

BONGO LAND



Alan Clark

by **Ralph Berry**

An ancient scandal rears its head today, like the Loch Ness monster surfacing from the deep. It centred on Alan Clark, son of the great Kenneth Clark whose CIVILIZATION TV series defined Western civilization until the Left got heir teeth into it and abolished courses in Western Civ. Clark was Independently wealthy through the family trust, and lived in Saltwood Castle, of which he said 'Of course I'm all for the poll tax. My house has 132 rooms.' He was a succesful historian, whose THE DONKEYS (the British Army in WW1) still sells in America, and whose OPERATION BARBAROSSA conveys his deep admiration for the fighting qualities of the German and

Soviet armies.

His literary masterpiece was his DIARIES (most especially those portions covering the fall of Margaret Thatcher) now regarded as the greatest political diaries since Samuel Pepys. He was close to her—when he called, the switchboard would put him through—but like Pepys was not at the centre of power.

Clark was a man whose mind was as independent as his means. It was said of him that he had given up the family business, civilization, to move into politics. He could afford to speak his mind. As an MP in the lower reaches of Government, his words had to be taken seriously.

Hence the outrage when these winged words were released. They came from a departmental meeting about black protests over ethnic monitoring, and I quote them from the late Clark's authorized biography:

'You mean to say that they don't want us collecting their names and addresses because they are afraid we'll be going to hand them over to the immigration service so that they can send them all back to Bongo-Bongo land.' A perfect storm then broke out, with the Labour opposition denouncing Clark as unfit to hold office. The Tories covered for him, but the affair dragged on for months. Clark had committed an unforgivable offence with 'Bongo-Bongo land'.

However.

The Left had not done its research (neither had Clark). The fact is that the Bongos are the ruling tribe in Gabon. Everyone bears the name Bongo or is closely connected with the tribe. True, the hyphen might seem mildly disdainful, but there is no arguing with the central truth of the name. Gabon is a land of Bongos. The oil-rich nation had ruled for more than 50 years, first under President Omar Bongo and then his son President Ali Bongo. All prospered. However, President

Ali suffered a stroke in 2018 and has been mentally and physically incapacitated ever since. This did not prevent the country's election body declaring that he had won a third term in power. Since there is no provision in the constitution for a third term, this did seem like pushing the luck of the Bongos too hard. Within minutes Gabonese military officers said they had overthrown the President. They were led by General Brice Oligui Nguema, the commander of the Republican Guard, who is the President's cousin. He would be: think Caligula and the Praetorian Guard.

The people loved the coup. There were TV images of General Nguema held aloft by soldiers shouting 'Oligui President'. Hundreds of people lined the streets of Libreville, the Gabonese capital, rejoicing at the military intervention. They knew enough about the corruption of the top Bongo family, which owns an extensive portfolio of luxury real-estate property in France.

The African Union has predictably condemned the coup, as has France, the former colonial power and hereditary patron. The system defends itself reflexively. I shall be surprised if I do not read soon of Russia making overtures to the new regime. Gabon remains the land of Bongos, but they are different Bongos