

# Part 1: The Powers at Work

## Introduction

Part 1 *of Engaging the Powers* consists of a set of some twenty papers detailing over a broad canvas those activities of 'the Powers' throughout the post-World War II period which clearly militate against what today we are beginning to call 'the common good'.

The set of papers is designed to build up an informed and coherent picture of the workings of 'the Powers'. There isn't exactly a conspiracy, but they are all following the same goal, to maximise financial advantage in favour of the big corporations in the belief that this is the only route to the economic growth upon which the wealth and prosperity of everyone depends. It sounds plausible but there are very large flaws in this argument as the critical stance of our papers makes clear.

Do ordinary Christians really need to know about all this? It is complex and remote from the preoccupations of daily life in the prosperous Western world. And, in any case, reading papers of this kind is very like being asked to read academic texts; it is intellectual in character, and this is an area which many churchgoers prefer to steer clear of. This is not to say that church people 'walk by on the other side' in the face of so much human suffering and oppression. In particular, they are major supporters of the campaigning charities as the presence of specifically Christian organisations amongst the leaders in the field indicate, ie. Christian Aid, CAFOD, Tearfund. The charities, through their campaigning material, shape the consciousness and consciences of their supporters. They are expert at identifying immediate problems and crises and at providing clearly presented information about the matter in hand. But this falls short of an adequate linear explanation of what is going on; that is to say, they stop short of looking at the unfolding history of the immediate crisis; as a result, the succession of events calling for campaign action just seem to follow one another endlessly in flat repetition. In fact there is a continuum behind the surface events which has a history; today's crisis has come from somewhere and it is pointing in a certain direction for the future. So that to properly understand the state of affairs one needs to know about that. Our papers fill this gap and taken together present a fuller, more coherent picture than the charities can provide for us. For example, a few years ago we were all protesting about the Structural Adjustment Programmes being imposed on debtor nations by the IMF and the World Bank. That phase was bad enough in its own right, but our Paper 1 based on Jacques Gelin's splendid *Juggernaut Politics* (2003) points to a history going back to the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 which laid the foundation of the postwar economic system. Here we discover that the US, from the start, was determined to create and dominate a new world market. Their overwhelming success and their scary secret plans for further development are described in Susan George's papers (12-14). TTIP is the shape of things to come, so watch out!

Nevertheless there is evidence (which I will enlarge on in Part 3) suggesting that at 'pew level' churchgoers are generally incurious about the man-made behaviour which is the cause of so much of the suffering; 'man-made behaviour' here can be taken to include the exploitive practices of the big international companies, the collusion of Western governments in these practices and the ineffectual and often corrupt nature of governments in much of the poorest parts of the world where the operation of 'the Powers' is at its most oppressive – not that corruption is limited to those poorer countries, as we are beginning to understand here in the UK.

The hope is that this set of papers will enable a few more people to gain an understanding of 'what is really going on' in the world of power today. The work of all those who pick up the pieces after economic exploitation and natural disaster have wrecked peoples' lives is hugely

important, but there is also a need, and it is part of the calling of the Church to meet it, to be well informed about these activities and in particular about what it is that drives them forward. Enquiry in this area will quickly reveal that black and white stereotypes about 'goodies and baddies' are wildly simplistic. Greed and selfishness may be frequent 'drivers' of the economic machine but it has its own systematic necessities as well and we all depend on the drivers to operate the machine successfully on our behalf. If the Church is to 'engage with the powers', it needs to become intelligently informed not only about the carefully concealed exploitations of the Powers' but also about the driving forces which shape their behaviour. The papers based on Tim Jackson's ground breaking *Prosperity Without Growth*, Papers 8-12 in Part 5 is our first excursion in trying to reach an understanding of the deeper pressures which shape the world economy today. More papers of this kind are planned including a set based on David Harvey's *The New Imperialism*, (2004); not a new books but it uncovers the deep roots of the incessant drive to achieve greater profitability and growth, which, being a fundamental feature, has not changed since Harvey wrote his book – it takes a thought revolution to overturn fundamental characteristics, and that is a fairly rare event.

---

## Overview of the papers

### THE BASICS

This first group of papers provides an essential background to the current flow of events, and will continue to do so. Without an understanding of how the current situation was arrived at, what the forces are that shaped it and how they exerted and continue to exert their powerful influence, one is presented merely with a continuing succession of apparently disconnected incidents. In a word, the back history is essential to an adequate understanding of how 'the Powers' operate and how they consistently conceal their own oppressive influence on the world's poorest people.

- PAPER 1      **Understanding predatory globalization**  
Based on *Juggernaut Politics* by Jacques Gelinias  
*Zed Books 2003*
- PAPER 2      **The World Trade Organization (1)**  
Based on *Behind the Scenes at the WTO*  
by Fatoumata Jawara and Aileen Kwa  
*Zed Books 2003*
- PAPER 3      **The World Trade Organization (2)**  
Based on *Behind the Scenes at the WTO*  
by Jawara and Kwa  
*Zed Books 2003*
- PAPER 4      **Foreign Direct Investment**  
Based on *Protecting Foreign Investment*  
by Carlos M Correa and Nagesh Kumar  
*Zed Books 2003*
- PAPER 5      **Transnational Corporations (1)**  
Based on *Big Business; Poor Peoples*  
by John Madeley

*Zed Books 2nd edition 2008*

- PAPER 6      **Transnational Corporations (2)**  
Based on *Big Business; Poor Peoples*  
by John Madeley  
*Zed Books 2nd edition 2008*
- PAPER 7      **TNCs – controlling the world’s food supply**  
Based on *Hungry Corporations*  
by Helena Paul, Ricarda Steinbrecher and others  
*Zed Books 2003*
- PAPER 8      **Neoliberalism and Its Critics**  
Based on *Market Whys and Human Wherefores*  
By David Jenkins  
*Continuum 2004*  
**See also Part 5, Papers 1–4**

**MONEY, POLITICS and POWER**

The link between the politicians and the financiers in the UK and the US is clearly brought out here.

- PAPER 9      **The Financiers rule – OK?**  
From *The Gods that Failed*  
by Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson  
*The Bodley Head 2008*  
and  
*Whose Crisis, Whose Future?*  
by Susan George  
*Polity 2010*
- PAPER 10     **The Price of Inequality**  
By Joseph Stiglitz  
*Allen Lane 2012*
- PAPER 11     **Mr Osborne’s Economic Experiment**  
By William Keegan  
*Searching Finance 2014*
- PAPER 12     **Shadow Sovereigns: How Global Corporations Are Seizing Power  
(Introduction and Chapter 1)**  
by Susan George  
*Polity Press 2015*

PAPER 13      **Shadow Sovereigns: How Global Corporations Are Seizing Power (Chapters 2 and 3)**  
by Susan George  
*Polity Press 2015*

PAPER 14      **Shadow Sovereigns: How Global Corporations Are Seizing Power (Chapters 4, 5 and 6)**  
by Susan George  
*Polity Press 2015*

CLIMATE CHANGE and its IMPACT

The relaxed attitude with which this problem is being treated in many quarters within the UK is wholly unwarranted. The crisis is cosmic in scale and immediate. Reid explains the science and notes its impact, worldwide, in general terms backed up by 'real life' reports. Northcott covers similar ground but adds a devastating critique of the political stonewalling which has surrounded climate negotiations in the past twenty years.

PAPER 15      **Climate Change and Human Development (1)**  
By Hannah Reid  
*Zed Books 2014*

PAPER 16      **Climate Change and Human Development (2)**  
By Hannah Reid  
*Zed Books 2014*

PAPER 17      **Climate Change and Human Development (3)**  
By Hannah Reid  
*Zed Books 2014*

PAPER 18      **...When an Irresistible Force Meets an Immovable Object**  
Based on      *A Political Theology of Climate Change*  
By Michael S Northcott  
*SPCK 2013*

PAPER 19      **The Post-Growth Project**  
**How the End of Economic Growth Could Bring a Fairer and Happier Society**  
**(Introduction and Chapters 1 and 3)**  
Edited by John Blewitt and Ray Cunningham  
*Green House - London Publishing Partnership 2014*

PAPER 20     **The Post-Growth Project**  
**How the End of Economic Growth Could Bring a Fairer and Happier Society**  
**(Chapters 2)**  
Edited by John Blewitt and Ray Cunningham  
*Green House - London Publishing Partnership 2014*

PAPER 21     **The Post-Growth Project**  
**How the End of Economic Growth Could Bring a Fairer and Happier Society**  
**(Chapter 6)**  
Edited by John Blewitt and Ray Cunningham  
*Green House - London Publishing Partnership 2014*

#### THE DEVELOPING WORLD

The developing world is stereotypically seen as a collection of countries incapable of bettering themselves either economically or politically. Certainly, they are victims of what was once described as the 'discontents of globalization', but they are not passive victims. The following papers provide accounts of the determined efforts, both political and economic, made by various countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America to pull themselves out of morass of internal misgovernance and external economic exploitation.

PAPER 22     **Business, Politics and the State in Africa (1)**  
By Tim Kelsall  
*Zed Books 2013*

PAPER 23     **Business, Politics and the State in Africa (2)**  
By Tim Kelsall  
*Zed Books 2013*

PAPER 24     **Latin America – Work in Progress (1)**  
From *World Politics 1945 – 2000*  
by Peter Calvocoressi  
*Longmans (8th edition 2001)*  
And  
*Civil Society and the State in Left-led Latin America*  
Edited by Barry Cannon and Peadar Kirby  
*Zed Books 2012*

PAPER 25     **Latin America – Work in Progress (2)**  
From *World Politics 1945 – 2000*  
by Peter Calvocoressi  
*Longmans (8th edition 2001)*  
And  
*Civil Society and the State in Left-led America*  
Edited by Barry Cannon and Peadar Kirby  
*Zed Books 2012*

PAPER 26     **Africa Uprising (1)**  
By Adam Branch and Zacharia Mampilly  
*Zed Books 2015*

PAPER 27

**Africa Uprising (2)**

By Adam Branch and Zacharia Mampilly  
*Zed Books 2015*