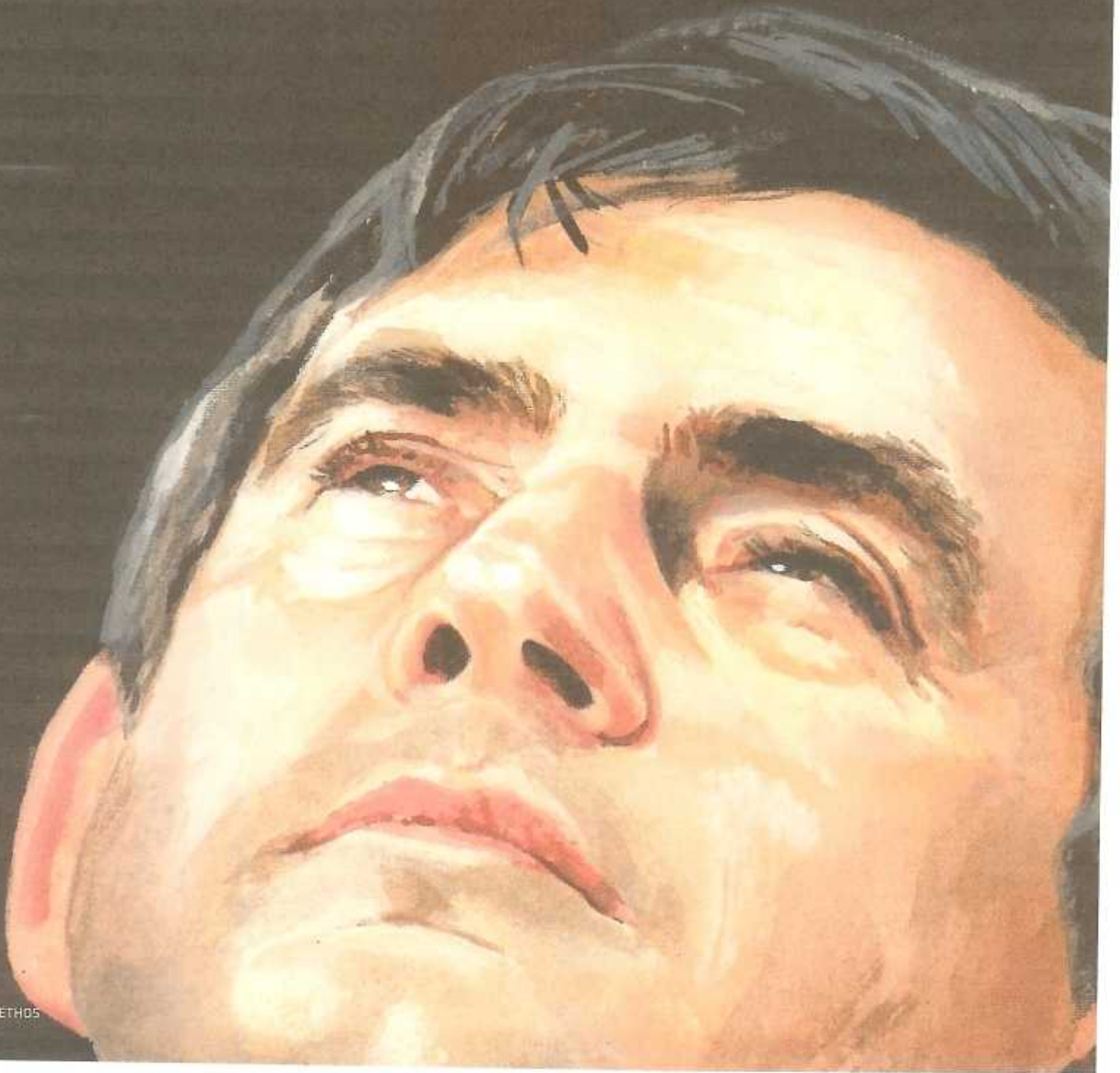



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## A MAN OF PRINCIPLE AS THE MAN WITH THE MASSIVE INTELLECT AND RUMPLED SUIT PREPARES TO TAKE UP RESIDENCE AT NUMBER 10, IRWIN STELZER LOOKS TO HIS RECORD AS CHANCELLOR FOR CLUES AS TO HOW GORDON BROWN WOULD FARE AS PRIME MINISTER

SO GORDON BROWN IS TO OFFICIALLY move into Number 10 Downing Street. At long last, or so the Brownites say. Others are not quite so enthusiastic. Some worry that the new prime minister will ditch the reforms of New Labour in favour of some brand of Scottish socialism. Others worry that Brown, unconstrained by Tony Blair's drive to make Labour acceptable to the aspirational classes, will find new ways of taxing the rich and not-so-rich so that he can continue his drive to redistribute income. Still others worry that his tendency to enclose himself within the circle of a few adoring colleagues will shut him off from the advice and criticism that every national leader must have.

JOSE JACCIET

Others, among them my American friends,

worry that Brown's idea of 'the special relationship' is that the United States and Britain should join together to lead the world in fighting poverty, to the neglect of the fight against terrorism, and devote their resources (most of them American) to lifting Africa from poverty, rather than shoring up the badly underfunded UK and US militaries.

The unfortunate fact is that we cannot be certain that any of these worries are unfounded. But we can make some educated guesses — and they are no more than that — about what to expect from a Brown premiership, always assuming that neither act of God nor act of pollsters nor an inevitable recession intervenes between the Chancellor and his move into the top job. >>

### Son of the manse

Start with the man. Those of Brown's advisers who conceived the silly campaign to Blairise the Chancellor have, it is to be hoped, been defeated. He will never look as smartly turned out as Blair or David Cameron, who, after all, has had a lifetime of exposure to the rules of formal and informal dress, reflected in his unfailingly perfect appearance strolling the high street, riding dogsleds in the Arctic, visiting troops in the field or appearing in the Commons. Nor will he ever develop Blair's easy relationship with everyone from heads of state to pop musicians. Blair styles himself as, and in many ways is, a regular guy. Brown definitely is not. He is what the French call *un homme sérieux*, and what the British more easily recognise as a son of the manse, a man whose Scottish Presbyterian father imbued him with a work ethic that is reflected in his abhorrence of unenforced idleness and his many welfare-to-work programmes.

Which is no failing, since the Chancellor knows that he is not Blair, not the charismatic Bill Clinton who dazzles Labour audiences at party conferences, not the photo-op-friendly Cameron. Judy Garland, whose life was not exactly a model to be emulated, did have one thing right when she advised, "Be a first-rate version of yourself, not a second-rate version of someone else". And Brown's self is a massive intellect wrapped in a rumpled suit and topped by an unruly thatch of hair. Best left that way, with his sense of fun and his hearty laugh confined to private moments.

The question, of course, is how far intellect can carry a nation's leader. Jimmy Carter, I am told by people I respect (although I have seen no evidence of this), was one of the most intelligent presidents ever to hold the office. Yet his domestic policy almost ruined the American economy and his foreign policy was a disaster from which only Ronald Reagan – he of the tiny IQ, if you read the liberal press – proved able to rescue the country.

So intellect is not all. Brown is probably the most economically literate and numerate politician ever to inhabit Number 11, and yet he poured billions into an unreformed health system; raised taxes to the point where they may be discouraging the very entrepreneurship and hard work that he seeks to encourage; devised means tests, which, in effect, raise the marginal tax rate to 70% for low

earners seeking to take home a few extra pounds; and ran deficits when the economy was growing at a pace sufficient to produce surpluses if only spending had been kept at prudent levels.

But he also presided over a long run of economic growth, freed the Bank of England from most political influence, though not all, since he retained the power to appoint the Bank's governors and to set the inflation target, and, most important, kept Britain from ditching sterling in favour of the euro, thwarting Blair's desire to show that he, Blair, is a good European.

Indeed, the example of the fight over the euro is one that sets in stark relief the difference between the present and the soon-to-be Prime Minister. Blair saw the issue as a geopolitical one: joining the euro would be his ticket to membership in the club of good Europeans. By increasing his standing in Europe, he would strengthen his position as the bridge between America and Europe: a role that would enable Britain to 'punch above its weight' in world affairs.

Brown took a somewhat different view, and imposed it on the Prime Minister by persuading him to buy into the Chancellor's several 'tests' by which he, Brown, would determine whether membership in the euro bloc was in Britain's economic interest. Backed by several voluminous studies of the housing market and other sectors of the UK economy, the Chancellor quite correctly decided to allow this experiment in monetary union to go forward without Britain: the train was leaving the station without Britain on board, and Brown was delighted to wave goodbye. Blair was unhappy but, having without too much thought agreed to be guided by the Chancellor in the matter, had no choice but to seek other ways to establish his European credentials, among them waiving the British opt-out to the Social Chapter, thereby exposing British industry to the Brussels disease – costly regulations that are increasingly life-threatening in this age of global competition.

So score one for Brown's economic nous over Blair's intuition-based geopolitical agenda. For had Britain, with its economy so different from those on the continent and its housing market so much more dependent on movements in interest rates, scrapped sterling, its ability to participate as a top-table player in foreign affairs would have been weakened by the inevitably sub-par performance of its economy. >>



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**JUDY GARLAND, WHOSE LIFE WAS NOT EXACTLY A MODEL TO BE EMULATED, DID HAVE ONE THING RIGHT WHEN SHE ADVISED, "BE A FIRST-RATE VERSION OF YOURSELF, NOT A SECOND-RATE VERSION OF SOMEONE ELSE"**

**RIGHT:** Gordon Brown at Edinburgh University in the late 1960s. It was here that the history student and future Prime Minister-in-waiting became interested in politics.



This tells us one thing: that rigorous, intelligent analysis is not exactly a defect in a national leader. But is it enough to make for a successful premiership? Probably not. Another necessary ingredient is what is generally called 'character', which my *OED* defines as 'the collective qualities or characteristics, esp. mental and moral, that distinguish a person... moral strength'. Neither intellect nor charisma is a substitute for moral strength. The lack of character, not any lack of intellect, brought Dick Nixon down, while a similar deficiency marred the presidency of the charismatic Bill Clinton.

#### Moral certainty

Here the Brownites are on comfortable ground. There can be little doubt that by virtue of upbringing, background and whatever else it takes to give a person 'character', Brown has it in abundance. He certainly is not given to the worship of celebrity unless, as with Bono, celebrity can be harnessed to the cause of eliminating poverty. Nor does he have a taste for the material things that drive most people to work. Had he followed his father into the clergy, he would undoubtedly have urged his flock, "with all thy getting, get understanding." Not exactly a message that the Blairites believe will play well in the aspirational set, but one that provides a clue to what we might expect from Brown as Prime Minister – a sure sense of the difference between right and wrong, with a lashing of austerity thrown into the mix. Austerity, by the way, more in matters personal than in matters relating to the welfare state.

Brown's personal value system, which places service above material gain, and which assumes that most other people do the same, is not an unmixed blessing, for two reasons. First, his belief that people do not work in order to have bigger houses and better cars and more gadgets is the reason he is willing to raise taxes to incentive-threatening levels. He just does not believe that high marginal tax rates will discourage good people from working hard, and real entrepreneurs from creating businesses and jobs.

Second, he believes, really believes, that all employees of the NHS are good people, whose primary aim in life is to succour the ill. As a consequence, he believes, really believes, that if he sets targets for them to reach, they will strive to do

so in an honourable way, rather than game the system so that they can 'tick the box' and keep the clipboard wielders off their backs. The idea that these people would leave patients in ambulances rather than admit them to an emergency room, thereby avoiding triggering the countdown to the time limit for stays in A&E, is something he just cannot accept. A charming weakness, actually, but also a very dangerous one in a policymaker.

It is, of course, Brown's character, his background, his roots in an environment in which doing unto others was so great a part, which creates a problem for those trying to make informed guesses as to how he will discharge his expanded responsibilities. It is no secret that if Brown could have one wish, it would be that poverty, especially child poverty, be eliminated from the world. He might have forgotten to bring the proper jungle wear to maximise photo ops when he visited Africa, but he brought a driving desire to do something for those less fortunate than the rest of us. And some ideas of how to do more than make gestures of concern. Raise the well-being of women; debt relief; international efforts to improve accountability and transparency – all ideas that tumble from his

fertile imagination, some sensible, some (debt relief that creates a moral hazard and loans to unreformed kleptocracies among them) not so sensible. See a problem, devise a programme: that's pure Brown, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse.

Brown's war on poverty is more than a mere moral crusade, if 'mere' is the right word in this context. He sees the elimination of poverty and the creation of wealth (in moderate amounts, of course) as a key weapon in the war on terror. The logic goes something like this. The Palestinian-Israeli dispute is at the root of the problem. (That's wrong, but let's follow his logic.) That dispute will be settled only when the Palestinians get their feet on the ladder to prosperity, with jobs for all those men now running around brandishing Kalashnikovs, and those with nothing better to do than shoot rockets from Gaza into Israel. So economic development, the elimination of poverty, and the availability of jobs, social services and education for children are the route to peace in the Middle East. Poverty no, peace yes, is the Chancellor's slogan, and the



### MR BROWN'S WAR ON POVERTY IS MORE THAN A MERE MORAL CRUSADE

#### FROM FIFE TO TEN: BROWN IS THE NEW RED

**1951** Gordon Brown was born in Glasgow, the son of Elizabeth and John, a devoutly religious man and minister in the Church of Scotland. The middle of three sons, Brown was three when his father went to the small Fife parish of Kirkcaldy. An exceptionally bright boy, he started secondary school aged ten, and was canvassing for Labour by the age of 12.



**1967** After being awarded a place at Edinburgh University aged 16, to read history, Brown became immersed in student politics, chiefly through student journalism, and spent three years as student rector chairing the university's governing body. He gained a first-class degree then a doctorate, and by his twenties was a leading political activist in Scotland.

**1969** Brown joins the Labour Party.  
**1972** Only the second student to do so, Brown was elected Rector of Edinburgh University and Chairman of the University Court.  
**1975** The Red Paper on Scotland, Brown's first book, was written while he was still a student. It set out his early political views and that of other notable



reason he has sent Ed Balls on so many trips to Israel and Palestine in the hunt for some way to get the process of economic development underway. How you bring prosperity to a people who dismantle productive greenhouses after receiving them as gifts or who waste half of their human capital by denying women access to jobs is a question that, so far as I know, Brown has not yet attempted to answer.

### Prime Minister Brown

Battling poverty, of course, is only one of the chores the new Prime Minister will face. Which leads to perhaps the most important unknown of all: the new Prime Minister's priorities. Here we have reason to hope and reason to despair.

Start with despair. As the Chancellor, Brown has expanded the welfare state and poured money into an unreconstructed NHS over building prisons or properly funding the military. The results have been disastrous for the quality of life in Britain.

If the first task of any government is to ensure the safety of its citizens, it must be said that Brown has failed in that task. The prisons are so overcrowded that dangerous criminals are placed in minimum-security institutions from which they stroll with ease; the military is so under-funded that it cannot meet the foreign policy goals of the government or maintain anything resembling a reasonable standard of living for the men and women who risk their lives in defence of the realm.

Turn now to hope. As Chancellor with the widest-ranging power of any who ever held that office, Brown inherited a public sector that had been badly under-funded for some years. He had to play catch-up. That he did so without attention to strict value-for-money accounting is perhaps understandable, given the impatience naturally resulting from 18 years in opposition, the glaring need to reduce waiting times in the NHS and the poor condition of too many school buildings. Perhaps it was not unreasonable to assume that the construction of prisons could wait and that the military, not yet committed to fighting terrorists from Iraq to Afghanistan, could do with less than its always-exuberant chiefs contended.

So we know what Chancellor Brown was, but we know not what Prime Minister Brown will become in so many important areas. We do have some

clues. Brown has taken a very hard line indeed on the need to fight terrorism, and not only with economic development abroad and increasingly inclusive economic opportunity at home. He favours long periods of detention for accused terrorists, to give the security services ample time to check out computers that are seized, contact co-operating agencies in other countries and gather evidence preparatory to trial. He has come up with extra money for serving soldiers – not enough, but at least he has got the message that the social contract with the armed forces has been frayed by the government's neglect of the troops' basic needs.

In short, there is some reason to believe that in the case of Brown the past is not prologue, at least not entirely. We cannot assume that the priorities of a peace-time Chancellor, elected after what was arguably a long period of neglect of the public services, will be those of a Prime Minister, taking office when the country is at war and the public services have already received what can only be described as a bonanza.

But we can assume that in packing for his move next door Brown will not leave behind some of the intellectual and emotional furniture that are his hallmarks:

- > A coherent vision of what he wants Britain to become on his watch.
- > A driving desire to organise a global effort to stamp out poverty.
- > Belief that he can safely entrust funds to public service employees because they want to do good.
- > A conviction that man not only does not live by bread alone, but is willing to trade some of that bread for the glow that comes with sharing with others (read, higher taxes).
- > Certainty that he has the ability to make the plans he and his colleagues draw up on paper become realities in practice, experience to the contrary notwithstanding.
- > Uncertainty about how far he can rely on markets rather than the state to accomplish goals.
- > A personal code that places public service above private acquisition of the material stuff of life.
- > The belief that time with a good book and with his family is time better spent than time entertaining celebrities.



**MR BROWN HAS TAKEN A VERY HARD LINE INDEED ON THE NEED TO FIGHT TERRORISM**

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CAMILIA PREEB, EDAPHIS

thinkers including the late Robin Cook and playwright John McGrath.

**1983** Brown entered Parliament in 1983 as MP for Dunfermline East.

**1985** Fast-tracked for promotion, Brown was appointed Opposition Spokesman on Trade and Industry.

**1987** Within four years of entering Government, Brown gained his first

frontbench post as Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

**1992** During the late John Smith's leadership of the Labour Party, Brown became Shadow Chancellor.

**1997** Following his appointment, by Tony Blair, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Brown surprised many by giving the Bank of England independence in monetary policy and



responsibility for setting interest rates.

**1998** Brown introduced the 'five economic tests' to make Britain's choice on whether to join the euro a Treasury decision.

**2001** Labour wins second election victory.

**2002** In April's Budget, Brown raised national insurance to pay for health spending, and introduced 'working tax credits', whereby

welfare payments are accounted for as negative taxation.

**2004** Brown failed to capitalise on Blair's now famous 'wobble' in the summer.

**2007** Blair has said that he will stand down as Labour leader before the next TUC conference, due to be held on 10 September. Brown is still the party's favourite to succeed him.