movement – either in the SNP or in the Scottish Socialists in the next decade could out-pace the possibilities for her big sister? Or are the New Labour new Leninist elite going to stifle the life out of an alternative Socialist Scotland? Are we back to Wallace and Bruce in the Independence War 'peasant revolts', the 1580s Presbyterians, the mid seventeenth century Covenanters or the 1922 ILP when it appeared for a while that new radical possibilities would come out of Scotland? For this we need to look at some periods of past potential rupture. This chapter will attempt this in a snap shot of the radical side to Scottish history.

## **ENGLISH IMPERIALISM AND THE HYBRID SCOTS**

Having never been subjected to Roman rule, Scotland was not so easy to enslave into the serfdoms of feudal England. Although Scotland covers the same land area as England, the mountainous nature of the land made it more difficult to establish the settled lowland agriculture of the English South, while most of the Highland and Hebridean North and West were never fully incorporated into the Lowland realm until after 1745. Since the fifth century Scotland has always been a hybrid nation and the people a hybrid race. The peoples involved were British-Welsh, Celts, Norse, Picts, Romano-British and finally of course the Scots themselves (6). Importing Norman Kings into Scotland by the eleventh century meant that the Norman King of Scots presided over a far more uneven social formation than that in England. Structurally then Scottish feudalism was also a peculiarly hybrid form.

When its elite voted for union with England in 1707, the Scots had a tradition of independent kingship running back for a millennium. The English imperial quest often overflowed into Scotland, especially when Northumbria was either under control or as in the early days, in the ascendant. The border wars that are still remembered today from the brave hearts of the fourteenth century reach back hundreds of years, with Northumbrian attempts to attack the Pictish kingdom first defeated as early as 685. The breathing space given to the King of Scots did not last for ever. As far back as 921, Scottish Kings, under sufferance, were swearing fealty to the 'English Emperor'. It is a tragedy of Scottish – and of Highland history – that the last great king of the North of Scotland from Moray is treated as a pariah after Shakespeare's successful use of Tudor and Stuart historical propaganda. For the legitimate High King of Scots – Macbeth – was overthrown, with the aid of Norman assistance and arms by Malcolm Canmore in 1057. When the Viking Normans conquered England, ten years later, they did not take over long to re-assert their 'over lordship' on the Scots (7).

From the eighth century to the fourteenth century feudalism spread across Western Europe and laid the economic basis for what was 'Christendom'. At its peak around 1200, the feudalism of this era was a dynamic - not a static force. New lands were cleared - in which monasteries played a key role. Agricultural productivity may well have doubled (to reach levels not surpassed until the eighteenth century) and the standards of living in general rose. Population rose likewise (8). In the Scottish case, the essential core of a feudal form of Scottish serfdom, as in the classic case in the Ile de France, was always far more weakly established than in England. A feudal political superstructure, on the Norman English model, was often superimposed on older clan legitimated pre feudal modes of production. This is most notable in the Scottish Highlands and explains more of the peculiar problems of this area and the romantic fascinations with a pre feudal era that elsewhere had been long lost elsewhere in Britain and even in Ireland.

## A HYBRID SCOTS FEUDALISM

Unlike in England where the Normans conquered the North by brute force and in the South by collusion, force and acquiescence, the Normans conquered Scotland by permeation and even after the Wars of Independence by continued steady encroachment. In England a strong Saxon nobility had to be almost entirely eliminated and the Normans inherited it wholesale. In Scotland, there was a clever and complex inter marriage with the old 'Celtic' fiefdoms. In England, the old peasant traditions remained stronger in the North, but feudalism ruled south of the Mersey and Wash. Southern Scotland was more like Northumbria, with a weaker serfdom imposed on an older peasant tradition. Scots Norman feudalism took its major implant under David I after 1124. Scots feudalism was still expanding in the twelfth century - into areas as near as Strathclyde under Malcolm IV until 1165, into Angus and Perth under William the Lion by 1214. The Highland North and West and the Hebridean seaboard had the outward political symbols of feudal power, of landed estates and lordly titles, but little else besides. Indeed here the rule of the 'Canmore' line of the King of Scots was disputed until well into the thirteenth century. There was less feudal 'vassalage' in the Highlands. Clan land was held on the sufferance of the clan chief. The peasants were tenants at will (9).

Smout writes of a peculiar Scots hybrid feudalism as 'clan imbued with feudal character' 'as feudalism became (also) imbued with clan'. In the Highlands, 'society was based on kinship, modified by feudalism; while in the Lowlands, on the other hand, feudalism was modified by kinship'. Dickson describes the early Scots kingdom as a 'military fiefdom fused with pre-existing patterns of *peasant* settlement' (10). To claim this as feudal, as Dickson does, because the peasants were 'exploited' will not do. The clan system may not be the pre-capitalist communal idyll that is sometimes presented; this does not make it automatically feudal. When Norman feudalism did appear, the new Norman or Celtic chiefs were super-imposed on the old clan system, working a new set of obligations on the warrior set of old. The genetic clan then legitimised a system that left many of the Highland peasants in poverty and/or landless. The road to the Clearances was long, but it is not a surprising development out of this system of paternalistic exploitation.

By around 1300, feudalism in much of its West European heartlands had reached a crisis. As only marginally productive lands were now available, incremental output was becoming harder and harder. Yet with a growing population, the land available to the serfs was falling. Average land holdings possibly fell from 100 acres to 20 between 800 and 1300. The peasants were literally driven to death in the attempt to gain new productivity gains. The imperial Plantagenet successors to the Normans – symbolised by Edward I, the hammer of the Scots - who ruled an Empire from Newcastle to Marseilles, were to repeat the Norman invasions in the late thirteenth century, as the English feudal mode of production itself came under pressure. The attack of Edward's 'English' army, 'sent back to think again', in the words of the de facto Scottish national anthem came out of the need to expand the base for the English feudal Empire. If intensive exploitation had reached its limits in England, a further extensive exploitation in Wales and Ireland (11) as well as Scotland was the solution.

## WALLACE AND BRUCE

Far too much Scottish popular history has been dominated by the ridiculous romanticism centred on the resistance of the Scots monarchy - from Bruce's victory of 1314, and then again with the Bonnie Prince Charlie of the '45. Like the real story of Macbeth, there has been a gigantic fraud perpetrated for a serious historical analysis of the popular movements in Scottish history. The real movements – which had the wrong associations for a monarchic and aristocratic Scottish ruling class in the nineteenth century when the romance was re-created - were and still have been obscured from the popular cultural imagination.

What can also be obscured in the heroic story of William Wallace's resistance, however, is Bruce's Norman Scots feudal ruling class attempt to scramble on and off the rival monarchical bandwagons. Both Bruce (on the Norman side) and the Stewarts, his direct successors, had only been in Scotland for a century by 1300. Robert Bruce had not only descended from and also married into older Celtic lines; he had also substantial and wealthier lands in England as the Earl of Huntingdon. Here the Hollywood perception of Bruce is accurate. Bruce was not only torn by his dislike of Balliol and the Comyns, but by the usual feudal pull of land ties and imperial legitimacy, in an era of yet to be founded nation States.

Dickson celebrates Bruce's defeat of 'English feudal imperialism'. This is scarcely true: Plantagenet imperialism was defeated, but English imperialism was only defeated temporarily. It was to come back to haunt Scotland again, play a vital role in the Scottish Reformation and was finally accomplish a take-over in 1707. Feudalism - either Norman English or Norman Scottish - was not defeated at all (12).

What had actually happened in the Scots Independence Wars was that one fraction of a feudal ruling class had won in a bitter and dirty struggle precisely because Bruce had learnt from Wallace, or been forced by the virtual closure of all his baronial support, to discover a new style of guerrilla warfare and draw upon the tradition of peasant and Celtic resistance to any over lordship. Bruce had learned how to fight and lead a popular struggle by turning the sentiment against the hated 'English' invaders to his own feudal benefit. A recent study by McNamee reinforces my view: the Bruce's were for him 'manipulators of popular patriotism'. The masses may not have fought for glory or riches – the Bruce certainly did (13). The death of so much of the old Scottish nobility physically in the Independence wars made it easier for a successful Bruce and then Stewart dynasty to plant their own men or to incorporate new areas of support into a new grand all Scotland alliance.

## **EXPANSIONARY SCOTS FEUDALISM**

The productive crisis which hit the English feudal mode of production thereby had a different social and political impact in Scotland. Most of all it created an early modern concept of the 'nation' of Scotland. Late expansionary Scots Norman feudalism still had new areas to colonise and was not troubled by the labour shortage of a land hungry English serfdom and increasingly powerful English late feudal urban economy. Victory in the 'Independence Wars' meant that the new Bruce regime could begin extending a 'more systematic feudalism' across Scotland. In this the military strength of the new Scots Norman aristocracy were to be used in alliance with the older Celtic nobles to continue the process of political incorporation, while increasing feudal exactions at the same time. Bruce's clever use of the MacDonalld Lordship of the Isles pulled in more of the West. Both the South West and the North East lowlands were new areas of growth. The spread of the English language into these areas was the supreme cultural expression of this expansion.

To claim that half the nobility of Scotland was 'expropriated' - and feudalism thereby defeated - as Dickson does for 1296-1350 is to claim something else. To exchange half the nobility for a new Norman Celtic Scots alliance does not mean that the nobility was 'expropriated', merely that its top personnel had changed. A weak Scottish feudalism was not defeated, its half established remnants continued to grow alongside the hybrid forms of pre feudal modes of production, it had never, in some areas, ever entirely replaced. With only a change in the rulers of Scottish feudalism, the political and economic basis for an early Scottish capitalism, as Dickson himself suggests was still 'chronically weak'. A long run dependence on the English market for Scottish goods speaks volumes.

In England after 1381, the weakening feudal economic base led onto the struggle for power and wealth, symbolised by the War of the Roses. These 'market forces' were less of an issue in Scotland, precisely because it was economically less developed (14). The much smaller economic base in Scotland before the advent of capitalism is shown in an export comparison with England even in the early seventeenth century. 50 percent of Scottish exports were of hides and skins and were 30 times smaller. The Scottish monarchy was even shorter of money than the English; Scottish sixteenth century tax collection compared unfavourably with twelfth century England (15). Indeed, as late as 1700 at least a third of the Scottish 'economy' was not in the cash economy at all. The cynics might comment from an experience of either Glasgow or the Highlands today that substitute the words – 'informal', 'black' or 'non-taxed' economy and the same might still be true.

## SCOTTISH POPULAR RESISTANCE UNDER FEUDALISM

Foster asks the question - where is the Scottish Robin Hood? Or to put this in real history – where is the Scots' - Wat Tyler – the popular leader of a Peoples revolt? Where too is the John Ball - the priests on the side of the popular revolt against feudalism? In the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320, the barons assumed that they and the church leaders could speak as the sole representatives for the people of Scotland. The desire for freedom enshrined in the Scots Barons desire from freedom against any Absolutist King - whether English or Scots - also accorded with a popular peasant resistance to the making of a refreshed feudal serfdom in Scotland. All could fight for Scotland, but the masses could also fight against serfdom.

There can be little doubt that there was a popular element in the Scots Wars of Independence, which included resentment against the rich and powerful; better still if they were 'English'. The Robin Hood ballads were popular in Scotland too. At least, in Wallace's Hollywood Braveheart there is now a real appreciation of a native man of the people, who had to fight his own lords most of the time as well as the usual cowboys - the English. The mass base of the Scots resistance to imperial English power were the squires (like Wallace), small lairds, farmers and craftsmen. The popular struggle against the English was thereby subsumed in a deeper hidden struggle against the 'English' imposition of serfdom, never established in the Highlands and established unwillingly and unequally elsewhere in Scotland. The other fruitful comparison for Scotland here is with the peasants' revolt in Catalonia. The Scots War of Independence takes the place of the English 'peasants revolt' in Scottish history, because what was in 1381 in England a more general up-rising against serfdom, led by the advanced rural areas and the towns, was in Scotland written and subsumed into the Wars of Independence. In a similar way the peasant wars in Sicily were often tied either to Independence struggles or even as late as the nineteenth century against incorporation into the new nation State of Italy (16). So the answer to Foster's question - in a different context is in brief - William Wallace.

Wallace can be celebrated today or in the nineteenth century by the Scots elite because his achievements suit their purpose, as they were built on by Bruce with different purposes and for different ends. To find a popular radicalism, the Scots ruling ideology needs a Wallace. This is not to under estimate the real importance of Wallace's achievements. To turn Foster's good question around - where is the English William Wallace? If the answer is not Robin Hood - important because Robin is as much myth and hope, part messianic deliverer, the answer is probably - in a later and therefore stronger anti feudal context - Oliver Cromwell (17). Without such a strong pressure from an urban driven market economy, Scotland had no equivalent to the English 'Peasants Revolt' despite the Black Death having a substantial impact in both places. The peasant revolt had taken place and had been subsumed in a national 'independence' struggle. There were very few Scottish Lollards in the fifteenth century, nor were there any Scots Levellers or Diggers in the seventeenth. Scots popular radicalism was to take a different course – but it was no less radical for all that.

## **PATRONAGE AND FACTIONS: AN AULD SCOTS TRADITION**

The response of different West European societies to the crisis of feudalism in the late middle ages determined to a major degree their histories over the next 600 years. After 1300, came a time of famines and plagues. There was a massive famine across Europe in 1315-17, for example - well before the Black Death appeared. The opening up to the diseases of the East, aided by the Crusades, came as the population was getting weaker; a sitting duck for the plague to come. In 1348-50, perhaps 40 per cent of the West European population died. When the feudal crisis hit Scotland, the very success of the Bruce Norman monarchic model eventually led to increasing noble resistance across the new Scotland after 1400. The dependence of the Scottish nobility on their regional and landed positions both forced and enabled them to resist the further centralisation of power that would allow anything like a powerful Scottish Absolutism to emerge. (Davidson points out that for - delete) Between 1455-1637, different Kings attempted – and failed to overturn, for example, the barons' independent powers of legal jurisdiction.

After the Wars of Independence, the Scottish nobility often allowed its Crown to govern through Regencies. In the fifteenth Century, there were 37 years of Regency government. These were from 1406-21 (under James I); 1436-39 (James II) and 1460-6 (James III). The Regencies stretched over 54 years in the sixteenth century. After the terrible defeat at Flodden there was a Regency under the young James V (1513-28); 19 more years before Mary's accession, when she was in France (1542-60) and 19 years under James VI (1567-85). When they couldn't arrange a Regency, the nobility showed a cavalier disregard for any royal line - most particularly, for example, with Mary herself. But this was not just an 'extraordinary misfortune' as Smout has it. The determination of the Scots nobility to avoid a Scots Absolutism was the key and it gained strength from the popular movements for some local 'independence'. Other elective crowns also reflected the strength of the local nobilities - in Ireland, Germany and Poland.

Crucially, power and patronage in a minority were, as Donaldson puts it 'a prize to be competed for by...factions'. Smout goes even further suggesting that feudalism 'collapsed' as a 'vehicle for unity' and instead became the vehicle for 'faction'. This is not why feudalism collapsed - nor was it ever much of a vehicle for 'unity' but it does reveal how the competition of factions - often under one party domination - has laid at the heart of a factional Scots politics. Controlling the State - as today in Africa - was the short cut to wealth and power - even in a captive client state. Capturing the imperial state in the name of something else - independence under Bruce – 'progressive reform' under Brown is better still. Capturing the monarch was to be a frequent occurrence in Scottish history. Cherie Blair's annoyance at the capture of her King by his Chancellor is in an excellent Scots tradition. The most blatant form of monarch capture, of course, was Bothwell's kidnapping and marriage of Mary. Likewise, James III had been made a prisoner by his own barons in 1482. His reign ended with royal forces defeated by a coalition of magnates, who executed him in 1486 (18). Mary's execution was left to the English. Mary's fate was also tied to the peculiar history of the Scots Reformation, to which we now turn.



## **SCOTTISH CHURCH: IDEOLOGISTS OF INDEPENDENCE ?**

Why did the Scottish Church keep some of its people for longer than England – and why has it too also eventually lost them? The Church in England largely preached an Establishment gospel and was rejected by the English common people early in its history. Blair's Catholic Tory paternalism, despite masquerading as a more radical Christian Socialism is of this ilk. Despite the Wesleyan and Victorian evangelical revivals the English Church has never won the people back (19). Crucially the Scottish Church played a vital role in the resistance to English imperial power in the Wars of Independence. The Scottish Church throughout its history provided an ideological centre for the Scottish nation's definition of itself. The Columban mission to Dalriada in the sixth century was part of the process whereby the different kingdoms of today's Scotland gradually synthesised. The church crowning of Kenneth MacAlpine in 843 provided religious legitimacy to the line of united Scots kings. This Celtic Church was closer linked to the people than the Roman Church increasingly imposed by the Anglo Norman Kings. This was especially true in areas like Galloway and Caithness where the church played a role in resisting the gradual encroachment of the Scots kingship over areas peripheral to the Alban central land mass, if not peripheral to seaborde trade, and the increasing spread of feudal relations of production on the land.

Both Celtic and Roman Church threw their weight and persuasive power in the defence of Scottish Independence and the struggle against the English Crown. The Scots Church also had a lot to lose from English hegemony by subservience to the Archbishop of York. Robert Bruce, like other monarchs, used his churchmen as his first ministers and chancellors. The famous independence Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, coming six years after Bruce's victory at Bannockburn, was substantially drafted by churchmen like William Lamberton and heavily influenced by Bishop Wishart of Glasgow. (20).

The roots of Gordon Brown's manse political socialism lie as far back as the peculiar and popular nature of the Scottish Reformation. In England politically the Reformation was born out of the growth of English Absolutism; in Scotland it grew out the nobility's attempt to stop a Scottish Absolutism from developing. In Scotland therefore the common people had to be co-opted in the Reformation – although the most politically radical were eventually hunted down. In Scotland, the Church became a much more important part of popular power and protest well after it had peaked in seventeenth century England. The Scots Presbyterian Church for all its potentially 'extreme' and narrow Calvinism had a popular support from the late Reformation, and certainly from the new Independence struggles of the mid seventeenth century, that still has a significant meaning today. Our New Labour Scots Prime Minister symbolises what McCrone calls a 'secular Presbyterianism' (21) – and the work ethic of a Protestant Calvinism, combined to a neo-liberal Capitalist spirit that would have fascinated Max Weber. One of the particular problems for a Socialist looking at the Scottish experience is to understand the structural and historical reasons for the populism embedded in the Scottish Church and the ideological consequences for the thinking of important parts of the Scottish socialist movement.

## THE LATE SCOTTISH REFORMATION

After the joint independence struggles of the fourteenth century the Scots Crown was dependent on the Scottish Catholic Church. Whilst the monarchy was poor, the Catholic Church was rich, taking up to 50 per cent of tax revenues. The Scots Crown had little financial temptation to force a breach with Rome because it could already (as in France) attempt to exploit and control the Catholic Church's patronage and wealth. In 1541, a decade after the enabling Protestant legislation had gone through in England, and only 8 years from the high peak of the sixteenth century English reformation (in 1549) the Scottish Parliament was still passing Acts against heresy.

The geo-political factor was therefore the vital key to the Scots Reformation as it had been over much of a divided imperial Germany (22). In the 1540s the newly established English Absolutism needed a secure Northern border. The Scots nobles ruled a peasantry with short leases and little incentive to increase their productivity. Agricultural technology was below advanced parts of Asia. Henry VIII's 'rough wooing' over 1544-8 ruined the Scots wool trade and higher taxes to pay for ransoms and resistance led to a noble cash crisis. The Reformation in Scotland was then driven by a 'Protestant' faction of a nobility under pressure. The English had only been removed with French help but by the mid 1550s, resentment built up instead at the French 'invasion'. The French Regent (Mary of Guise) had further increased taxes and imposed a 'gagging' Act. The Scottish nobility felt their weakness; the Scottish population being 800,000 compared to France's 13-15 million. Once the crown matrimonial had been gained for the Dauphin (making him potentially King of Scotland), Mary had no need to use the Scottish noble Protestants to embarrass the now Catholic Mary of England. As she turned on them, opposition grew. In 1557, the first 'bond' of the Lords was based on a refusal to invade England at French behest (23).

Unlike England the Protestant nobility was to turn against the Crown and against Cardinal Beaton as the chief minister whose 'Catholic' rule and wealth also angered the middling lairds and the towns. In the generations after Wallace, the fertile lowland areas of his old support from Angus, Ayrshire and the Mearns provided the social base for a rising class of lairds - some of whom, particularly in Ayrshire had been known for their early rebellious 'Lollard' opinions – but these came up to 100 years later than in England. The Parliament of 1560 was dominated by such lairds. The more limited level of Scottish economic development meant that the Scots towns had less overall impact on the overall polity than in Saxony or England's East Anglia. Although the Scottish population increased 50 per cent in 1500-1650 (it doubled in England), the town population represented only 10 per cent. Apart from Edinburgh, only 3 towns in Scotland in 1500 had populations of over 5,000. Nevertheless, in a lordly City it was possible to ferment trouble and there riots in Edinburgh in September 1558. In Perth, in May 1559, riots also broke out, based on a conflict between merchant and craft artisan control of the Town Council, which had been a typical event in the radical German cities. When the radical preacher Knox came back to stay in Scotland, he headed for Perth. Even if relatively small, discontented burghers could now make common cause with a faction of the nobility.

## THE PROTESTANT COUP AGAINST ABSOLUTISM

With Edinburgh now as their natural base, the Lords of the Congregation, as they called themselves even appealed for English help and the military victory of 1560 was largely down to the English army. A noble faction had been able to push through a Coup against the Crown's French Regent. Whatever their 'Protestant' leanings, it was more convenient for the Lords to express the coup externally in religious - not political terms - to Elizabeth, on the English throne since 1558. The Crowned Queen of England would have difficulty in accepting the removal of a legitimate Regent (even if French), without some significant justification - otherwise how secure was her own throne? The Scottish nobility had 'to pretend that the rebellion against the throne was not a true rebellion'. Internally, the Lords could build on what Protestant leanings could be found. They could stress their coup as a religious 'crusade' to gather as much popular support as possible from the Protestant lairds and towns. Knox claimed that 8 towns had been 'won' to Protestantism; but only one - Dundee - allowed Protestant preaching in 1559. In Scotland, the towns alone could not make a Reformation; it needed an aristocratic coup to get it started.

Poor Mary's love life – the resident Queen of Scots after 1560 - provided a wonderful 'cause celebre' for the next logical step after the Regent was to unseat a Queen in 1567. The Protestant faction needed this second coup because the old structures were still substantially in place and functioning. It took a noble civil war until 1573, with English intervention to establish the legal Scots Reformation – nearly 50 years behind England.

If initially the 'Protestant' faction dressed the coup as a matter of great religious import, Lee goes on to show that the propaganda changed between from preaching a free religion to proclaiming a free country. The late sixteenth coups took place because in an unstable and threatening situation, the Scottish nobility could not stand a Scottish Absolutism. Ironically, like the Polish nobility in the seventeenth century, the Scottish nobility's determination to avoid Absolutism produced the exact opposite. To enforce their own position, in the name of religion, they ended up giving their country's freedom away. The Scottish nobility only survived in the eighteenth century under a British Absolutism, dominated by their traditional English rivals. In Scotland, the Reformation reflected the relative weakness of the feudal monarchy, which was unable to create a Scottish Absolutism. Although Scotland eventually had a popular Protestantism, which formed a further counter to the power of the Crown, the Scottish Reformation had initially to be borrowed from the English.

The nobles 'crusade' against Mary, like all elite coups, always had the danger of running way beyond the aims of the Lords. They were anxious that they should remain in control of the popular revolt, having been concerned about the implications of the insurrection in Perth. The nobility wanted a relative autonomy from the King - they were not about to hand power to the insurrectionary masses. The Scottish Reformation needed popular support to carry it through against the Crown. This meant that the nobility, co-opted by the Crown in England, had in Scotland to co-opt the middling classes the lairds and the burghers.

## POPULAR PRESBYTERIANISM

A landed Parliament now needed a broader body to embrace the other classes. Unlike England where the popular movement was strongly based in Parliament by the 1630s, the Church's (Kirk) General Assembly became the base for the re-invented Scots' populism. Lynch calls the General assembly a 'surrogate parliament'. It was in effect both an alternative parliament and a provisional government. The General Assembly became the substitute for the reformers' Godly Prince - it suited the reformers for its Protestantism and the nobility because they did not want an Absolute Prince.

This popular base, acquired well before that in England, now pushed the Scottish Reformation, despite the later start, further ahead than in England. From 1574 - 84, Presbyterianism, which made little headway in England apart from the radicals and in the Universities, became the popular expression of the Reformed Church in Scotland – even a 'metaphor for Scottish identity' (25). The 'Protestant victory' led to the return of the theologian Andrew Melville from Geneva in 1574, after 10 years away. Writing at around the same time as Thomas Cartwright in England, Melville's Presbyterianism was to have far more influence in Scotland. Simply because Melville had returned from Geneva, it is quite ridiculous to suggest, as Donaldson does, that 'Presbyterianism was in no sense an indigenous Scottish movement'.

Presbyterianism became an indigenous movement in Scotland because it came to represent the popular movement of Protestant forces in Scotland. A movement that was not 'indigenous' could not have played such a crucial role in what some have called the Scottish Revolution after 1637. The General Assembly continued its popular role throughout the upheavals until 1644 (26). Presbyterianism could not have done so unless its theology and understanding of the church and society captured the popular lay and clerical minds of 'middling' Scotland. In the sixteenth century, the Presbyterian movement never had the same power in England because its middling sort had never been brought into their Reformation in the same way.

The radicalism of Melville worried the Scottish Church leadership, still in its politics and understanding largely unreformed. The Scottish Reformed Church started facing both ways at once - towards James' potential Absolutism (the noble civil war encouraged the desire for order akin to that in England after 1650) but to stay 'Reformed' it still needed its links to what was becoming the popular opposition. The rise of James VI (But James I in England) to power tipped the balance. Lee argues that James had always seen the church as his most dangerous opponent because of its potential theological and political challenge to his royal authority. James' attempts to control the Scottish Presbyterian Church must therefore be seen as part and parcel of his attempt to create a viable Scottish Absolutism.

## **A BRIEF SCOTTISH ABSOLUTISM - JAMES VI AND CHARLES I**

As the civil war was ending, the Scots bishops were to swear a virtual oath to James' supremacy. There was a contradiction here as the bishops were still supposed to be subject to the General Assembly too. Even the Assembly had a tendency to slide back to the forces of order, authority and hierarchy. Nobles were increasingly elected to the Assembly as lay 'elders' (27). Rather than challenging the hierarchy of the surrounding society (as Melville had intended it to do) it 'conformed to it'. Perhaps not too surprisingly then, the "Black Acts" of 1584 against the Presbyterians now re-emphasised Royal Supremacy over clergy and teachers, as well as bishops. The Godly Prince was now asserting his right to supersede the General Assembly. Melville fled to England.

James eventually needed an English Absolutism to support his power in Scotland. This meant that the Scots tradition of Episcopalianism was now to be used to crush dissent in both countries. The trick that James had sustained in Scotland for a brief time in Scotland was not sustainable against the stronger parliament in England, and in the midst of rapidly socially changing conditions, as merchant Capital began to make its increasing presence in the developing England of the seventeenth century. The tendencies which led to a Revolution in England and an up-rising in Scotland in the mid seventeenth century were well in place before James son' Charles, and were more virulent, partly because of repression under both James and Elizabeth (28).

One major reason that so much of Scots society – nobility, gentry, lairds and burghers - signed the national Covenant in the Greyfriars church yard in early 1638 was their frustration in a King who had ruled from London – and made only one visit to Scotland (in 1633) in 13 years of rule. The Scots had never accepted divine right, even under Bruce in 1320. The Episcopal Church of Scotland – it is still known as the English Church – because it came to symbolise an alien kingly power. Charles was trying to run the Scottish Church – and thereby Scotland - as if it was England. The King may have been the Head of the Church of England, he had not since the 1580s been Head of the Church in Scotland. What Charles did at a distance to the church, for many he was doing to the nation.

Absolutism was never really established in Scotland and the attempt to import it via a Scots born English based King was shown to have failed by 1640. The contrived unrest in Edinburgh in 1637, focused on the appearance on the Book of English Common Prayer and a liturgy **too** like the 'papist' mass, stemmed from a deeper political unrest shared across all Scots classes. Within 6 weeks of the start of his reign in 1625 Charles had greatly antagonized his Scots nobility. His 'revocation' threatened the Scots landed classes with the potential loss of all the lands taken from the Church after 1560. They may have almost coped with a renewed Catholicism they could not cope with the loss of land. As with the coups of the late sixteenth century, the trick was to drape pecuniary interest in the higher cause of true religion (29).

## INCOMPLETE REVOLUTIONS

Scottish nationalism was a feudal controlled nationalism and it still bears the hallmark of these origins. The Scots feudal aristocracy rallied the people more easily under the banner of an external enemy - the English. After Charles I's defeat, Dickson argues that Scottish feudalism fades away in its 'fallow period'. This would be highly unusual, despite mythology on English gradualism. Feudalism usually needed brutal force to encourage its eventual euthanasia. Foster ask the next then obvious question - did Scotland have a 'bourgeois revolution'?

In Scotland, every revolution has been incomplete. Scottish Feudalism, implanted by a Norman monarchy from above, never fully completed the overthrow of the clan system. This is where Foster is correct to speak of the 'sheer weakness' of Scottish feudalism. Yet strong traces of clan/feudal style land ownership remain to haunt the Highlands today. Foster also points out that all over Scotland traditionally feudal organised agriculture never occupied more than a minority. This 'weak feudalism' could still resist its overthrow mightily - not the least in its repression of popular movements.

The only revolution one Scottish Marxist can find is a Bismarckian one from above that created the Scottish Enlightenment in the service of British imperialism. Desperate to find a Scottish revolution, he has to celebrate the rise of Scottish capitalism in the eighteenth century, as the nearest thing to a revolution he can find (30). Scottish capitalism never overthrew Scottish feudalism completely and left the Presbyterian Church to be the odd base for the popular movement between 1560 and 1690.

Hardly surprising then in this revolution from above that the landed, merchant and financial classes still rule the roost in Scotland. Unlike the German and Italian bourgeois who needed a popular fascism to gain power, the Scots capitalists feed off the greater power of English Capital to sustain them. They can then blame the Scots working class sub-ordination on the 'English', when in fact the English working class (with many an immigrant Scot, Welsh and Irish through many generations in their mix) gain precious little extra benefit. The Catalan and Basque capitalists did something of the same - borrowing from Castilian and British power to establish a less popular authoritarian 'fascism' and then blaming the 'Spanish' to their own workers (many of whom were of course 'Spanish' immigrants) for their exploitation. Capital certainly gains through this divide and rule.

## TOO MANY FALKIRKS AND NOT ENOUGH BANNOCKBURNS

The final defeat of Wallace's radical nationalist populism at the Battle of Falkirk in **1298** enshrined so well in the Braveheart film was been too common an experience for radicals in Scotland. Bannockburn's victory is celebrated so much because such have been rare in Scots history. Even worse are the unintended consequences of the victory - as in the success of a Scottish feudal nationalism under Bruce. Unlike England which experienced two major revolutionary up-risings in its late Middle Ages - in 1381 and in 1642, which profoundly affected the possibilities for English capitalist development, neither Scotland (nor Wales, nor Ireland) have had successful independent popular revolutions. Whether there has been revolutionary potential, it has been subverted by a local ruling class (in both Ireland and Scotland), by a popular religion filling in the revolutionary fervour (Roman Catholicism for the Irish, Methodism for the Welsh and Presbyterianism for the Scots) or by being hidden, subverted and often sub-subsumed within a variety of nationalist movements.

Some Scots forget that the English they so easily make the source of all their problems had their radicals too. It took the power of Cromwell's revolutionary New Model Army to beat the Scots reactionary aristocracy between 1648 and 1651 - comfortably - but Cromwell's own inability to hold England meant that the Scots aristocrats almost reverted to type as soon as he had gone. It took an English Revolution for independent baronial legal jurisdiction in Scotland to be overthrown: these powers were first only effectively suppressed under Cromwell's rule in Scotland. After 1660, with the English Restoration, such feudal powers were re-instated in Scotland. 1,200 such jurisdictions remained until 1747, when they were finally abolished after Culloden. These aspects of feudal power still existed in Scotland at least 100 years after they had been abolished in England (**31**). Whatever had been enacted in Scotland between 1638 and 1707, it does not seem on this basis to be the complete triumph of a 'bourgeois revolution'. The distinctive Presbyterian populist movement, which the early leaders of the Scottish labour movement built on and borrowed from, was politically crushed in the 'killing times' of the 1680s and 90s. Better still, if the subsequent powerlessness engendered can be blamed on England.

The 'English' cannot be blamed for the Scots ruling class' ability to murder their own people. Scotland's later weaker and narrower capitalist development created less space for a radical or revolutionary movement on the left wing of the struggle against the Scots Establishment until much later in the late nineteenth century. The Scots cannot blame the common English people for their failure to overthrow feudalism; for as the Scots Reformation history has shown, they often needed English help to do it. The problem of the Scots domination by English Norman imperialism, always and especially after 1707 in collusion with the Scots own aristocracy and bourgeois should not be blamed on the common people of England. Scots, look to your own rulers - then and now for what was a specific Scottish feudal and then capitalist form of domination. New Labour equivalents have been the political rulers of Scotland for most of the twentieth century. New Labour are the foxes that the real radicals of Scotland have to run to ground.

## **A JUNIOR ROLE WITHIN THE IMPERIAL COALITION**

The Scottish elite know all about helping running an Empire whilst being the junior partners. The Edinburgh Mafia also knows that having some control of the global purse strings helps. Symbolically, a Scots academic, Niall Ferguson has extolled the virtues not only of Empire, but of the American Empire's historic mission today. The advice from this freshly based New Yorker was that the USA should more eagerly grasp its hegemonic role. According to this history, the world leadership of the USA enabled the re-structuring of Germany and Japan; if pursued with conviction, it would have enabled victories in Korea (against China) and Vietnam, besides the eventual defeat of the evil Russian Empire. So, the new gospel of imperialism can take us onto to greater global prosperity and democracy, after the war in Iraq (32). If only the Americans could be made to serve in their new colonies. This son of Fergus would have made a great planter in Ulster: sent to tame the wild rebellious Irish (33). It would perhaps take this kind of Scot to see the people who make an Empire work. For it was a similar Scottish elite who chose in 1707, via bribery and threat, to throw in their lot with England so that they too could share in the benefits of Empire. Today we have a new Scottish technocratic meritocracy helping to run the British State, whilst its leaders taking their advice from such academics, find their place as junior coalition partners in the American Empire.

Three Hundred years after the Act of Union of 1707 between England and Scotland was fitting that the main commemoration was through the issue of a new coin (34). For selling out for filthy lucre is an apt summary of the results of the Scots ruling class decision to desert its own people and sell their independence for the benefits of the flesh pots of England and Empire. Better still if you can deflect popular discontent with what Brown once called the uneven development of Scottish capitalism by blaming all on the English. In the narrow minded nationalist case in the pubs, not even 'English' rule but ordinary English workers are thus to blame for the Scots workers plight. A crude nationalism can become the alternative to the New Labour Establishment that has politically held power in Glasgow.

As this Scots elite busies itself for the next Scots election in 2010 over a battle for political Britain, part of the pressure for Blair's abdication came from Scots New Labour, who saw the danger of gaining the world while losing the heartlands of Scotland in the last elections for the Scottish parliament of 2007. None of the lumbering Southern based heavyweights worry too much about getting bogged down by the pikemen around Holyrood in the struggle to govern a minimally devolved Scotland. Here too another Scots elite is happy to desert its own in the pursuit of greater political power. There are still precious few heroes - so Robin Cook and John Smith will have to do - despite their common inheritance as creators of a New Labour that has sold out Scotland - and England. Some day soon, radical socialists will have to start again in Scotland. Once the Tories have thrown in their lot with the global elite - rather than the pressurised bits of fading British manufacturing capital - a proper Etonian Cameron (another good Scots name) will provide a more presentable façade for the global capitalist Empire.



## **BEFORE AND AFTER THE '45**

As the defeat of Culloden in 1746 symbolised, the Scottish popular movement has often been led and then subverted into a limited definition of the nationalist cause by middle class or aristocratic leaders or monarchist pretenders. After the '45, this has often been the British imperial - 'Unionist' cause - as much as the Scottish national cause. Like the English middle class of 1793-1819 and in 1848, which murdered the Jacobins and destroyed the Chartists (perhaps because the English 'middling sort' had learnt their lesson and already made their gains from siding with the mass popular movement in 1381 and in 1649), the Scots rulers have always turned on their own. This is true of Scotland after 1314 under Bruce, of 1560-1603 after the Reformation, of the Covenanters and Cameronians of 1660-90, of the Highlanders and their families butchered after 1745. The final entry of Scottish capitalism onto the stage is celebrated with an insurrection in 1820 nobody, bar the initiated few, remembers (35). Only by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did Scotland catch up and then have a potential domestic capitalist industrial ascendancy. This was first ruled over by the strength of Scots nineteenth century liberalism.

The story of Scottish revolutions is of a Scots ruling class, cleverly blaming the English to their own kin, as they bring down the axe of counter revolution on their head. Perhaps Wallace should have slit Bruce's throat in the Braveheart film; Mel Gibson captures Wallace's blood stained horror in a way that the Scottish common people have not learnt too well - my own side has betrayed me. Even worst the Scots ruling class celebrates with romantic mush about the destruction of a culture, it helped and aided to destroy. The crushed Scots radicals had a more shadowy history, celebrated by a Robbie Burns and built on politically by the likes of a Keir Hardie. And Hardie, despite having a pivotal role in founding a Scottish Labour party nearly ten years before the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in Bradford, still won his first MP's seat in West Ham in East London, then in Wales and never had a seat in Scotland.

Taking Scotland as our leading Celtic example, when one searches for popular revolutionary movements before the late nineteenth century one comes across a series of hybrids and a set of overwhelming defeats. The only genuinely Scottish inspired and based victory, I can find is the parliamentary victories of the ILP in Glasgow in 1922 and these were more in the enthusiasm of the Scottish working class first showing its real muscle openly on the Scottish political stage (36). Only then did a 'Socialist advance' beyond that in England look possible. A Scottish hybrid feudalism, never truly conquered and never properly imposed, led to a peculiar hybrid capitalism, very advanced in parts in industrial Glasgow, alongside a financial, political and ideologically driven Edinburgh, but an almost non existent capitalism in a destroyed communal and feudal West and North. Even this, as the industrial destruction of Glasgow has subsequently shown, was an incomplete revolution. The peculiar financial and political space occupied by a colonial capital - Edinburgh - lords it over the rest of Scotland under the continued political, financial and economic supremacy of the global capitalist Empire.

## SCOTTISH LIBERAL UNIONISM AND ECONOMY

With the mid nineteenth century triumph of British free trade imperialism, Scotland was dominated by Liberal Unionism. After the 1832 Reform Act, Scotland was even more dominated by Liberalism than was England. In 1865 85 per cent of the small Scottish electorate voted Liberal compared to 57 per cent in England. At its peak in 1906, the Liberals had 59 Scottish MPs compared to only 9 Conservatives and 3 Labour MPs. In 1910 one third of the Liberal Cabinet were either Scots or sat in Scottish seats (37). The similarity to New Labour's safe bases from which nearly a century later ambitious Scots attempt to rule England is uncanny but also a worry for Labour if anything should now threaten their long hegemony.

As with today's threat, one issue has always been Scottish nationalism. With Scottish industry in the Union Empire still a success, the Scottish Home rule movement in the nineteenth century appealed in the struggle against landlord rule, especially for the Crofters in the Highlands. This made it the Scottish rump of a much more threatening Irish movement. If there was a Liberal Scottish nationalism after the 1890s, it followed Chamberlain's Newcastle Programme and was akin to that of White Australia - a Protestant Scotland could look for a devolved independence within the Empire; today of course this is seen in the EU context.

The problem for the Scottish economy even at the height of its relative powers in 1913 was its dependence on a number of staple products. Scottish specialisation was notable: Dundee's jute exports accounted for a third of European demand. Scotland produced 1.5 per cent of Britain's cotton (given the dominance of Lancashire), but it produced 14 per cent of its linen. Clyde shipbuilding accounted for nearly 50 per cent of British marine exports. Scottish industrial working class wages - with relatively high paid skilled craftsmen in shipbuilding and engineering, plus the danger money for the miners - may have been higher than the average in England in 1914. With up to 80 per cent of Glasgow being skilled in these trades, unemployment for insured workers in Scotland was only 1.8 per cent in 1913, compared to 8.7 per cent in London.

The Great War badly disrupted these export trades, especially in textiles, which became increasingly dependent on government war contracts. Coal and herring exports were lost in Germany and the Baltic. After 1918, as the Scots industrial economy went into decline average Scots wages were now 14 per cent below those in England. The dynamic of the Scottish economy had been cut away. Harvie writing in 1981 links his pessimistic outlook dominated by Scottish industrial stagnation to the net emigration of 23 per cent of its population - 600,000 - after 1911 (38).

## **SCOTS WORKING CLASS: McBUTSKELLISM AND NEW LABOUR**

Scotland after 1918 was a different country. The new universal suffrage for men had far more impact in Scotland than in England. The English electorate had already embraced 60 percent of the male population; in Scotland it had only been half this, so in 1918 the new Scottish franchise was three times larger. The Scottish working class now appeared on the open political stage - virtually for the first time ever. The Scottish Labour vote increased ten times versus that of 1910. The Labour vote which was 4 per cent of the much smaller franchise in 1910 increased to 23 per cent in 1918. It increased again to 32 per cent in 1922. The enthusiasm in Glasgow for the election of 29 new Scottish Labour MPs was perhaps never to be repeated again; the working class felt that it now had chance to rule for the many not the few, for the first time. Maybe the 10 per cent of Scottish males, who had died in the war would not die in vain. The hopes of 1919 were not to be realised in two minority Labour Governments in London (39).

The eventual recovery in the more consumer based industries of the 1930s - cars, chemicals and electronics - was of much more help in Middle England than in Scotland. As the Conservatives came back to power in London in the 1950s, the Scots Tories have been called McButskellites. The aristocrats who ran Scottish Unionism had managed to re-combine the marriage of land owners with industrialists - German and Italian style - as a defence against a powerful working class. This new alliance worked so well in Scotland that the Conservatives later demise - and a return to the Scots suspicion of its aristocratic, public school educated, English accented Anglophile nature - could obscure the fact that the Scots Tories - unlike any other Scots party - did command just over 50 percent of the popular vote in 1955. It could also pick up the conservative unionist working class vote. This was aided by the Kirk's continuing hostility to the Catholic Church combined with sectarian hostility to the in-coming Irish working class. The 'Irish', who tended eventually through leaders like Wheatley to be staunchly loyal to Labour, were disliked for the suspicion of undercutting 'British' wages. This enabled elements of the Scots working class, as in Northern Ireland, to be won over via the Orange Order from the 1870s to the Scots Tory and Unionist Establishment. This heartland passed to New Labour by the 1980s, but it could pass on again to the SNP.

The McButskellites also pursued policies of Government direction of Scottish industry and natural resource opportunities (like Hyrdo Electric, aluminium smelters and forestry) despite Brown's claim that this had never been tried in Scotland. If since 1918 New Labour had inherited the Liberals nineteenth century political power - since 1945 in Scotland they have also triangulated Conservative economic policies on the old welfare and corporate State consensus. New Labour's Scottish-trained willingness to become both the political and economic establishment in Britain was foreshadowed by the Labour Party's political power in the Central belt and by its happy pursuit of Conservative economic policies in the 1950s. To now see New Labour pursuing the policies of neo-liberal imperialism should come as no surprise given its history as the New Scottish Establishment (40).

## **THE RISE OF THE SNP: 1974 – 2009**

The rise of today's Scottish National Party (SNP) is largely a phenomenon of the late 1960s and 1970s. As with the SNP's victory in the devolved Scots elections of 2007, it was strongly linked to increasing disillusion with Labour rule at Westminster (from 1964). The SNP seemed to be positioning itself as a class-less national party, especially able to pick up the aspiring petty bourgeois vote of non manual workers and/or the upwardly mobile ex manual working classes. At its peak, in 1974 it took 30 per cent of the Scottish vote in the second (October) election. What frightened a Labour party struggling to hold on to power in the 1970s was what Michael Foot called 42 second places to Labour. As the class conflict over the fiscal crisis of the welfare State reached new heights in the 1970s and 80s the SNP held on to an average vote of between 12 and 18 per cent in 1979-87 but never seriously threatened to take power.

In 2007 disillusion with New Labour surfaced in the Scottish parliamentary elections. The SNP just beat its 1974 vote taking 33 per cent of the poll (against 24 per cent in the Scottish elections of 2003), just beating New Labour by 20,000 votes in getting 660,000, and winning 1 more seat. It has since ruled as a minority government.

In 2010-11 the threat of losing its Scottish heartlands will dominate New Labour's strategic thinking. After all the dis-illusion of New Labour, will this time mean that the SNP will now consolidate at its old peak – say with over 30 per cent of the Scottish vote? Whatever happens in England or in British elections. 2007 could mark the beginning of the end of New Labour's rule in Scotland. For this potential, to a Gordon Brown well versed in twentieth century Scottish political history, should be a reminder of the demise of the former great Liberal power in Scotland. A party that ruled Scotland for nearly 50 years looked to be at the height of its powers in 1910; within 12 years it was a spent force. We can be so accustomed to think of New Labour's domination in Scotland in the same light, we can forget the lessons of history.

The domination of the Labour party in Scotland in much of the twentieth century then stems from the experience of what I have called Scotland's three incomplete revolutions. Scotland has a peculiar hybrid of an incomplete feudalism, a lopsided capitalism and a secularized Presbyterian populist 'socialism'.

## **PRECIOUS FEW OPTIONS**

Precious few thereby are the political options for socialists in Britain today: firstly, in knowing which Party to 'join' and secondly, even worse, in the scarcity of new socialist ideas - if the imperialist driven welfare State capitalist consensus of the 1950s is seen for the opportunist straight jacket it was and is. The 'left' alternative has also never been able to shake off the sectarianism and (Leninist/Stalinist/Trotskyist) democratic centralism in which the Communist Party and other left wing parties were born in the greatest revolutionary up-surge in Britain in the twentieth century, from 1917-1931.

To come full circle, we have the Scots experience of a totally incomplete 'Socialist revolution'. For all the hope of 1922 may have led to better housing (just) and better welfare (just) in the Glasgow of 100 years on, there is no more power to the ordinary Glaswegian. To a Scots working class accustomed to read the Labour party as the Socialist party in Scotland for 100 years or more, is not this Glasgow-centred Mafia, what 'Socialism' seems to offer? No wonder they take refuge in a nationalist cause, or in a 'Rangers Rule Britannia' sectarian bitterness and tribalism. No wonder the Scottish Socialist Party struggles to find a platform. Policy prescriptions from the 1950s, nor the 1960s, will not do: re-nationalising bits of failed bureaucracy will not do. This is precisely what the Scots have suffered from for 50 years. Like Hardie in West Ham, another Scot, George Galloway has to go to Muslim Bangladeshis in East London to find a power base for his critique of imperialism.

The danger signal from Scotland is one of the major global lessons of this study. There is a long Scottish tradition of the use of faction to gain power and of being the junior partner in an imperial partnership. The rise to New Labour is case study of the abuse of power by a cabal on behalf of Global Capital. Scottish Socialist solutions are more possible than in England in the foreseeable future. At least there is a base in Scotland, for the rejection of New Labour and neo-liberalism (42). But the economic base on which a Scottish socialism can be built is going to be considerably weaker than that in England and the temptation to tax the middle classes to pay for re-distribution to the poorer working classes will be enormous. As for the Scots globally linked upper and old ruling classes, they can too easily escape. It is the dependent public sector middle classes who will feel the pinch in any genuine attempt to re-distribute power and income. The lower end of the health workers, the teachers and 'council' workers generally who feel the pressure of New Labour's targets and get some, but not much of the benefits will find it harder to sacrifice, even for the depressed and marginalised poor of inner City Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Slogans may win them, but hard realities of a disembowelled Scottish economy need to be faced.

## EXIT MUSIC?

A well known Fife crime writer, Ian Rankin called his last Inspector Rebus novel, often based around Edinburgh, Exit Music. In it a barely disguised Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) is called First Albannach, with its sprawling spanking new £335 million head quarter township close to the airport well described. The imperial hubris and its links with local politicians (SNP in Rankin's case) that has led to RBS' subsequent downfall is prophetically drawn (43). In a subsequent BBC documentary one City banking analyst who worked in the same firm as me for a while, John Aitken, described the successful take over of Nat West as akin to Scotland winning the World Cup. The policies of 'Fred the shred', cutting 18,000 jobs in the new combined entity earned his huge pension in the eyes of the RBS board. A Scots cabal had taken over a much larger English bank; rather like Scots New Labour running England. A relatively tiny Scots bank had suddenly become a global player. The RBS sheet grew 20 times to £90 billion after 23 further acquisitions. Over reaching to attempt the same globally with ABN Anro brought RBS the toxic debts that have eventually brought its de facto nationalisation (44).

A Scottish Prime Minister and a Scottish Chancellor, Alistair Darling (also MP for Edinburgh South West) have ended up buying controlling stakes in two banks dominated by their Scottish origins, interests – and jobs – Halifax Bank of Scotland and RBS. The other banks have important regional stakes in Yorkshire (Halifax and Bradford) and Lloyds has strong Welsh origins. These all happen to be in old Labour heartlands. A new Darien disaster has for now been averted. It may not bankrupt Scotland – but it certainly reveals the bankruptcy of New Labour (45).

I have approached the final ascendancy of Gordon Brown to the pinnacle of power that he has so long wanted through the medium of Scotland's history, political economy and church. This is a short hand way of doing one part – but a major part - of the Labour Party's history – even more dominant in Scotland's present political history in the generation after Mrs Thatcher's English imposed rule. It forms an important and vital part in the long history of the Labour Party's sell out. As New Labour still rules in Britain its demise may still appear some way off as yet – they may yet survive another General Election. But as the boom which sustained its power in Britain since 1997 has ended, where now? It is exactly appropriate that New Labour's approach to its own exit should be heralded by the banking system to which it has been so sycophantic and subservient for so long. For Scots New Labour has shared the same imperial hubris as RBS.

As with the old Liberal rulers of Scotland (or in Italy after 1918 and 1989) when the demise did come, it was devastating. If New Labour has lost its real material popular base within the working classes of Britain, who it no longer serves (if it ever really did), New Labour would have no base and no reason left to exist. Those on the left in Scotland, Britain and elsewhere will need to see through this period of the exit music of New Labour. It then beholds us to think again about the imperial arrogance of junior partners as we look for a libertarian socialist policy for the next generation after Gordo.

## END NOTES CHAPTER 8

1. Linking every analogy here would spoil the fun, but two explanatory points are worthwhile: the list of places defying the King are the major symbolic SNP election victories in the Scots election of 2007. Both in 1638 and 2007 the political elite were reluctant to sign up to the national covenant – in the first case knowing the risks the nobility then ran; in 2007 it did not seem clear for a while – given New Labour’s intransigence - whether the SNP would be allowed to govern as a minority.
2. I first came across this quote in Hunter, J. Last of the Free. A Millennial History of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Edinburgh, Mainstream 1999 p 12. A longer version is in De La Bedoyere, G. Defying Rome. The Rebels of Roman Britain. London, Tempus 2003 p 8, 95.
3. See Benn, C. Keir Hardie. London, Hutchinson 1992. Marquand, D. Ramsey MacDonald. London, Jonathan Cape 1977.
4. Acherson, N. Stone Voices. The Search for Scotland. London, Granta Books 2002. for a description of John Smith's family p 187-9.
5. See Howell, D. A Lost Left: Three Studies in Socialism And Nationalism Manchester University Press, 1986 p 11-27.
6. Dickson, T (ed). Scottish Capitalism. Class, State and Nation from before the Union to the Present. London, Lawrence & Wishart 1980 p19-25, 33-7.
7. Prebble, J. The Lion in the North. One Thousand Years of Scotland’s History. London, Penguin 1972 p 20 – 30. The Scots King Duncan had to swear fealty to William Rufus, William the Conqueror’s son (p37). Scots Kings thereafter were plagued with the frequent reality of swearing fealty under duress to the English (Norman) kings.
8. Anderson, P. Passages From Antiquity To Feudalism (London, Verso 1974; this ed 1978) p 182-90 on the feudal dynamic.
9. On feudal expansion see Lynch, M. Scotland:A New History.1991; this ed London, Pimlico 1998 p 79-86. Barrow, G.W.S. Feudal Britain. The Completion of the Medieval Kingdom. 1956. This ed London, Arnold 1971 p 132-75. McDonald, R.A. Outlaws of Medieval Scotland.Challenges to the Canmore Kings 1058-1266. Edinburgh, Tuckwell Press 2003
10. Smout, T.C. History of the Scottish People. 1560-1830. 1969; this ed London, Fontana 1990 p 41-3, Dickson p 25.
11. For the Welsh and Irish expansions see Davies, R.R.The First English Empire. Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093-1343. Oxford University Press, 2000.

12. Frame, R. The Political Development of the British Isles. 1100-1400. Oxford University Press 1990 p 40-51. Dickson p 37-45.
13. McNamee, C. Wars of the Bruces. Edinburgh, Donald 2006 especially p 206. In the famous Declaration of Arbroath of 1320 the nobility claimed they did not fight for riches or glory.
14. The best discussions of the political and economic implications of the English uprising of 1381 set in a European context, but with little reference to Scotland are in Hilton, R. Bond Men Made Free. Medieval Peasant Movements and the English risings of 1381. London, 1973 and Anderson, P. Lineages Of the Absolutist State London, New Left Review 1974, This Ed Verso, 1980.
15. Fraser, A. Mary: Queen Of Scots .1969, This ed, London Phoenix 2002 p 217-8.
16. Foster, J. Capitalism and the Scottish Nation in Brown, G (ed). The Red Paper on Scotland . Edinburgh, EUSPB 1975 p 141, 150.
17. Tony Robinson & David Willcock In Search of British Heroes. London, PanMacmillan 2003 p11, 160-3 brings out Wallace's status as the 'man of the people' well. He also notes that Wallace while briefly Guardian of Scotland had a military discipline installed briefly in his Scots levies that also reminds me of Cromwell.
18. Donaldson, G. Scotland: James V to James VII Edinburgh, 1965 p 54, Smout p 33 and Prebble p 133-5, 140-1 on regencies.
19. For the role of the Scots Church and today's Scottish identity see Jenkins, D. The British: Identity & Religion. The thesis on England forms part of a larger work on English Capitalism and the English Church; further details from the author.
20. Neil Oliver makes a good summary of this in his 2009 BBC programme on A History of Scotland London, Orion 2009 called 'Bishop Makes King'.
21. McCrone, D. Understanding Scotland. The Sociology of a Stateless Nation. London, Routledge 1992 p 120.
22. Donaldson, G. The Scottish Reformation. Cambridge, 1960 p 29-30, Prebble p 53,93. On the German Reformation in a broader context also see Wilde (2006) p 70-1.
23. Lee, M. Britain's Solomon. James VI and I in his Three Kingdoms. University of Illinois, 1990 p 9-10, Fraser p 177.
24. Lynch p 160 - 97, Lee p 13- 16, Donaldson (1960) p 41, 90-4 Donaldson (1965) p 11-12, 278.



25. Lynch, M. The Age of Renaissance and Reformation in Mitchison, R (ed) Why Scottish History Matters p 51.
26. This is not just an error made 50 years ago by Donaldson but continued in simplistic explanations by conservative historians still. For Worden, B in what is a long essay on The English Civil War London, Weidenfield & Nicholson 2009 attempts to explain Scots intransigence by reference to a Calvinism from below' (p8) and a stronger 'tradition of Presbyterianism and radical political theory' (p23) whilst never investigating their roots.
27. See also Stephenson, D. The Scottish Revolution 1637 - 1644: The Triumph of the Covenanters Newton Abbott, 1973 on the way Scots political history has been too often sub-subsumed under 'church history' (p14). See also p 106-7 on lay elders.
28. MacInnes, A.I. Charles I and the Making of the Covenanted Movement. 1625-1641. Edinburgh, Donald 1991 makes Charles the 'driving force' and 'principal architect' of the covenanting movement (p1).
29. Davidson, N. Discovering the Scottish Revolution. 1692-1746. London, Pluto 2003.
30. See John Prebble's brilliant and path-breaking books. Culloden. London, Penguin 1961, The Highland Clearances London, Penguin 1963, and Glencoe. London, Penguin, 1966 all of which inspired me on a teenage first visit to Scotland. The Afghan and Colombian solutions to the destruction of their peasant rural economies has been opium and coca. The Scots Highlands had their own 'low intensity conflict' from 1690-1890.
31. Fergus is a semi-mythic King of Dalriata who came from Ulster to the 'West of Scotland' (around Iona) in the sixth century. Fergus was by tradition the first 'Scots' King as eventually the larger 'Pictish Alba' Kings took on the title after Kenneth MacAlpine. It is the Scots Presbyterians settled back in the plantations of Ulster from the seventeenth century especially who form the core of the Ulster Protestants today.
32. Ferguson, N. See Colossus. The Rise and Fall of the American Empire. London, Penguin 2004 which is also discussed in Wilde (2006) for its poor coverage on Egypt. It followed after Empire. How Britain Made the Modern World. London, Allen Lane 2003.
33. The best recent radical work I have seen on the Union is in Davidson. Try as I might I have not found Nairn, T – an original and seminal work - The Break Up of Britain. Crisis and Neo-Nationalism. London, New Left Books 1977 useful now.
34. See Brown.
35. Ellis, P.B & Mac A Ghobhainn, S. The Scottish Insurrection of 1820. New edition, Edinburgh, John Donald/Birlinn 2000.

36. So Shinwell on 1922: 'the gleam of hope where despair had too long held sway' p 30. in Donnachie, I, Harvie, C & Wood, S. Forward: Labour Politics in Scotland 1888-1988. Edinburgh, Polygon 1989

37. Devine, T.M. The Scottish Nation 1700-2000. London, Penguin 2006.

38. Harvie, C. No Gods and Precious Few Heroes. Scotland 1914-80. London, Arnold 1981

39. On a sympathetic account of the Labour politics of the 1920s see Middlemas, R.K. The Clydesiders. A Left Wing Struggle for Parliamentary Power. London, Hutchinson 1965.

40. Marr, A. The Battle for Scotland. London, Penguin, 1992.

