

LIVING

MARXISM

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FOR WHAT?

PLUS: An A-Z of the triumph of capitalism • Ken Loach on *Hidden Agenda*—and a real-life story of British murder in Ireland • Britain's national identity crisis • Don't blame pay rises for unemployment • Sonia Sutcliffe, gay sadomasochists and much more

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story of British murder in Ireland • Britain's national identity crisis • Don't blame pay rises
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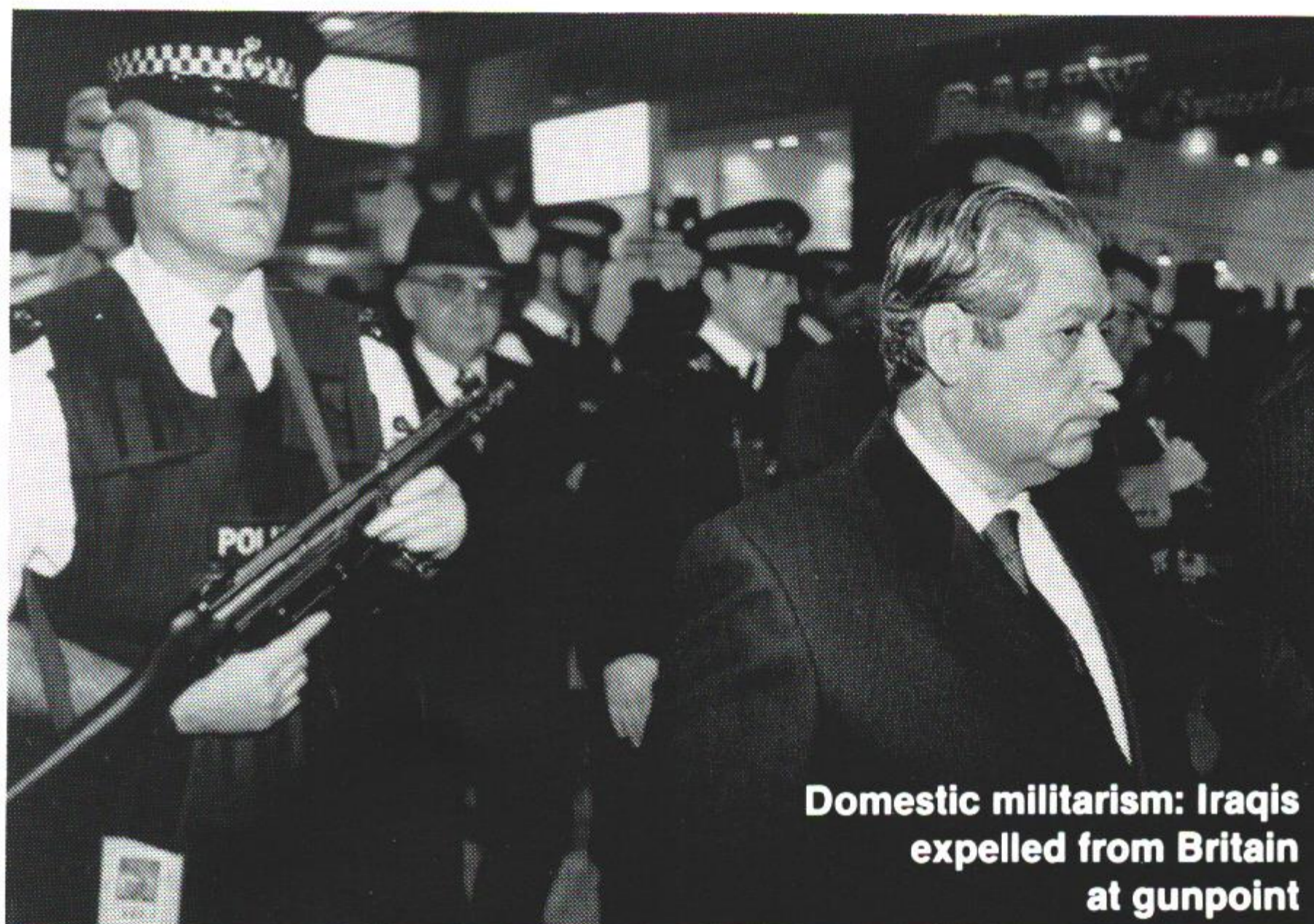


PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Domestic militarism: Iraqis expelled from Britain at gunpoint

War against war

War in the Gulf is not just about what the military does in the desert. The government also has to fight some crucial battles on the home front. And that is where those of us in Britain who oppose the war can make a difference.

The Tories need to win over the hearts and minds of a solid majority of British opinion, to give them the freedom to pursue their war aims in the Middle East. In January, we saw the state trying hard to create a militaristic wartime atmosphere in Britain by staging high-profile stunts: tank manoeuvres at Heathrow airport, battle station exercises in hospitals, the calling up of a few reservists, etc.

The government knows how important winning on the home front is. Opponents of the war should take note and act accordingly. We may not be able to influence what happens in the war zone directly. But there is plenty that can be done to hamper the war drive here. Every domestic act of militarism, from the threatened rounding up of Iraqis in Britain to the censorship of the press, should be vigorously opposed. Above all, the case against imperialism in the Middle East needs to be made at every opportunity.

There is no chance of persuading the Tory government (or the Labour leadership) to abandon the war drive. But by cohering a body of opposition opinion over here, we can make it much harder for them to get away with it over there.

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**LIVING
MARXISM**

FEBRUARY 1991 3

editorial

For what?

They have called it 'the greatest moral issue since the Second World War', and shown their willingness to create a mountain of corpses in the desert. Yet in six months the American and British governments have failed to come up with one convincing reason for their massive invasion of the Gulf.

You could tell that they were getting desperate when, in the first week of January, president George Bush even suggested that the USA would be fighting 'a war for democracy'. The regimes he wants us to defend, run by the Emir of Kuwait and the sheikhs of Saudi Arabia, would have you locked up, flogged or worse for using dirty language like that.

None of the other excuses which the Western powers have offered us is any better. High-minded principles about 'detering aggression' have never bothered the British or American imperialists in the past, when they gave the nod (and the money, and the arms) to countless invasions in the Middle East—including Saddam Hussein's attack on Iran in 1980.

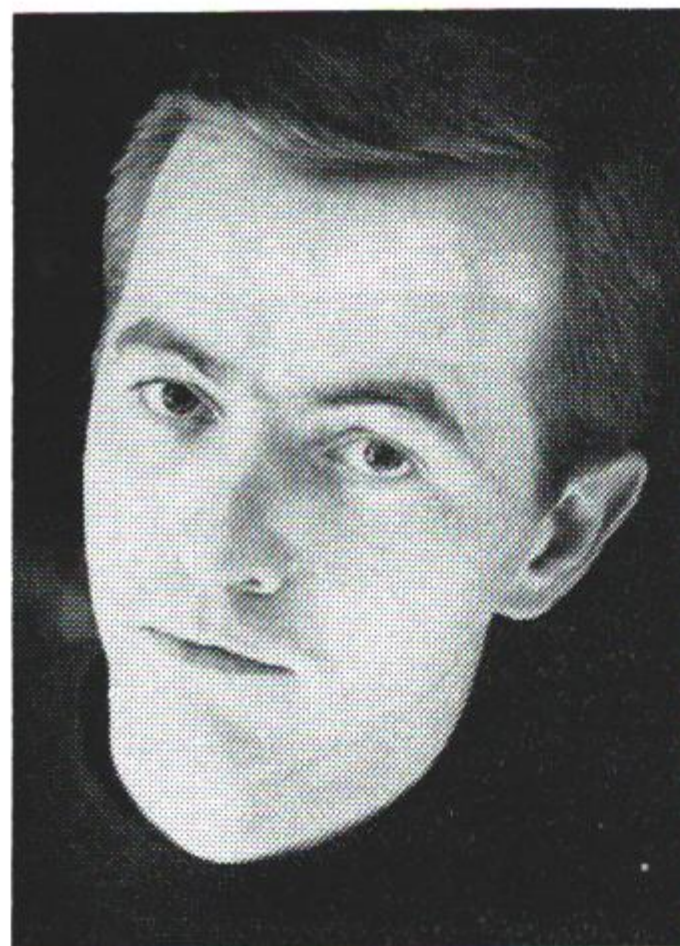
As for the West 'punishing atrocities', we do not yet know what has gone on inside Kuwait under the Iraqis. But we do know that the worst atrocities of the century—up to and including the Nazi Holocaust—were covered up in Britain and America when they happened. Whereas when Western governments have broadcast war crimes from the

rooftops—as with the infamous ravishing of Belgian nuns by the Kaiser's troops—they were either exaggerating or just making it up, to justify their own violence.

It gets even less plausible when the Anglo-American alliance, the people who brought you Hiroshima and Nagasaki, claim that they have shipped hundreds more nuclear weapons into the Gulf war zone and aimed them at Iraq for the humanitarian purpose of 'stopping nuclear proliferation'.

The weakness of the West's arguments has left a lot of people unconvinced about the war drive, which appears to them to be totally irrational. If Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan were still in office, the critics could at least fall back on the old staple of blaming the personal bloodlust of power-mad politicians. But with a grey suit in the White House and a greyer one in Downing Street, even that explanation won't really wash. So, they ask, for what are 'we' supposed to be fighting?

It is not surprising that events in the Gulf cause confusion in the West. Media attention is focused on Iraq and Kuwait, yet their run-of-the-mill local dispute provides no explanation as to why the conflict should have escalated into a great international issue. As we have argued in *Living Marxism* from the start of the Gulf crisis, the true causes can only be understood by looking beyond the boundaries of the Middle East, at the power struggles now warming up among the Western allies themselves.



editor
mick hume

When all the phoney justifications for war are stripped away, the truth is that the US administration has staged the showdown in the Gulf, and put millions of lives on the line, as a cynical exercise in power politics; an exercise designed to demonstrate to the rest of the West that America is still Number One.

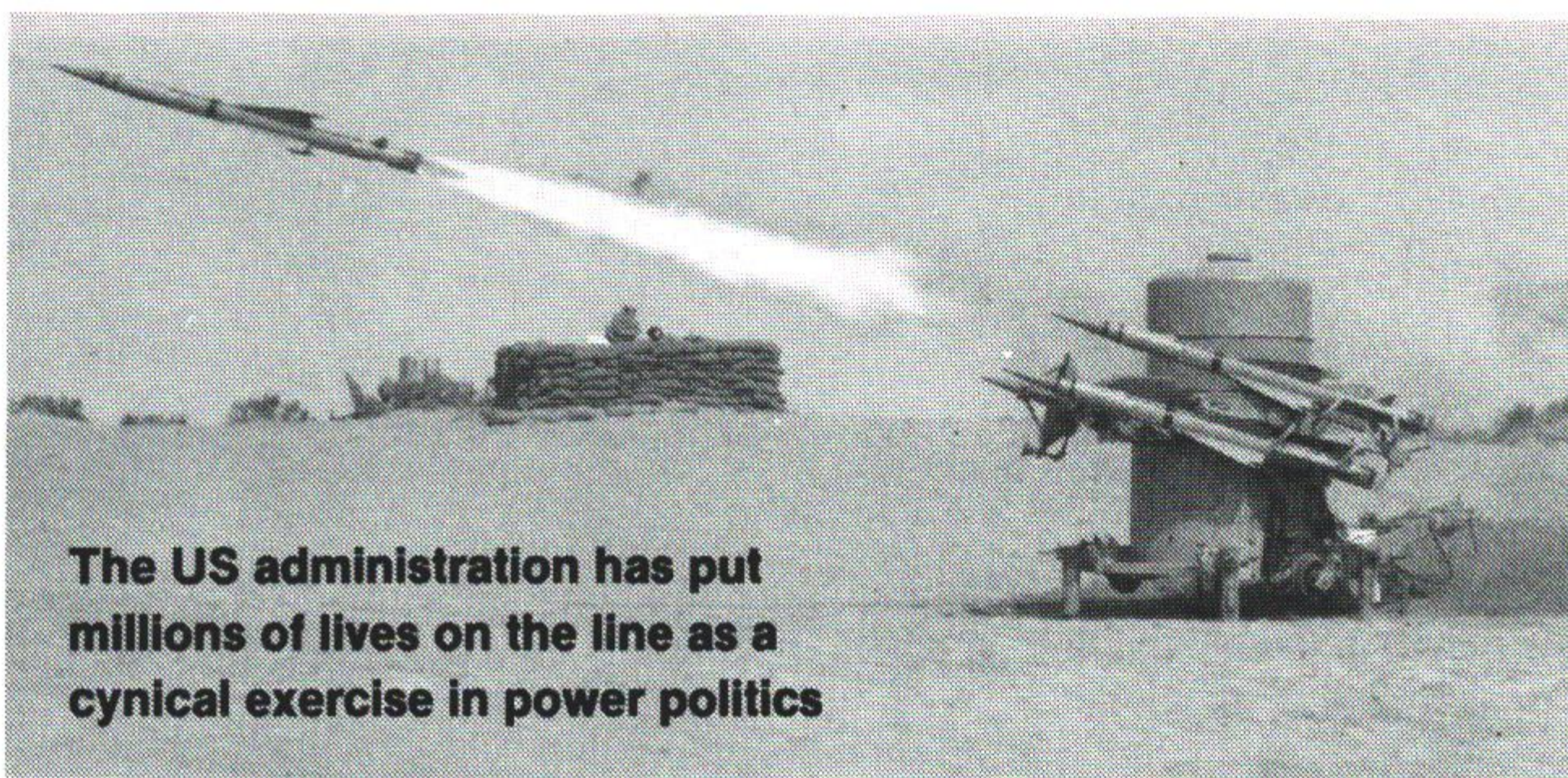
The global dimensions of the Gulf crisis were made, not in Baghdad, but in Washington. America had no interest in what Iraq planned to do to Kuwait; the US ambassador assured Saddam of just that shortly before he invaded his neighbour. But once the Iraqi invasion had happened Bush seized upon it, as an opportunist thief might seize upon an open window, and used it to further his wider foreign policy aims. The Iraqi presence in Kuwait became the pretext for the USA to launch an international crusade, designed to reassert America's leadership of the world. Washington's primary motive in turning the Gulf crisis into the hottest issue on Earth has been to hold its Western alliance together, at a time when the start of an economic recession and the end of the Cold War have threatened to pull it apart.

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Recession is exposing the long-term decline of US economic power, and sharpening the challenge from more dynamic capitalist nations. Now the talk is of trade wars, protectionism, and the billions which the USA owes Japan and Germany. Once the Americans could make their Western rivals jump into line by waving the mighty dollar. Today, as their trade and budget deficits rocket upwards, they are more likely to be waving a begging letter. The rising powers in Bonn and Tokyo are less willing to take orders from Washington with Uncle Sam in danger of becoming a bankrupt.

While the Cold War continued, the USA could compensate for this problem by playing the anti-communist card, pressing the Japanese and the Germans to accept its leadership and prop up its economy in payment for Washington's role as defender of the Free World. Anti-communism acted as the cement holding the US-dominated Western alliance together. But the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the crisis in the Soviet Union have destroyed the credibility of the 'Red Menace'. The Americans have since been desperately searching for an alternative issue which could focus Western minds on the one area where US leadership remains unquestioned: militarism.

When the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait came along, it gave Bush the excuse for starting a hot war in the Gulf as a substitute for the Cold War. Saddam replaced Stalin as the threat to Western civilisation, against which Washington could demand that its allies



The US administration has put millions of lives on the line as a cynical exercise in power politics

united in support of US militarism. The tragedy unfolding in the Middle East results from this deadly diplomacy played out between the USA and the other Western powers.

The fact that the Iraq-Kuwait dispute is only a pretext for US imperialism can be better seen by placing the Gulf crisis in the context of longer-term developments in global affairs. Obviously nobody could foresee precisely what was going to happen. But something like this has been on the cards for some considerable time.

In the pages of *Living Marxism*, we have often discussed the development of a *culture of militarism* among the Western powers. The USA has consistently tried to force its increasingly uppity allies to follow its lead by creating a militarised us-against-them climate in international relations. The Middle East, a cockpit of conflict among the imperialists throughout the century, was always a likely setting for the showdown. Almost two years ago, in an article entitled 'The origins of the third world war', we pointed the way ahead for US foreign policy:

'The US-inspired international naval task force in the Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War illustrates the sort of initiatives that America needs to underwrite its global position....Bush will continue to take a militarist line in diplomatic affairs.' (April 1989)

The much more powerful 'US-inspired international task force in the Gulf' today is not an outraged response to Saddam's aggression; it is the latest of the more and more aggressive measures America has to take to keep a grip on global affairs.

The Gulf crisis is no one-off episode. It is the start of a new era of confrontation around the world, a New Age of Imperialism. The first in the firing line are the peoples of the third world. The imperialists will try to turn their continents into battlefields—and, as the masses of the Middle East have already demonstrated, the oppressed will resist. Alongside and interwoven with this trend goes the intensification of conflicts among

the Western powers themselves, conflicts which point towards the greatest conflagration of all.

Already in the Gulf we have glimpsed the limits of America's ability to hold the Western alliance together, as the French pursued their own diplomatic links with the Arab regimes and other powers showed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for war. While avoiding any direct involvement in the American-led invasion, the Japanese and Germans have used the crisis to push forward their own plans to act as fully fledged world powers. The ground-breaking deployment of the Luftwaffe, ostensibly to help defend Turkey against Iraq, sets a precedent for Germany to play a powerful military role in future international affairs. The Japanese will not be far behind. The battle for supremacy among the imperialists is only warming up.

Taking a stand against Western militarism in the Gulf is the first step towards stopping the world sliding into an abyss. We have the ideal target against which to launch our campaign: British imperialism. The British government has been internationally recognised as the most malevolent warmonger on Earth, more bellicose in its statements on the Gulf than even the Americans. This is because, even more than America, Britain is an economically exhausted capitalist power desperate to maintain some international status by recreating the militaristic images of Empire and once more strutting about the world stage. There could be no more fitting place to raise a voice against unjust wars than in the heartland of British imperialism.

A few years ago on television, I saw an old soldier staring out over endless rows of graves on the First World War battlefield of the Somme. 'For what?', he wept, 'For what?'. The same question is already being asked about the Gulf. Giving the true answer is a job we must all take on, if we are to prevent another entire generation from being introduced to the peace of the grave by the war games of Western imperialism.

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Letters

We welcome readers' views and criticisms. Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

Midnight in the century?

Frank Richards in 'Midnight in the century' (December 1990) says that if you accept his analysis 'it would be easy to draw pessimistic conclusions'. That is an understatement of quite majestic proportions. For Richards there is nothing but decline and defeat anywhere in the world.

He claims, *inter alia*, 'there is no real sense of a working class movement with a distinctive political identity anywhere in the world', 'Marxism has been discredited', and, to cap it all, 'it seems that the prospects for human progress are worse than at any time this century'. Far from bucking the trend of fashionable bourgeois thought on these issues, Richards just repeats it, adding a minus rather than a plus sign. But the whole schema is contradicted by the facts—facts you can read any month in *Living Marxism*, as well as the bourgeois press.

First, the organisations which gave the working class its coherence are the trade unions and mass working class parties. Have they disappeared in the advanced countries? Been crushed by fascism as they were in the thirties? Not at all. Trade unionism has declined and the Stalinist parties are in a fearful crisis. But in Britain, where the neo-liberal assault has been at its fiercest, there are nine million trade unionists, despite everything. Was it the Stalinist parties which gave the working class coherence? Or Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon? Richards paints a too rosy picture of the past of working class organisations.

Second, the mood of resignation and defeat which Richards says pervades the world is contradicted by the facts about the very same countries he quotes as examples. Brazil, for example, in the aftermath of 31 million votes for Lula, the candidate of the Workers Party. Or France, in the wake of demonstrations by

500 000 trade unionists and students. One could also throw in things like the insurrectionary general strike in the Dominican Republic, or the military offensive of the FMLN in El Salvador, both in the last few weeks.

What Frank Richards nowhere says is *when* this world historic defeat for the international working class is supposed to have taken place. It is impossible to understand what he means unless he tells us. Mass revolutionary communist parties have not existed in the West since the twenties. One gets the impression that Richards thinks that only a mass revolutionary current in the working class gives it existence as a political factor. This is the fundamental dividing line among those organisations in Britain which call themselves 'revolutionary'.

If you think a real working class movement exists, then you intervene in it to fight for Marxist politics. If not, you can choose to address the comparatively tiny groups of people who can be won directly to communist propaganda. But if you choose the latter then you can only build what is, scientifically, a small sect—and wait for things to change. Not a very effective way to fight for real Living Marxism.

Phil Hearse London

Frank Richards' article 'Midnight in the century' seems to imply that the capitalist class is experiencing an unprecedented level of confidence—the recent snub given by the government to the TUC's pathetic offer to help curb wage rises seems to be symptomatic of this. However I felt the article didn't clearly convey the reasons for this confidence. This confidence only arises from the lack of any clear challenge to the capitalist system as a result of the defeats suffered by the working class and the discrediting of communism by its false association with the collapsed

Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe—it does not arise from any passionate belief in capitalism.

Why is it that a year after the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, right-wing commentators continue to hog acres of newsprint and hours of air-time denigrating Marxism? Shouldn't they be singing the praises of the free market system to the rafters and writing golden eulogies to the triumph of capitalism? Such a triumphalist attitude is notable for its near absence. This is because in Britain, capitalism can no longer deliver the goods—the evidence is plain for all to see from crumbling hospitals to the sheer inability to build a railway from the Channel Tunnel to London. And the recession is casting further shadows over the long-term economic outlook. The ruling class is only too well aware of these problems, hence the vicious way they attack any suggestion that there may be an alternative to their system.

Talking to people, I do not get any sense of a passionate belief in capitalism—rather a mute resigned acceptance that this is all there is, and that any collective struggle for progressive change is no longer a viable proposition. Any anti-capitalist sentiment that does manifest itself does so in the self-destructive behaviour of anarchist rioters or the individualistic solutions of the Greens. This lack of any working class challenge means the ruling class is free to do whatever it sees fit to prop up its system. It underlines the urgency of developing a coherent critique of capitalism which exposes its tendencies towards collapse—the ruling class may be confident in its ability to contain the working class but not in the ability of capitalism to prosper. And it demonstrates the need to build a hard core of Marxists, using whatever means appropriate in the current political climate.

Dave Amis Essex

Why is Frank Richards so pessimistic? Why in 'Midnight in the century' is he not overjoyed that the erstwhile 'Friends of the Soviet Union' have abandoned the pretence of Marxism? Most of the intellectual camp followers of the Communist Party denied the possibility of socialism, distorted Marx and did their best to prevent any discussion of the working class. Surely the sooner *Marxism* (ie, conservatism) *Today* changes its name, the better. The magazine has as much relationship to Marxism as a starched shirt has to spermatozoa. And the Labour Party? When was that ever a left-wing party? If this was the left, I'm glad it's in disarray.

Ruling class triumphalism is based on the belief that the market is eternal. But the religious doctrine of the omnipotence of the market demands a faith that transcends reason. It is self-evident to anyone with a thimble-full of intelligence that the market is incapable of satisfying the needs of workers in the West, third world or the East. Now that all the groups which adapted to Stalinism are atomising with Pythonesque hilarity, we can be confident that working class creativity will embrace the theoretical form of emancipation it needs. The 'Midnight in the century' was during the dark terror of the fascism and Stalinism of the thirties. At the beginning of the new century we have every reason to look forward to the 'New dawn of communism'.

Paul B Smith Glasgow

About that chicken...

How does Ann Bradley ('Born-again charlatans', December 1990) know that 'the most advanced science could no more revive human life than it could breathe life back into the frozen chicken in your fridge'? Claiming to know what will and will not be possible in the future is something I normally associate with charlatans, not those professing to be Marxists.

It's true that as our lives seem to be increasingly out of our control, more people are turning to spiritualism for the answers. Not surprisingly, the Church of England has just reported its first increase in attendance since the sixties. And when ultra-cool rappers insist that 'you have to pray just to make it today', you know people are feeling helpless. Ann is rightly concerned that the belief that we get a second chance at life prevents people from fighting for a better life in the here and now, but her dismissal of cryogenics is crude.

Obviously, those currently promoting and researching cryogenics exploit people's fear of death. But I find it surprising that a Marxist would confuse the potential of science and technology—however outlandish it may seem to us now—with the way it is used in today's society. The ideas that the Earth was round or that man could make it to the moon were once considered to be as absurd as breathing life back into 'the frozen chicken in the fridge'. How can man advocate the potential of genetic engineering and embryo research while dismissing man's ability to bring the dead back to life? If human sperm can be frozen and revived at a later date, why not a

whole human (or a frozen chicken, for that matter)? The assertion that 'once you're dead, you're dead' would suggest that there is more to death than simply the cessation of physical processes, and that there is something more to life than science could understand or replicate. A soul or God's magic touch, perhaps? I doubt it.

Russell Williams Newcastle

As a scientist I've always needed an explanation for everything, and have seen *Living Marxism* as a welcome impulse to such an attitude. Therefore, I was disappointed with Ann Bradley's article, 'Born-again charlatans', as it only provided a good old slag-off of the irrational. The Doris Stokeses and cryogenics firms have been doing what the church has done for centuries: 'exploiting our hopes, fears and insecurities'. With the decreasing influence of the church, the other charlatans have stepped in. What is needed in this climate is rational explanations and a clear understanding of what science is capable of, both of which the article failed to provide.

Out-of-body experiences are not 'daft'. Although some people consider death to be when the heart stops beating, it is really when the brain dies—and the time-lag between the two could be minutes. The best explanation of out-of-body experiences so far is that when the heart stops beating, blood pressure and oxygen levels drop triggering chemicals which spark the subconscious into picturing your vision of life after death: God, Mohammed, or the queue for rebirth as a cat. And as for cryogenics, my work shows that it is hard enough to freeze small tissues without damaging their cellular structure—so it is dubious that whole human beings could be frozen and thawed without massive amounts of destruction. Those gullible enough to believe the cryogenics firms' hype may be little more than frozen chickens. But this should not blind us to the possibilities of using cryogenics to preserve tissues for transplants or even, one day, doing what cryogenics claims to do today.

A Carter Glasgow

We should make the most of our present life but just because Ann Bradley doesn't believe in life after death she shouldn't be able to ridicule someone else's belief. She should spend more time making the most of life rather than criticising others. Anyway, I don't like your hair, missus.

JB Temple Kings Lynn

Exploitation

Andy Wilson (letters, January 1991) states that he is confused by the way the term 'exploitation' is used in Helen Simons' article of the same name (November 1990). While he agrees that 'the rate of exploitation increases as productivity increases', he disagrees with the argument that 'exploitation itself changes; that people are more exploited in different areas of the economy'.

It is unclear whether the change in exploit-

ation that you disagree with is a qualitative or a quantitative one. Simons does not argue that exploitation itself undergoes qualitative transformations in different areas of the economy. The changes she refers to are purely quantitative; that the rate of surplus to necessary labour-time (the rate of exploitation), and hence surplus-value to variable capital (the rate of surplus-value) vary according to the productivity of labour.

So in fact people are more exploited in different areas of the economy. Simons' reference to a Nissan carworker being more exploited than a third world plantation worker testifies to the tendency of exploitation to increase as productivity rises. This, however, does not imply a *qualitative* change in the nature of exploitation—it is only one of degree, or its rate that has altered.

Nick Johnson London

Kraut-bashing

Your issue on the British and the Germans (September 1990) was spot on: in Britain I was appalled by the gross distortions, whopping lies and sheer malice against Germany. I, for one, was born after the war, like most Germans. I never murdered or tortured anyone; I detest neo-Nazis and wouldn't dream of voting for them; I don't live on beer and sauerkraut (in fact, I can't stick sauerkraut, like many Germans)—and, above all, I'm not keen on imperialism and I'm not slaving to take over Europe. I've never seen so much Nazi literature as I saw in Victoria's WH Smith, but your mag shows there are still voices in Britain that do not pander to chauvinism and paranoia against a target country.

Frank Becker Düsseldorf

Was Thatcher poll-axed?

Sorry Bazza (letters, January 1991), but *Living Marxism* won't be swallowing its words—unless you can explain how changing one 'dry' Tory leader for another constitutes a victory for the working class. The Tory leadership campaign did not coincide with any upsurge in the poll tax campaign (unless it was being conducted by telekinesis), but with the aftermath of Thatcher's shoddy performance in Rome.

Sure, Heseltine promised a review of the poll tax and attempted to use the unease of some Tories, particularly in marginal constituencies, to gather support. But he failed, and the grey-suited men picked John Major, who has subsequently felt confident enough to reject the idea of tampering with the tax until after the next election. This hardly tallies with the claim that the working class has defeated the Tories.

Until the left stops dreaming about mass campaigns that don't exist and broadens its political attack (witness the consensus over the Gulf), then the working class will remain in the grip of bourgeois ideas.

Antoni Orgill Manchester

Anti- war?

Not good enough!

Chances are that you're already opposed to the US/British war drive in the Gulf. Pat Roberts puts the case for going further, and taking sides with the Arab nationalists against Western imperialists

It has come as something of a relief to find that the powerful propaganda campaign on behalf of war with Iraq has failed to win the support of a significant cross-section of the population in Britain and the West. This public relations exercise has somehow failed to connect. A lot

of people seem to sense that the sordid display of Western militarism in the Gulf has little to do with the ostensible principles of defending democracy and national sovereignty. In January, large demonstrations in the major cities of the world showed that there is a significant reserve of

anti-war energy which is waiting to be mobilised.

The evidence that so many people are strongly opposed to the war is obviously a positive development. However, the fact that they have instinctively reacted against war does not necessarily mean that they have a clear understanding of the issues at stake. In fact, it has become quite common for opponents of the Gulf war drive to accept the essential message of the Western propaganda campaign against Iraq, but then to draw the conclusion that war is not yet a necessary solution to the commonly identified problem of Iraqi aggression against Kuwait.

One widely held view is that while Iraq has behaved despicably and Saddam is a madman, it would be wrong for the West to resort to a military solution. This view often

Supporters of sanctions are
no match for the hardline
militarists



runs alongside the suggestion that, instead of war, Iraq might be forced to withdraw from Kuwait and punished through a combination of diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions. The assumption behind this posture is that Iraq is morally wrong and the West is in the right, but that war is a disproportionate response to the problem.

The 'let's beat Saddam, but without a war' sentiment is loudly echoed by many left-wing critics of military action. In Britain, a *New Statesman* editorial in the run-up to the 15 January deadline noted that 'war against Saddam Hussein and Iraq would be justified', then asked, 'but would it be wise?'. Its answer was that this time it would not be wise, and that more time should be devoted to pursuing a political option (11 January 1991). More or less the same point was asserted by the editor of the Labour left weekly *Tribune*, who suggested that 'a war in the Gulf is not necessary', and that diplomacy should be given a chance (11 January 1991).

'Dam the Tigris'

The national newspaper advertisement designed to mobilise for CND's January demonstration clearly spelt out its priorities and perspectives: 'Iraq out of Kuwait', 'Sanctions not war', 'Negotiate now'. Thus the first demand of the biggest anti-war initiative in Britain so far was the same as the first demand of those organising the Western war effort: 'Iraq out of Kuwait.' One anti-war marcher, a former RAF man, went even further in endorsing the anti-Iraqi thrust of the US/British campaign, while disagreeing with war: 'We shouldn't be fighting at all. The first step could easily be to dam up the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to deprive Iraq of water.' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 13 January 1991)

Critics of the war who accept that Iraq or Saddam is the problem are not offering a genuine alternative to the Western powers' drive to establish military domination in the Middle East. Such a narrow anti-war stance does not question the objectives of Western strategy, but merely the means through which they are to be pursued. The standpoint of the liberal/left consensus from the *New Statesman* to CND represents a tactical rather than strategic alternative to Western imperialism, with the debate often centring on issues of *timing* and *scale*, and not of substance.

Obviously an anti-war response is preferable to a wholehearted militaristic one. Such a response from the public can slow down the government's drive to create a full-



**Architects of the
Gulf crisis:
foreign secretary
Douglas Hurd
and US secretary
of state
James Baker**

blown war culture within Britain. Yet in the end it cannot challenge militarism effectively. Once the moral and philosophical foundations of the Western case have been accepted, then it will only be a matter of time before the use of force becomes justified. Only the most principled pacifist can resist this logic. Unfortunately, even principled pacifism fails to challenge the politics of militarism as long as the problem is identified as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

In reality, the Gulf crisis has nothing to do with the sovereignty of Kuwait and Saddam's armed aggression. There are numerous examples of armed aggression in the Middle East in recent decades which nobody suggested should lead to a massive mobilisation of Western forces. Kuwait itself was a creation of British imperialism, and has always been considered as an artificial statelet where democracy in any shape or form is conspicuous by its absence. It is an oilfield with a flag, run by a family firm of British-imposed aristocrats. The absence of democracy in Kuwait is widely recognised as a fact of life, and has never been an issue among the Western powers.

The US-led military intervention in the Gulf has been prompted by

America's need to preserve the existing balance of international power. President George Bush's administration seized upon Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as an opportunity for the declining USA to demonstrate its world leadership in the only sphere where it can still confidently call the shots—the military field. The Gulf crisis was manufactured in Washington. Its primary aim has been to keep the Western powers in line behind Bush, by demonstrating that the US-run military alliances of the Cold War years are still relevant in the post-Cold War age.

To end all wars?

The Gulf crisis represents a transition from the Cold War to what Washington hopes will be an American-led global security system. Temporarily, the Americans are trying to use Iraq and other third world states to substitute for the Soviet Union as the stereotypical threat to civilisation. The Americans have assigned a caricatured version of third world nationalism the role of global troublemaker for the nineties. By leading an international crusade against third world nationalists like Saddam, Washington thus becomes the saviour of world peace.

It is ironic that the Gulf intervention is seen by many as a

necessary step to end all wars and preserve the peace in the new post-Cold War era. The elimination of tinpot dictators is now presented as the prerequisite for a new period of peace. In reality, as we know from the experience of this century, wars that are promoted as ending all wars have a habit of unleashing new ones. The West's Gulf intervention is set to be the prelude to a series of military engagements in the highly unstable post-Cold War world.

The hysterical terms in which Iraq has been talked up as a danger to the world should make even the most gullible among us suspicious. Iraq is a highly unlikely candidate for the role of the most dangerous aggressor on Earth. At least the so-called Soviet threat, which was used to justify Western militarism in the Cold War years, had some degree of plausibility. A backward state like Iraq, on the other hand, is hardly a new Nazi Germany on the make. Iraq has been talked up as a danger to world peace in order to justify the enormous military mobilisation by the USA and its allies.

There are many who are deeply suspicious of Western motives, but are no more sympathetic to Saddam Hussein. The repressive character of the Iraqi regime is pointed to as evidence that Saddam's actions are responsible for the West's action. We have no wish to imply that Saddam possesses any positive qualities. Nor do we endorse his regime in any sense whatsoever. But it is worth asking—what's so different about Saddam?

Iraq is no more or no less repressive than dozens of other third world regimes, many of which are backed by the Western powers. We challenge any supporter of the Western war drive to indicate how Saudi Arabia is less repressive than Iraq, or how Syria is less aggressive than Iraq. Yet both Saudi Arabia and Syria have been applauded as fine participants in the American-led alliance against Saddam's Iraq.

In the end, Saddam Hussein, Iraqi aggression and Kuwaiti sovereignty are entirely incidental to the whole dispute. The Gulf crisis is not about this or that individual—it is a conflict between two mutually opposed forces: the force of Arab nationalism and the force of Western imperialism. Which is why Saddam, while being treated as a devil in the West, enjoys such widespread popular support in the Middle East—especially among the oppressed Palestinians. This support is not so much for Saddam or the policies of his Baath Party, but for what is seen as a blow against imperialism on behalf of the Arab people.

The underlying conflict between

Arab nationalism and Western imperialism is what the anti-Saddam propaganda campaign orchestrated by John Major and Bush hopes to obscure. It is also a conflict that forces everyone to consider which side they should support.

A difference

It is true that neither side is particularly attractive. Western imperialism has long represented a regressive force which continually thwarts human development around the globe. Arab nationalism for its part is thoroughly discredited by its record of petty squabbling and internal conflict, and the way in which it has often been manipulated by demagogues in the mould of Saddam Hussein. Nevertheless, there is a very real difference between Western imperialism and Arab nationalism.

Even in its most gentle, diplomatic form, Western imperialism represents foreign domination by one means or another. By contrast, even the most degraded form of Arab nationalism represents a desire for freedom from foreign domination and control. Arab nationalism expresses the popular desire for *self-determination*;

imperialism stands for *oppression*. These two forces cannot be treated as equally bad in any sense.

It is not enough to oppose war. It is necessary to take sides. Refusing to take sides in practice means acquiescing to the domination of the weaker by the stronger. Sitting on the fence does not make you a genuine neutral observer. It means evading the reality of Western domination in the Middle East. Who would refuse to take sides in an armed hold-up because the victim had a reputation for being a school bully and unsavoury character?

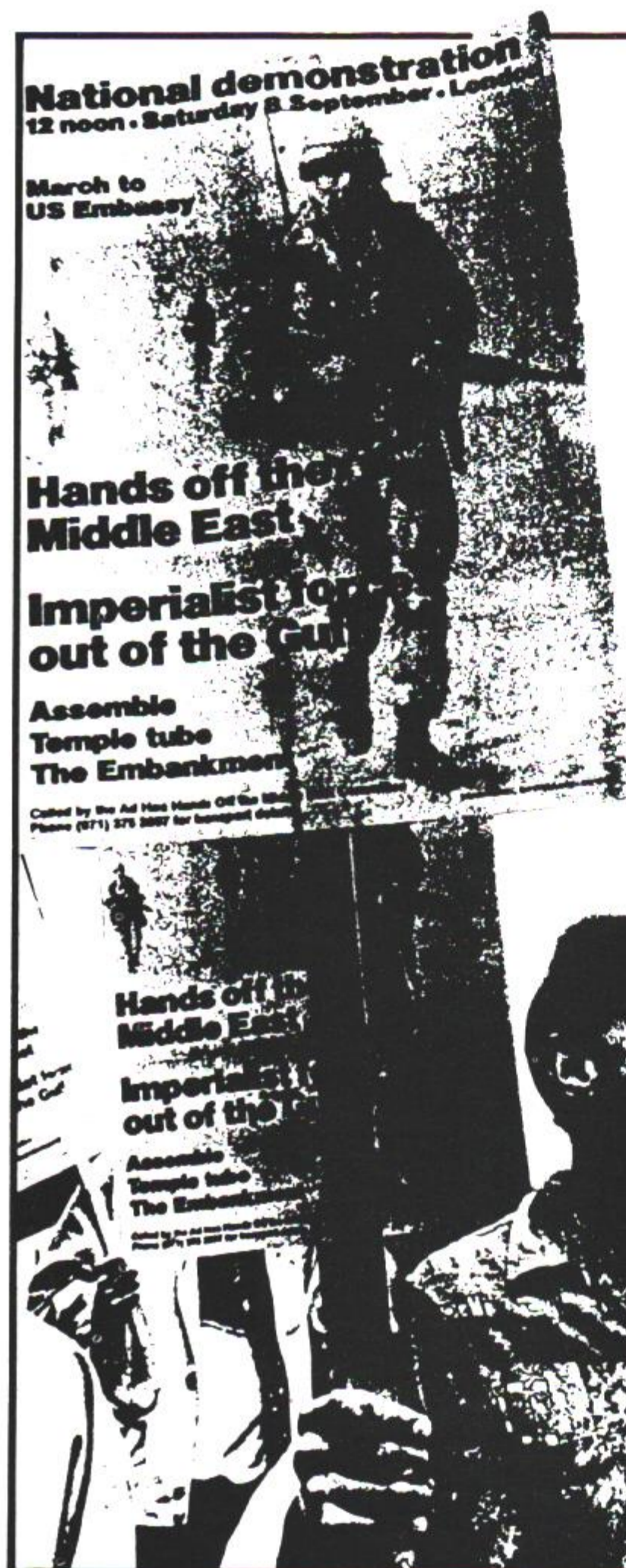
Where next?

Taking sides against Western imperialism has to mean opposing not just the act of war, but *any* means which the Western powers use to secure their objectives—economic, diplomatic or military. Economic sanctions, political pressure or the damming of rivers are just different ways for the West to force the peoples of the third world to submit. They should be seen as no more acceptable than an air-strike.

In any case, no matter how strong feelings against Saddam may be, there is much more at stake than

what happens in this single conflict. If Western imperialism is not challenged it will gain legitimacy with each new military adventure. If the Western powers can intervene in the Gulf today, what's to stop them from doing the same in other parts of the world tomorrow? It is a classic example of imperialist logic that 'we' are said to have a role to play in solving any problems in the Middle East.

There are also more ominous developments afoot. Long before any shooting war had started, it was clear that the Gulf crisis was providing the pretext for the recolonisation of the Middle East. Under the guise of dealing with 'the rape of Kuwait', a major US military presence has been established in the Middle East. There will be no speedy withdrawal. Western imperialism is preparing for a long haul to secure its interests by imposing its will on the peoples of the Arab and Islamic world. Which is one more reason why the cause of human emancipation demands that we oppose all Western interventions, and side with those fighting imperialism.



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An A-Z of the triumph of capitalism

A

The end of the Cold War, we were told, would bring the flowering of a new, peaceful world order, in which the West could spread its civilised values and prosperous system around the globe. Since then we have had the start of a recession and a war drive. Kirsten Cale has put together her list of some of the other benefits which the world has gained so far from the triumph of international capitalism

A is for America, victor in the Cold

War, richest country on Earth and home of free enterprise, where one in seven people (and one in three black people) now live below the official poverty line, and the lifespan of a boy born in Harlem is likely to be shorter than that of a boy born in Bangladesh.

deprived countries from Hungary and the Soviet Union to Panama and El Salvador.

C

C is for chemical weapons, still being

produced, sold and stored by the capitalist powers, despite claims that they were an unwanted offshoot of the Cold War. The USA has 1000 tons of howitzer rounds of nerve gas VX and another 1700 tons of mustard gas, and its budget for chemical weapons is set nearly to double to \$178m in 1990-91. Meanwhile, Mitsubishi of Japan and the German firms Siemens and Thyssen are among those reputedly profiting from helping Saddam's Iraq and Gaddafi's Libya to get chemical weapons.

D

D is for diarrhoea and diarrhoea-

related diseases, the easily curable complaints which, thanks to the profit priorities of the Western drugs industry, are the biggest killers on Earth. And **Djibouti** in the Horn of Africa, a former French colony and still an important port for French, Italian, US and British warships, which now experiences the full benefits of Western patronage: just five per cent of its half a million people can write, and the biggest 'industry' is prostitution.

B

B is for bankruptcy, a record 24 000 of them in Britain last year, and 17 000 more in the USA. And **Big Mac**, the 'beef' burger now being sold in 12 500 outlets around the world, as Ronald McDonald takes the best Western capitalism can offer to

E

E is for El Salvador, the small country in Central America where Washington continues to defend democracy as it has done for a decade, by bankrolling a right-wing

regime against the leftist rebels, the FMLN, to the tune of \$5 billion a year—more than a million dollars a day. The continuing war has already cost over 75 000 lives, 35 000 of them murdered by the right's notorious death squads. In the peaceful spirit of the new world order, the American congress last October voted to punish the killing of six Jesuit priests by cutting off US aid—well, about 10 per cent of it, anyway.

F

is for the **Free World**, that haven of liberty, peace and prosperity which is now supposed to provide the model for human society. Adding up the figures from Amnesty reports suggests that there could be around 80 000 political prisoners in the Free World (ie, Western or pro-Western states); the true total is probably higher.

G

is for **Gulf crisis**, during which the Americans have mobilised the most powerful military force on Earth: by the start of this year there were 149 warships in the Gulf, and 700 000 US and allied troops, 3673 tanks and 1740 aircraft camped out in the Saudi desert, all ready to do their bit for Western civilisation.

H

is for **homelessness** which means that, in the 'property-owning democracy' of modern Britain, nearly half a million people have nowhere permanent to live while thousands sleep on the streets. And **hunger**; at least 750m people suffer from serious hunger and malnutrition in the world today.

I

is for **IMF (International Monetary Fund)**, which claims to channel Western aid to the third world, but which these days ensures that the money really flows in the opposite direction. Last year the third world paid off \$50 billion of debt, and still has another \$1500 billion to pay. The IMF has rescheduled debts on condition that third world countries slash spending on health, housing and education, raise unemployment and cut wages. In Africa, the IMF has just taken out more than it has put in for the fourth year running. Food production in famine-stricken sub-Saharan Africa has *dropped* as governments switch to non-food crops, to earn the foreign currency which they need just to pay the interest on their debts to the Western financiers.

J

is for **Japan**, the most dynamic capitalist power in the world, where only a third of homes are connected to sewers. And **junk bonds**, that miracle of the eighties enterprise culture which allowed parasites to make billions by buying up some of the world's biggest companies with handfuls of paper. Michael Milken, the Junk Bond King, is currently serving a 10-year jail sentence in America for cheating his clients. His lawyer pleaded that Milken was really 'a sensitive human being'.

K

is for the **Khmer Rouge**, the movement that killed 1.5m in Cambodia in the seventies, and now looks set to get back at least a share of power under the 'comprehensive settlement' which, through the United Nations, the USA has planned for that ravaged corner of south-east Asia. In 1979 Vietnam invaded, overthrew Pol Pot and installed a new government. Since then the USA has led an international campaign against Cambodia as a continuation of the Vietnam War (a war during which American bombers dropped the equivalent of five Hiroshimas on Cambodia). To this day, only one country on Earth is denied UN development aid: Cambodia. Meanwhile, the Americans (backed by the British) have kept the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia's seat at the UN, and filtered money, arms and military training through to Pol Pot's forces whose landmines continue to maim up to 80 Cambodians a day. Now, as part of the post-Cold War world order, the UN security council proposes to oversee a 'peace settlement' involving all parties in Cambodia. Just who this would benefit most can be gauged from the security council's decision to drop the word 'genocide' from its resolution on Cambodia, and instead refer to the Khmer Rouge's crimes diplomatically as 'the policies and practices of the past'.

L

is for **Lebanon**, the other Middle Eastern country which was being ravaged by a foreign power as the Gulf crisis began, but which does not qualify for the protection of the UN/US humanitarians. Barely two months after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Syrian army trapped the Maronite Christian forces of General Aoun in central Lebanon, staged a massacre, and imposed a stooge government in Beirut. The USA, while despatching a warfleet to confront Saddam, sent George Bush steaming into Syria to shake president Assad warmly by his blood-soaked hand and thank him for backing the anti-Iraqi crusade. The British government also showed its outrage at the Beirut bloodbath by restoring diplomatic links with Syria.

M

is for Mozambique, where five

million face starvation today because food supplies have been disrupted and crops torched by the right-wing Renamo rebels backed by South Africa and the USA. The 10-year war has already killed 600 000 and forced three million out of their homes. Unicef puts infant mortality as high as 375 deaths to 1000 live babies (the highest in the world) and life expectancy at between 40 and 43 years (the lowest in Africa). Now the Western-run World Bank has made food aid conditional upon Mozambique adopting a liberalised market economy—which means abandoning what's left of the health and education systems. And **'Make-sicko City'**, nickname for Mexico City, the largest and most polluted city in history, home to 20m people, many thousands of whom live by scavenging on rubbish dumps.

O

is for oil sheikhs, the men whom the US and British governments want us to defend in the Middle East as pillars of the new world order. The Emir of Kuwait and his al-Sabah clan ruled over one of the most elitist states on Earth; of two million residents, only 800 000 were allowed full citizens' rights, and only 60 000 Kuwaiti men could vote for the national assembly (which had been suspended anyway). The rest, mostly imported migrant workers, were denied most rights and often treated as slave labour. The regime even falsified weather reports to avoid paying bonuses for working in high temperatures. The Saudi Arabian sheikhs of the 6000-strong al-Saud family are even richer and more reactionary. There are no elections, no judicial system and women are not even allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia. Pictures of men and women together cannot be published, the death penalty is meted out to those who renounce Islam or commit robberies and petty thieves have their hands amputated or are flogged.

air-to-surface missiles, and the multi-billion pound Trident nuclear subs, and still has soldiers posted in Northern Ireland, Belize, the Falklands, Gibraltar, Germany, Norway, Kenya, Hongkong, Brunei, Namibia, the Sinai, Canada, Ascension Island—and Saudi Arabia. And **Panama**, whose people are none-too-impressed with the benefits of the US invasion which liberated them from drug-running former CIA agent Manuel Noriega in December 1989. After killing up to 7000 Panamanians and reducing poor districts of Panama City to rubble, the US forces imposed another stooge president, Guillermo Endara, who is now being investigated for laundering drug money from the Colombian Medellin cartel. Unemployment is skyrocketing, the promised US aid has not materialised, and the old paramilitary gangs are back in charge.

N

is for Nics, or newly industrialising countries, supposedly the third world showcases of capitalist success over the past decade. Last year, Taiwan's stock market lost 70 per cent of its value in four months; Singapore's growth rate fell by eight per cent; and South Korea's export growth rate fell by 50 per cent. In the sphere of politics, South Korea's Darth Vader-lookalike riot cops continue to smash up demonstrations demanding more democracy, while the police state in Singapore has installed 1984-style video cameras in public toilets.

Q

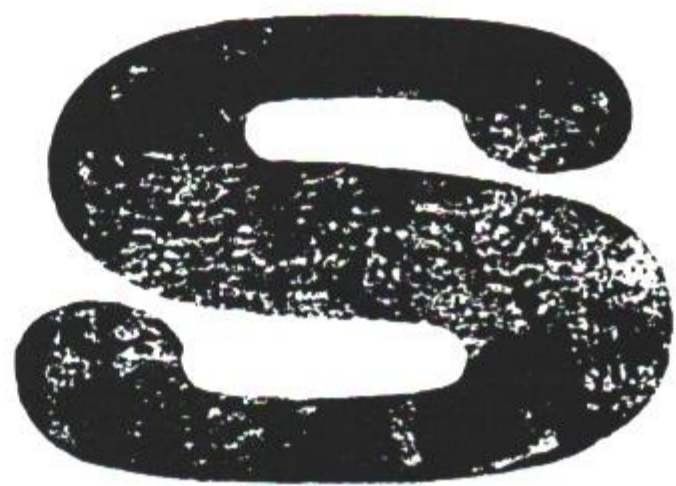
is for quinine, the simple drug that prevents malaria, the second biggest killer in the world. It is so cheap and easy to produce that Schweppes puts it in its bitter lemon, yet countless thousands are dying for want of it in the third world. Western capitalists say they've defeated Marxism, but what about beating the mosquito?

P

is for peace dividend, which was to be reaped at the end of the Cold War. Yet US military outlay stood at nearly \$300 billion last year *before* the \$6 billion-a-month Gulf crisis. Since the Cold War ended, the Pentagon has laid on funds for B-2 bombers (one of which costs almost as much as Mexico's defence budget), C-17 troop transports, Seawolf attack submarines and a beefed-up Star Wars programme. Britain is still to go ahead with the new nuclear

R

is for refugees, of whom between 15 and 30m, half of them children, are estimated to live in camps around the world, fleeing from Western-backed wars and conflicts as far apart as Afghanistan and Mozambique. They are now being joined by another wave of humanity crossing the Middle East in search of refuge from the threat of war in the Gulf.



S is for **starvation**, the fatal legacy of debt, war and IMF austerity programmes in the third world. Twenty million people are threatened by the new famine in sub-Saharan and southern Africa alone.



T is for **Tiananmen Square**, scene of the fastest-forgotten massacre in modern times, as the West and the Chinese regime launch a new détente over the pile of dead bodies. Amnesty reports that the Beijing regime executed hundreds more pro-democracy protesters in the months which followed the June 1989 killings, but this bloodbath has not prevented the Chinese leadership from taking its place in the new world order. Last year, the USA granted China most favoured nation status, the EC dropped sanctions and Whitehall sent officials to clinch new trade deals in Beijing. The Chinese have repaid the West by not opposing crucial UN resolutions backing action against the Iraqis.



U is for **unemployment**, universal scourge of a capitalist system which literally is not working. Even within the G7, the seven richest capitalist nations, 18m people are unemployed. In Eastern Europe, the reintroduction of market economics means that at least a fifth of the workforce faces the sack. In the Soviet Union the market is expected to mean 30-40m unemployed by 1994. Many third world countries have more than 50 per cent unemployment and no welfare system.



V is for **Vietnamese boat people**, who fled to Hongkong in search of a better way of life but found only a British Crown colony run by diktat from Whitehall, which demonstrated the magnanimity of the Free World by interning 53 000 boat people in barbaric camps, and is now deporting them back to Vietnam.



W is for **war** which, just before the Gulf crisis, we were told was going out of fashion as the '40 years of peace' under Nato culminated in the triumphal end of the Cold War itself. In fact since 1945, wars have been fought in every third world country except Sierra Leone, Togo and Djibouti in Africa; the United Arab Emirates in the Middle East; French Guiana in South America, and a few islands. Estimates of how many people have died in these third world conflicts range from 15-30m. Almost all of the wars have been started and sponsored by the Western powers or their proxies. The USA is involved in one way or another in all of the current wars in Latin America (eight in total), Africa (six major wars), three out of the five conflicts in the Middle East, and in one of the eight major wars in Asia. Almost the only 'hot' war which the USA has no hand in is the 22-year old one between the British state and Irish nationalists.



X is for **xenophobia**, the ugly anti-foreign sentiment on the rise everywhere as the world fractures into hostile camps along national and ethnic lines: anti-Japanese chauvinism in America and Australia, anti-Arab racism in France, anti-Hungarian sentiment in

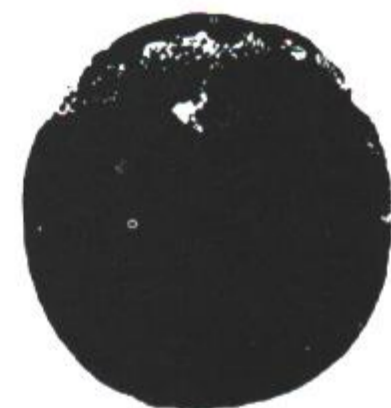
Romania, anti-Korean chauvinism in Japan, anti-French/German mood in Britain, etc, etc. So much for the spirit of 'one world' which, Western propagandists assured us, would follow the thaw in East-West relations.

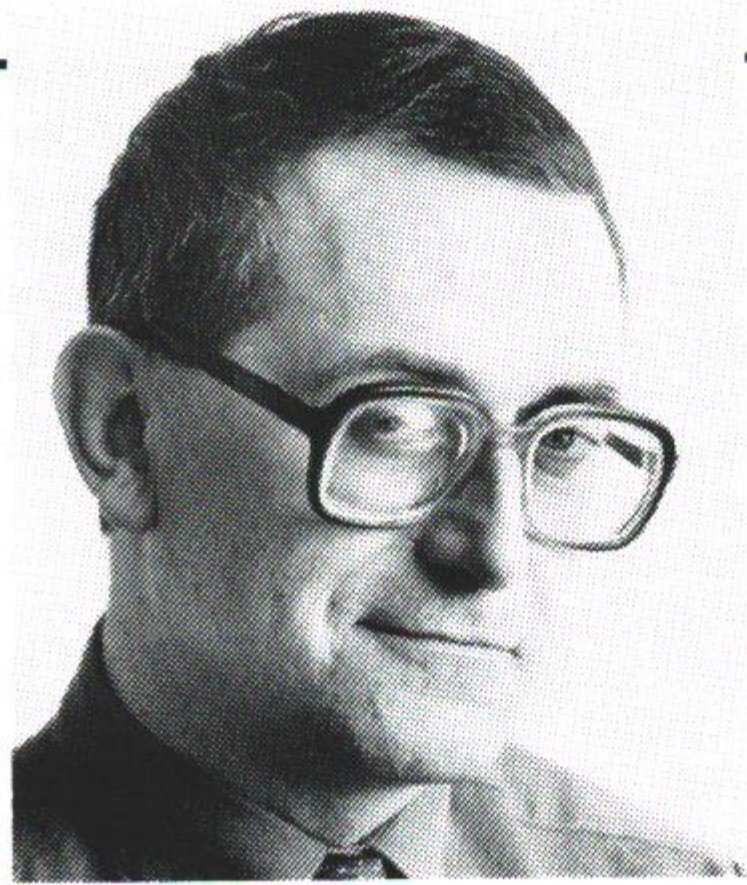


Y is for **young people**, brutalised, starved and killed by capitalism. Unicef reports that 76m children in South Asia are malnourished, half of the global total; 30m children live on the streets throughout the world; 200 000 children under 15 have been conscripted into armies; 80m children over 10 are forced to carry out work that stunts their normal development; and 15m children a year die from disease, malnutrition and neglect.



Z is for **Zhid or Zsido**, the terms for Jew in Poland and Hungary, Eastern European countries where anti-Semitism is making a big comeback alongside the capitalist market. In Poland, Lech Walesa's presidential campaign relied heavily on the mobilisation of anti-Jewish sentiment, although there are only 6000 Jews left in the country. In Hungary, the word *Zsido*, scrawled across election posters, is sufficient to deter people from voting for the Alliance of Free Democrats, and Jewish schools and cafés have been attacked. The promised 'triumph of human values' in the post-Cold War world has turned into a triumph for the values of hate.





Don Milligan

The 'Torture Vice Gang' trial

I was at home watching *Blind Date*. Cilla was cooing over a contestant. I was bracing myself for the embarrassment about to break over me. It was excruciating; a deliciously painful moment. But the spell was broken by a choked scream from the bathroom. I rushed to investigate. It was my flatmate, Robin. He was distraught, foaming at the mouth and yelling. In the wash-basin, orphaned and bloody, lay a tooth. It had just fallen out in the middle of being brushed. 'Serve him right', I thought, 'I always felt three times a day was excessive'.

Robin was even more miserable when I pointed out that the Tooth Fairy only pays out on milk teeth. I went back to Cilla. She was making three silly lads look even sillier by demanding to know all about their ideal girlfriend. But I couldn't get back into the show. I kept nervously fingering my teeth: feeling each one, and woggling it in turn, to check that it was still secure. I was reminded of the pleasure I used to get from moving loose milk teeth around; first with my tongue, pushing it this way and that, and then more directly with my fingers until it could be pulled out. The pain, I remember, was exquisite; a real private pleasure. Almost too much for comfort, but not quite.

Some years were to elapse before I enjoyed my next painful experience. I had my neck bitten by a close friend. It was quite a severe bite and it left two large semi-circular bruises. I was proud of my wound, but I was concerned to hide it from my mum and dad. I knew they would be alarmed. Not by my penchant for masochism, but by my new-found enthusiasm for sex. They knew that it would lead to trouble. And, in due course, of course, it did. All this came back to me recently when I read an article in a newspaper about the 'Torture Vice Gang'.

Two dozen men had got in touch with each other because they enjoyed having sex most of all when it hurt. Sniffing amyl nitrate they had twisted, bashed and flogged each other to the point of orgasm and beyond. They had also made videos of the highlights so they could get worked up all over again. The police got to hear. 'Operation Spanner' swung into action and Judge Rant was enlisted to hand out punishment at the Old Bailey. He sent eight of the men to prison. Another eight were given fines, probation and suspended terms of imprisonment. The names and photographs of 15 of the men were published so that all would be disgraced and financially ruined.

The trial proved an excellent opportunity for the courts to spell out that the 1967 Sexual Offences Act was never intended to sanction sexual freedom. The specific criminalising of sado-masochistic pleasures by Judge Rant underlined a ruthlessly consistent public policy: homosexuality is illegal under the terms of the 1967 act, and so far as is practicable, it will remain so. The act removed penalties from 'acts of gross indecency' voluntarily carried out in private between two male civilians over the age of 21. In all other circumstances,

homosexuality remains illegal. This was reiterated in the Local Government Act by Section 28, criminalising the promotion of homosexuality by councils. It was reinforced by the government's insistence that all sex education must promote marriage and family life. It is being further underlined by the new Criminal Justice Bill, which aims to give judges even more powers to imprison homosexual men.

The crime of the men on trial was that they loved being hurt by, or hurting, their friends. It made their sex fulfilling and heightened their pleasure. I've no doubt they started out like me, woggling their milk teeth and being bitten by teenagers. But because they went on to refine their painful pleasures they are being brutalised by the state and ruined by the mass media. According to Judge Rant we have to draw a line 'between what is acceptable in a civilised society and what is not'. Whether these chaps were civilised or not they certainly put the wind up Judge Rant. While viewing one of the videos, he 'went white in the face and asked for an adjournment'. Even the detectives, men hardened in the struggle to bring villains to justice, were shaken by the erotic antics of the 'Torture Vice Gang'. Their 'brute homosexual activity' took place 'in sinister circumstances' and had nothing to do with the 'concept of human love'.

Judge Rant, of course, like his comic alter ego,

the police and the broadsheet newspaper editors have all changed their tune. None of them have got anything against homosexuals at all. Even Margaret Thatcher and John Major made the same point by ensuring that actor and homosexual campaigner Sir Ian McKellen was awarded a knighthood at the same time as Sir James Anderton, the patron saint of homophobic policemen. The new consensus is that we should not be gratuitously beastly to respectable homosexuals. They too are part of life's rich tapestry. And, within the civilised limits set out by parliament and the courts, they are as deserving of respect and individual liberty as the rest of the population.

It is in this context that many will be tempted to have a discussion about the rights and wrongs of sadomasochism. Is it sexist? Does it reduce human beings to objects? 'Surely there must be something wrong with people who are turned on by Nazi boots and police uniforms?' Well, maybe, maybe not. But these deliberations miss the point entirely.

The old stereotype of the 'queer' as a social inadequate—a disloyal and pathetic child-molester type—is being replaced by the new stereotype of the 'queer' as sexual fetishist drawn to practices inspired by racism, fascism and the occult. The dirty mac has been replaced by an apparent addiction to elaborate and darkly Gothic sexual rituals. Danger. Death. Aids. Snuff movies. These

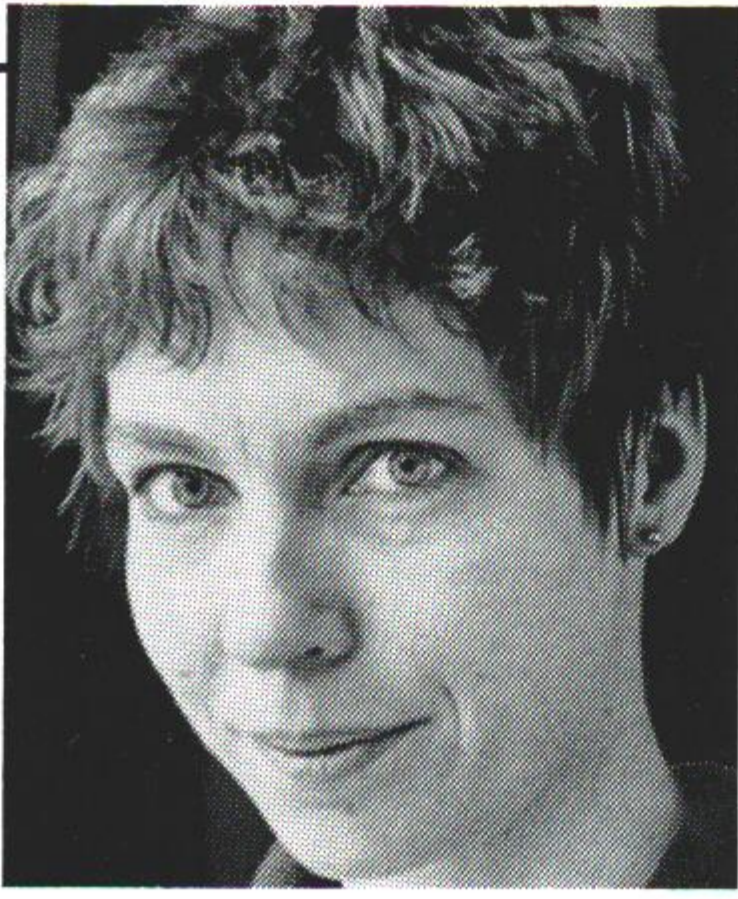
Love must be loved and life must be lived entirely within the judges' rules

Judge Dredd, is an expert on the 'concept of human love'. Love must be loved and life must be lived entirely within the judges' rules. The 'concept of human love' is expressed by self-restraint and simple unadorned fucking with as little mucking about *before* or *after* as humanly possible. Judge Rant knows that it is best expressed between two people of opposing genders within an exclusive relationship ratified by the church and registered with the state. It is a view shared by William Rees-Mogg of the new Broadcasting Standards Council, who knows that 'human society has always had to deal with the instinctual forces that lead to drugs, sexual variety and murderous conflict'. As TV watchdog he has to make sure that 'sexual variety' gets as little air-time as possible so as to ensure that the 'concept of human love' canvassed by Cilla Black comes out on top.

However, Rees-Mogg, like his friend the judge, has assured everybody that he has got nothing against lesbians or two men in bed together. In fact,

are the modern associations daily stirred into the public imagination by the authorities. The real message of the 'Torture Vice Gang' trial is that the modern homosexual is a sadomasochist who is likely to die of Aids, or drugs or of torture. Against this background of violence, death and disease the public policy of ensuring that homosexuals are denied equal rights seems sensibly liberal and positively humane.

This is the beauty of the 'Torture Vice Gang' trial. The authorities have used it to insist that they have nothing against tooth woggling or the joys of being bitten or scratched or even squeezed rather hard by spouse or fiancé. What is more, they have got nothing against 'ordinary' homosexuals. It is simply that they want us to draw the line at uncivilised hanky-panky. I don't know about you, but I'm fairly certain that no matter how much the judges rant for punishment and pant for discipline, I shall feel bound to deny them the pleasure.



Ann Bradley

Sonia Sutcliffe: a set-up

The double standards of the British press have seldom been more clearly revealed than in the coverage of Sonia Sutcliffe's libel action against the *News of the World*.

By December Sonia, wife of Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe, was probably running neck and neck with Myra Hindley in the 'Britain's most hated woman' stakes. Margaret Thatcher was forced to withdraw after she won an embarrassing amount of public sympathy following her fall from power. The press whipped up such a degree of anti-Sonia feeling that the *Sun* could even run a 'special report' under the headline, 'I would rather spend two weeks in Greece with Peter Sutcliffe than with Sonia'.

Peter Sutcliffe was, and presumably still is, a particularly nasty piece of work. Between 1975 and 1980 he murdered at least 13 women and tried to kill at least another seven. He smashed his victims over the head with a hammer and mutilated their bodies with a screwdriver. So when journalist Barbara Jones says that she would rather take a holiday with Peter than with Sonia, the wife is definitely persona non grata.

If you didn't have an obsessional interest in December's libel trial it was easy to forget who was the defendant. Most of the newspaper-reading public may well have believed that Sonia Sutcliffe was on trial, having been implicated in some way in the Ripper's murders. The press ran ghoulish reports of Sonia describing her husband's method of murder, and her belief that he killed humanely. They invited us to wonder at her naivety for believing that her husband could have caught VD from a toilet seat. They encouraged us to disapprove of the fact that she still visited her husband and had vowed to remain faithful to him for 10 years. The press, 'quality' as well as gutter, put Sonia Sutcliffe in the dock. The fact that the case was really a libel action which she had brought against the *News of the World* was turned on its head, and held up as proof that greedy Sonia had brought about her own downfall.

Sonia Sutcliffe brought a libel action against the *News of the World* following the publication of two sordid little stories in 1988, which told of a holiday romance between Sonia and a Greek travel agent who allegedly looked like the Ripper. The *News of the World* paid £25 000 to the man for his story of the holiday, and of his distress at discovering a) that he had been having sex with the Ripper's wife, and b) that he resembled Peter Sutcliffe. Barbara Jones, the journalist who would rather go on holiday with the Ripper than with his wife, acted as go-between for the man and arranged to provide photos of Sonia in a bikini. Jones had previously befriended Sonia Sutcliffe and taken her on the 'bonking' holiday so that she could pump her for material for a book.

Sutcliffe lost the libel case because the court found that she had lied in a previous libel case, when she denied that she had accepted a financial

advance for co-authorship of that book. Barbara Jones provided the evidence against her. Some would call it a set-up: you may think that—I couldn't possibly comment. How Sonia Sutcliffe's shenanigans over money makes it all right for the *News of the World* to publish the 'Sonia loves a Ripper double' and 'Killer's wife in sexy fling' stories is a mystery to me. Nonetheless the court dismissed the case, and ordered her to pay costs of £300 000.

The popular press had a collective orgasm. The *Sun* ran a special front-page editorial: 'The liar loses', in which it claimed that the decision was 'a victory for all newspapers which regard it as their first duty to ferret out the truth and have the courage to publish it'. I am not sure why the courageous *Sun* believes that it has a duty to ferret out the truth about Sonia Sutcliffe's sex life. But she is clearly regarded as fair game.

The media mafia seems to believe it is immoral for Sonia Sutcliffe to fight for compensation when her character is defamed. We are told she had previously amassed compensation amounting to £334 000. In the *News of the World* case it was considered legitimate for the paper's lawyers to remind the court that by the end of 1989, Sonia's

against her. Read between the lines in the recent *Sun* coverage and you might just draw the conclusion that Sonia Sutcliffe's stropiness is partly to blame for her husband's actions. We are told that Sonia dominated Peter and that she 'tried to re-educate him by taking him to the opera and ballet'. Sonia apparently 'had the power to put him down with a single sharp word'. We are also informed that she had treatment for schizophrenia. The implication is clear: Sonia Sutcliffe was a trouser-wearing, hen-pecking harridan, and perhaps if she had been a proper wife the tragedy would never have happened.

Good murder stories sell papers. The Yorkshire Ripper sells papers and so by connection does Sonia Sutcliffe. The press accuses Sonia Sutcliffe of trying to make money out of the Ripper murders—but the press barons have made more dosh than anyone out of the case. The interests of Sutcliffe's victims have never been at the top of any newspaper's list of priorities. Even today when the papers drag up the details of his violence, they remind us that most of his victims were prostitutes and reserve their real sympathy for the few who weren't.

The papers are always looking for somebody

They have been out to get her since she refused to play the part of the broken and guilt-ridden little woman

libel actions had brought her an average of £50 000 a year tax free. The *Sun* refers to the money as 'her winnings'. What everybody conveniently seems to forget is that this money was awarded to her as compensation because the papers involved were found *guilty of libel*. It's courageous for papers to publish lies, but it's immoral for a woman to fight back against them.

The press set out to crucify Sonia Sutcliffe, and it looks as though they have succeeded. But nobody should be under the illusion that it was done in the interests of ferreting out the truth. They have been out to get Sonia Sutcliffe since she refused to play the part of the broken and guilt-ridden little woman when her husband was convicted. When the courts decided that her house should be sold to provide compensation for Sutcliffe's victims, she fought the decision and won. When the papers printed lies about her, she fought them and won. Sonia Sutcliffe stood up for her own interests. She's a stropy woman, and the press doesn't like that.

They've done their best to turn her stropiness

whom they can set up as an incarnation of evil—preferably a woman. Somebody to use as a kind of anti-Christ, someone who seems to go against everything that decent, God-fearing folk respect. Myra Hindley is their favourite—a woman who defied all maternal instinct to satisfy her lover's unnatural cravings. Sonia Sutcliffe has been selected to play the same role today. She may not have the same potential as Hindley because, of course, she didn't help her husband or even know about his crimes. But such details don't matter to the fearless searchers for truth in the British newspaper industry.

I am sure Sonia Sutcliffe is no angel. It is quite possible that she is an avaricious woman who has tried to get what money she can by trading on her name and her husband's reputation. But in this case she's far more sinned against than sinning. Barbara Jones may rather go on holiday with the Ripper than his wife. I think I'd rather go on holiday with Sonia Sutcliffe than Barbara Jones.

That nice Mr Major declares war

One minute John Major pledges to create a more caring society; the next he threatens to crush the Iraqis.

Sharon Clarke looks at the two sides of Major's new-look Conservatism

Most commentators have not yet come to terms with what's new and what's not about John Major's government. Some have taken the talk of a more compassionate, less confrontational Conservatism at face value, and announced that Major's replacement of Margaret Thatcher marks the 'end of radicalism'. Other critics refuse to accept that anything has changed, and dismiss Major as simply 'Mrs Thatcher in disguise'; in this spirit, the makers of *Spitting Image* say that their Major puppet (a robot created by Thatcher) is going to take on the former prime minister's voice. Neither of these responses quite hits the nail on the head.

There is no point denying that the Major government is going to be different from Thatcher's. Since his election to the Tory leadership at the end of November, Major has quickly set about projecting a nicer, more voter-friendly style, and toning down some of the government's controversial policies accordingly. However, this alteration in the government's image should not distract us from the fact that, in crucial respects, things are going to get even worse for many people under Major than they were under Thatcher.

The Tories' shorthand way of describing Major's new approach is

to say that the government is going to be tough on economic matters, but gentler on social issues. At first sight this might seem fair enough. For example, in December Major made clear his intention to keep interest rates high to combat inflation, while at the same time announcing a new initiative to get the homeless off the streets of London, and an improved offer of compensation to the haemophiliacs who contracted Aids on the NHS. Yet there is a fundamental contradiction between the two sides of Major's stated aims. Providing meaningful social welfare is an expensive business. So how could the government get tough on the economy and yet be generous on social issues at the same time?

No turning soft

Like any capitalist government, the Tories' priority is to sort out the economy for their business friends. In today's restrictive conditions of recession, that must mean tightening the screws on unprofitable welfare spending (warfare spending is another matter). Even if he meant every compassionate word he has said, Major would have no scope for going soft on social issues in 1991. The only policy concessions his government can afford are superficial ones which will cost it little or nothing—and make little or no difference.

Look a little closer at the '1000 new beds for homeless' initiative announced in December, for example, and it becomes clear that the government is putting no new money at all into the project. Instead it is counting on the voluntary agencies to come up with a thousand more places in hostels and rented housing. Just 20 of these beds were expected to be available by Christmas.

Most of the Major government's other well-advertised changes, such as the modification of Thatcher's national curriculum for schools, involve no expense to the treasury. One which does is the offer of £50m compensation to be divided among the haemophiliacs given blood infected with the Aids virus (many of whom have already died); this may be an improvement, but it is still pathetic. And any minor modifications to the poll tax which Michael Heseltine might propose will no doubt have to be financed by more cuts in local government spending.

However nice he might like to think he is, the prime minister's priorities will be determined by capitalist economics, not good intentions. The depth of the recession is going to demand drastic measures. The government can thus be trusted to keep its promise of getting tough on the economy; as explained elsewhere in this month's *Living Marxism*, it is already paving the way for a far-reaching attack on our jobs and living standards. This is why, for most of us, things are going to be worse under Major than they were under Thatcher—not because of the personalities involved, but because British capitalism is in an even weaker state today than it was a decade ago. Major's attempt to appear more compassionate on an

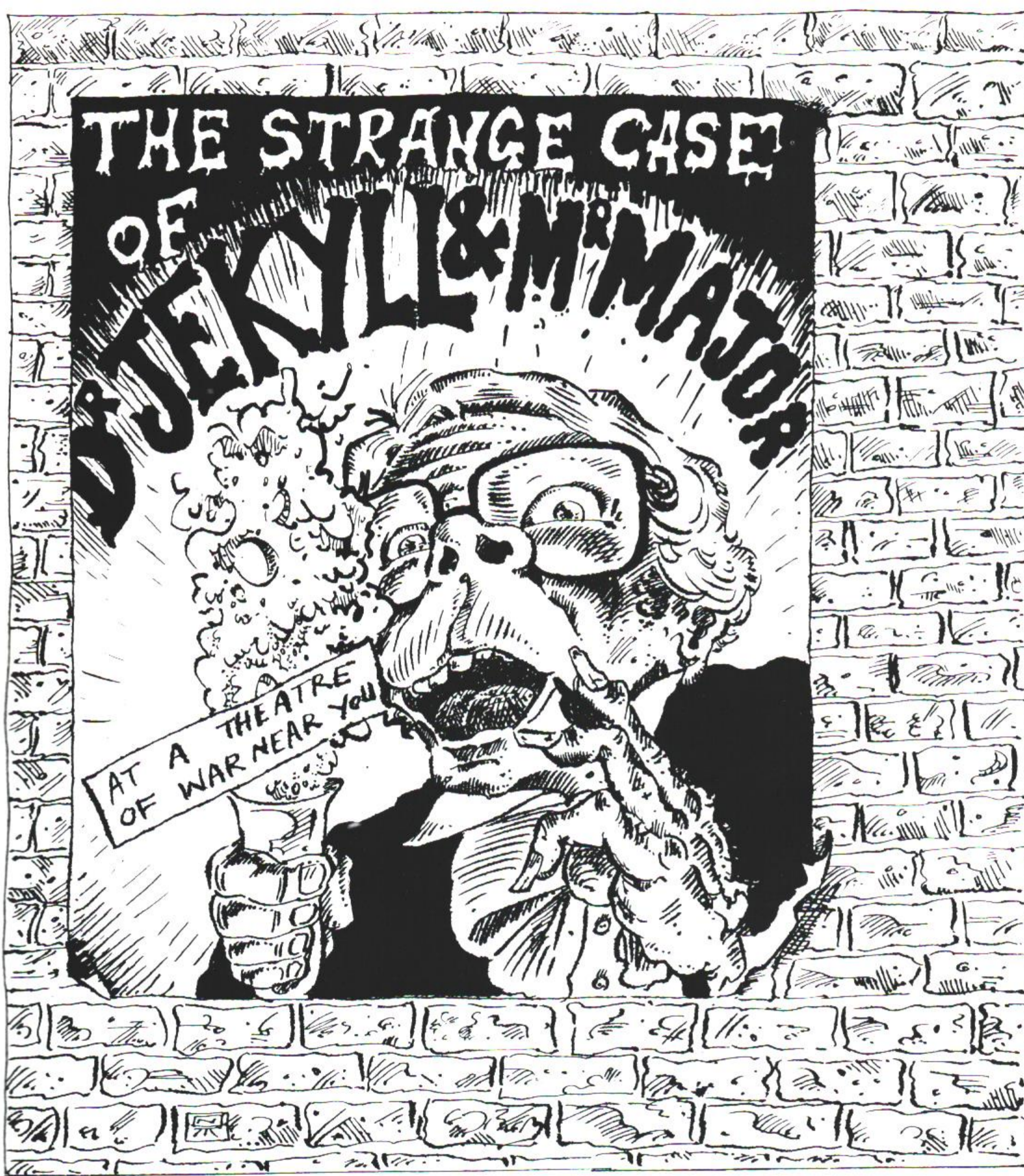


ILLUSTRATION: Nat

issue like homelessness has impressed Prince Charles, but it will do nothing to solve the problems facing the half a million homeless people in Britain, or indeed to prevent more people becoming homeless in the hard times ahead.

So should we dismiss Major's changes as of no importance at all? Not quite. The recent revamping of the Tory government's image has had an impact on the balance between the parliamentary parties. In particular, Major's facelift is helping to expose the limits of the Labour Party's feeble opposition to the Tories, enabling the government to pursue its harsh policies on the economy and the Gulf with greater ease.

The greatest achievement of the Thatcher government was the way in which it redrew the map of British politics, and forced the Labour Party to accept many premises of Tory politics. In the eighties, Neil Kinnock's Labour Party was transformed into an openly pro-capitalist party of the centre ground, and its policy differences with the Conservatives on key issues became narrower and narrower. In these

disadvantageous circumstances, Labour saw its best weapon against the Tories as 'the Thatcher factor', and it devoted much effort to attacking 'the greedy society' and 'the mean society' which it accused her of championing. This line of attack was always weak; but since Thatcher has been replaced by that nice Mr Major and his image of compassionate Conservatism, it has faded away altogether.

Denied the easy target which had been presented by Thatcher's personality, Labour now has to find a more substantial political stick with which to beat the Major government. Yet the changes of the past few years have left Kinnock's Labour Party with no distinct political identity of its own, no alternative programme with which to challenge Tory policy. Indeed once the Thatcherite rhetoric is removed, Labour spokesmen often find themselves in embarrassing agreement with Major's Conservatives on the fundamentals of what must be done to save British capitalism (such as, for example, cutting our real pay levels). All Kinnock's party can do is to quibble

with the Tories and invent insubstantial differences. This was demonstrated in the Gulf crisis debate in early January, when Labour announced that it was opposed to war and would remain so until the moment one started—at which point it would promise to become as enthusiastic a supporter of British militarism as the Tories.

Many commentators have said that Major's cultivation of a more moderate, reasonable style heralds the creation of 'a new consensus' in British politics, after the confrontational Thatcher years. What this new consensus really represents, however, is the fact that the Tories have won the big debates and forced the opposition parties to adapt to their principles. In which case, there is *no need* for Major and his ministers to continue picking Thatcher-style fights with their parliamentary opponents on every issue.

'A perpetual cockpit'

When Major said in December that 'the house of commons need not necessarily be a perpetual cockpit of confrontation', he did not mean that the Tories were going soft, but that the softness of the opposition often made all-out confrontation unnecessary today. For example, when new health minister William Waldegrave registered his disapproval of the Thatcherites' use of business language in discussing hospital finances, he was not suggesting that the health service be freed from the constraints of capitalist accounting. He was merely noting that, since the principle of business management in the NHS was now written into the statute book and accepted by the Labour leadership, there was no further need for the provocative rhetoric.

The Conservative Party's dominance over the politics of the new parliamentary consensus explains how it has been able to recover in the opinion polls since the Thatcher factor was removed from the scene. More importantly, the neutralisation of the opposition parties explains why Major has been able to declare war in the Gulf, preside over soaring unemployment, and yet still project the image of a more caring government. The Labour Party has made it easy for that nice Mr Major to go on the attack at home and abroad. The fact that the government's iron fist is now wrapped in a velvet glove of compassion will provide little comfort to those on the receiving end.



Tories prepare way for attack on jobs and wages

Redundant arguments

Soaring unemployment, says Helen Simons, has a lot less to do with rising pay than with falling profits

This time last year the official unemployment figures were still falling fast. But at the end of 1990 they leapt upwards by nearly 58 000—the worst monthly increase recorded since May 1981. The rising jobless total provides the most forceful evidence that Britain is back in recession. Economists agree that things are going to get worse, with falling output and soaring unemployment. Alan Walters, Margaret Thatcher's old economic adviser, anticipates a slump to rival the Depression of the 1930s. The living standards of millions of people in Britain are at risk. So who or what is to blame for the return of mass job losses?

Wages of sin

The government and the employers have a straightforward explanation for the new unemployment: it's the workers' own fault for demanding such high wages. 'I have been warning for some months that if wage rises stay high, that will have a necessary effect on jobs', said John Major when the soaring figures were released in mid-December. In case anybody missed Major's point John Banham, director of the bosses' organisation the CBI, used his New Year message to warn that 'the growth in unemployment can only accelerate unless lower pay settlements lead inflation downwards'. Banham condemned the demand that wage rises keep pace with inflation as 'recklessness' which would cause 'needless job losses, bringing bleak prospects to thousands of families in the New Year'.

The image of greedy workers squandering the nation's wealth, leaving British business helpless before international competition, serves as a simple and politically useful explanation for mass unemployment. It both provides a



scapegoat for the 'bleak prospects' facing many families, and paves the way for attacking our wage levels in the months to come. The government and employers have had considerable success already in getting their pay-rises-equal-job-losses message across to the trade unions. Union officials at the Rolls Royce aerospace plants recently urged their members to adopt a 'responsible attitude' in face of the lay-offs that now plague the airline industry, and to accept a five per cent pay rise—which, at a time of double-figure inflation, meant a five per cent *cut* in real wage levels.

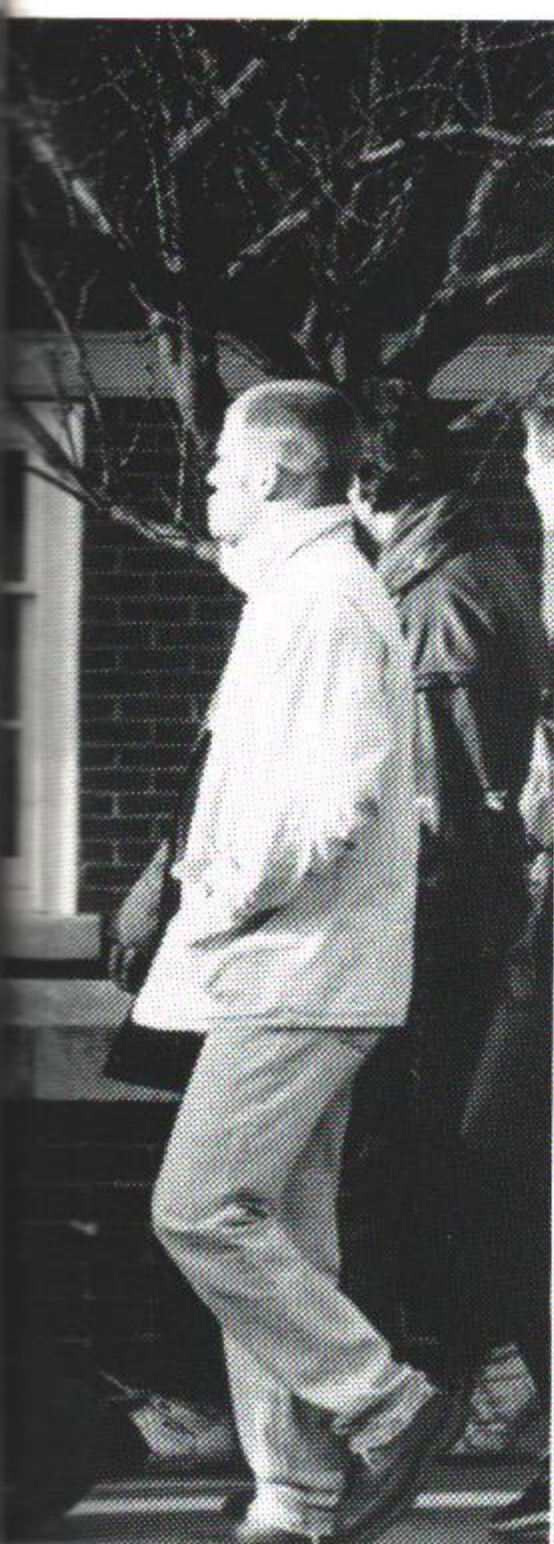
The claim that workers have somehow 'priced themselves out of jobs' is now approaching the status of common sense. Yet it does not stand up to serious examination. For a start, there has been no dramatic hike in the living standards of most

people. Over the past year, pay settlements have hovered at or around the going rate of inflation. Pay rises in line with inflation put more cash in your pocket, but the extra money only enables you to maintain your existing living standard against rising prices. The millionaire members of the CBI may consider this to be 'recklessness', but for the rest of us it is a matter of survival. Far from consuming an ever-greater share of the nation's wealth, the average living standards of the working class have remained pretty constant (see *Employment Gazette*, January 1991).

Even the better-looking pay rises achieved last year were less impressive than they might first appear. In the autumn Jaguar hit the headlines with a pay deal reportedly worth 12.5 per cent, which fuelled the

arguments about reckless wage increases and greedy workers. Closer inspection of the deal, however, reveals that the basic increase was 8.5 per cent (well below inflation, then running at 10.9 per cent). The additional four per cent was designated as a 'versatility allowance', in exchange for which the workers are expected to work more flexibly and intensively, and to abandon industrial action.

A similar deal lies behind most of the other headline 'reckless settlements'. Far from pricing themselves out of work employees are now having to accept deals which make them work harder and longer. Flexible working practices and productivity packages cut a company's costs and boost its output.



Capitalism cannot preserve jobs even in the Tory heartlands; 2500 are to go at British Aerospace in Surrey (left)

This sort of wage deal does not damage the firm. As employers well know, they pay for themselves many times over.

The 'workers price themselves out of a job' brigade also ignores the fact that a section of the working class has suffered from falling living standards over the last decade. In 1979, nine per cent of the population and 12 per cent of children were living on an income below half the average. By 1987 the corresponding figures were 19 and 26 per cent ('Poverty: the facts', Child Poverty Action Group). The latest review from the Low Pay Unit points out that, in 1990, 10.4m adults in Britain earned below the Council of Europe's 'decency threshold'. Many of these impoverished workers are now the ones joining the dole queues.

Unemployment is not caused by

greed or reckless pay rises. To understand the true causes of today's joblessness, we need to look not at workers' rising pay levels, but at the bosses' falling rates of profit.

The tendency for profit rates to fall is a key feature of capitalism. It is not brought about by accidental factors, such as a pay deal, but is an inherent feature of a profit-based market economy. The pressure to compete by raising productivity forces capitalists to invest a greater proportion of their capital in machinery and raw materials, and relatively less in human labour. But since exploiting human labour is their only source of profit, this shift reduces the ratio of new profits created to total investment. Thus their rate of return tends to decline. We will return to this fundamental law of capitalist economics at greater length in a future issue of *Living Marxism*. For now, it is worth noting that the decline of profit rates is illustrated in surveys of the British economy since the late fifties.

Not natural

Falling rates of profit are ultimately responsible for the inability of the system to maintain full employment. If profitability is poor, capitalists will not invest the resources necessary to create or maintain jobs. Of course people always need jobs, and others always need the goods and services which those workers could produce. But our needs are of little or no concern to the capitalists. Their preoccupation is with private profit, and if they are not making enough of it, they will cut jobs and close enterprises. Thus unemployment is not the 'natural' disaster which the authorities often like to portray it as, nor is it a product of pay rises which keep pace with inflation. It is a consequence of capitalist economics.

How does this general understanding of unemployment relate to the specific rise in joblessness in Britain today? As one of the most decayed capitalist powers, modern Britain has suffered more acutely from problems related to poor profitability than have more dynamic economies like Japan and Germany. Tory mythmakers would like us to believe that all was well with UK plc until recently. In fact, back in the sixties profit rates were so sluggish in the UK and investment so poor that Britain had already been overtaken by Germany as Europe's leading exporter. The downward trend has never been reversed.

The massive shake-out of jobs in British manufacturing during the recession of the early eighties showed how desperate the employers had

become to counter the crisis of profitability. Official unemployment rose to well over three million and empty factories dotted the landscape. The Tory 'miracle' of the eighties was supposed to have turned things around for good, as unemployment fell and the economy expanded. Today it is clear that the recovery amounted to very little. Profit levels had barely recovered to pre-1979 levels before they began to decline again in 1988. Throughout the decade there was no net investment in manufacturing; now investment is falling once more. And despite the improvements of the eighties, Britain's productivity remains only two thirds of Germany's and about half of the USA's.

British unemployment figures fell in the late eighties, firstly because of the Tory government's extensive fiddling of the figures, and secondly and most importantly because of the massive extension of credit in the world economy. For a while, credit allowed British capitalists to make money and create jobs without addressing their underlying problems of unprofitable production. The banking, financial and construction sectors boomed on the basis of huge credit-financed speculation in the share, money and property markets. Many manufacturers used the money they borrowed, not to invest in new technology, but to play the City markets and make a fast buck with which to subsidise their factories.

Bleak south-east

The famous entrepreneurs of the roaring eighties built flimsy empires on the basis of heavy borrowing and the consumer credit boom. But an economic upturn founded on debt and financial gambling could not last for long—and neither could many of the jobs which it produced. Now the overnight millionaires are turning into bankrupts, and many of their employees are back on the breadline.

The superficiality of the Tory miracle is reflected in the pattern of the new unemployment. Many of the regions and economic sectors which were the success stories of the eighties are now being hit hardest. Thus south-east England, a centre of many of the shaky empires of the eighties, is suffering now; in November alone unemployment there rose by 23 700. The massively indebted estate agents, retailers, architects, construction firms and financiers in the region have all begun forcing through redundancies.

Yet it is not just the fly-by-night operators of the south which are shedding jobs. Unemployment is now on the increase in all regions, as every economic sector suffers the

consequences of the debts which employers have accumulated to compensate for poor profitability over the past decade. Several big companies which survived the recession of the eighties by cutting some jobs are now being forced to close down altogether. Across British industrial and commercial companies, interest payment on outstanding debt now accounts for nearly 40 per cent of post-tax income (*Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin*, November 1990). The debt mountain threatens all sections with further lay-offs.

In the face of all the evidence the authorities cling to the myth that today's wage rises are the cause of tomorrow's crisis. Capitalists are understandably reluctant to admit that mass unemployment is as much a part of their system as is the market. British employers are particularly sensitive to such criticism, since the weakness of their economy has already made mass unemployment a feature of British life for most of the past two decades.

Full-scale attack

Crippling interest repayments may have pushed the economy over the edge into recession, but the underlying cause remains the declining profitability of British industry, a longstanding problem which the debt orgy of the eighties disguised for a few years. The only possible solution to the crisis facing British capitalism is not borrowed money, but a full-scale attack upon workers' jobs and living standards which could create the necessary conditions for profitable investment. If John Major can win the argument about pay rises causing unemployment, carrying out that attack will become considerably easier.

A recent package agreed at the Toleman transporter group in Brentwood, Essex, should provide a sobering warning. Management proposed to cut pay by 25 per cent for the last three months of 1990, and to intensify working conditions so that the firm could cope with the downturn without imposing redundancies. With the promise of profit-sharing in the future, the union, the TGWU, accepted these punitive terms (*IDS Report*, November 1990). Such short-term wage-cutting packages have yet to become a trend. But if the view that wage rises cause unemployment goes unchallenged, then deals which make us pay for the crisis of the profit system are likely to become commonplace.



Former steel town heads for second slump

Corby: so good they closed it twice?

From steel town to ghost town to boom town and back: Corby in Northants seems to sum up the fortunes of British capitalism over the past decade.

Andrew Calcutt and Liam Harris report

Sitting on a bench in Corby's windswept shopping centre, the young woman with a pinched face and a small baby was far from hopeful: 'This town will suffer. Companies are going bust and shops are starting to close. I was born here, I've lived here all my life, but we're thinking of moving away. To Northampton.'

Business is booming at the local Citizens Advice Bureau, where more and more desperate people come to talk to manager Valerie Jacobs about debt problems caused by the low pay, lay-offs and short-time working which are the hallmarks of a town in recession. As if that wasn't enough, Jacobs believes that some local companies are trying to cheat workers out of redundancy money.

Such a bleak picture stands in marked contrast to official forecasts of a rosy future for the Northants town. Labour council leader Kelvin Glendenning says Corby was a success story in the eighties, and remains so today. The steelworks, which once employed two thirds of local men, closed in 1980. But 'Corby refused to die', says Glendenning, 'Corby worked, got off its backside and beat a path to new industries' doors. We have been named among the top 10 towns in the UK for growth'.

What Glendenning calls 'the Corby renaissance' certainly turned a few heads. The former steel town was one of the few Labour strongholds which Margaret Thatcher admired. She gave Glendenning an OBE. The Hungarian government has sought his advice on economic restructuring. A high-ranking delegation from Moscow recently declared that the Soviet Union could learn a great deal from 'the Corby experience'. East

and West, Corby is held up as an example of the regenerative powers of capitalism. It's all very impressive, unless you happen to live there.

Corby grew up overnight in the thirties when, instead of moving Northamptonshire iron ore to Glasgow steelworks, Scottish steel firm Stewart & Lloyd decided it was cheaper to move steelworkers from Glasgow to a new plant in Northants. Corby new town was built as an appendage to the Stewart & Lloyd steelworks which opened in 1933, and unemployed Scots queued for jobs and company houses in one of the few boom towns in Depression Britain.

13 000 steelmen

In the sixties, 13 000 workers pedalled through the gates of the steelworks every day, and everybody assumed that the Corby Candle—the gas jet above the steelworks—would burn forever. Another apparently permanent fixture was the steel union, the ISTC. It was said that steelworks managers didn't dare sack anyone without union permission. But when recession bit in the seventies, both the British steel industry and the union proved fragile.

British steel had been left behind by hi-tech European plants. As part of its radical restructuring plans, the British Steel Corporation announced that Corby's iron and steel-producing works would close in November 1979. In April and November 1979, thousands of demonstrators faced down riot police in an attempt to 'keep the Candle burning'. In the early months of 1980, Corby joined the bitter national steel strike, the first big industrial conflict of Margaret Thatcher's years in office.



The ISTC, a union built on the bureaucratic methods of fudge and compromise which had dominated post-war industrial relations, proved unfit to fight the new class war declared by the Tories. 'It organised everyone and represented no one', is how one disgruntled activist remembers the ISTC. The strike was lost, and Corby closed.

With the closure of the steelworks, local unemployment rocketed to 30 per cent. Scottish-born steelworkers used to play a round of golf after their shift. Now they stayed on the municipal golf course greens all day. Corby was becoming a ghost town. Then, in 1981, environment secretary Michael Heseltine cut 'the last piece of red tape in Corby' and opened Britain's first enterprise zone. Salesmen from Corby's joint industrial development committee went in search of new industry, offering big incentives. On top of £60m worth of department of trade and industry grants, there were European Community loans and grants, rent and rate rebates, tax

allowances, reduced planning restrictions and fewer employment regulations. Attracted by an unprecedented package of state-funded incentives, up to 700 businesses moved to Corby, and the PR men declared it a victory for free enterprise.

In and out

Corby's boom was always a superficial affair. Many of the 'new' jobs were simply transferred from elsewhere, as employers sought to take advantage of the incentives. At least a third of the newcomers went out as quickly as they came in. The council built a brand new factory for Commodore Home Computers, and handed it over gratis. Commodore soon downgraded the plant to a warehouse, then quit the town altogether, and 600 jobs went with it.

Local workers laugh about 'matchbox factories' and fly boys who came back under another name for a second helping of government grants. Everybody has a story of factory closures. 'Alphabet Quilts—in

that place you got 10 minutes notice', said one woman who has grown accustomed to 'outfits that come for a year and then disappear again'. Now, as serious recession sets in again, jobs are not safe even in those firms which stayed the course. Many Corby companies employ most of their staff on contracts of 13 weeks or less. Temping agencies do much of the hiring and firing in the town today.

Corby workers enjoyed few benefits of the eighties 'boom'. Pay rates remained low; by 1991 the going rate for many jobs has risen to the dizzy heights of £2-2.50 an hour. Enterprise zone employers banned unions, sacked activists, and took little notice of health and safety regulations. Fans of 'the Corby renaissance' didn't seem to mind two-storey factories without fire escapes.

Hardly WonderWorld

Small wonder that Corby workers, some juggling two or three part-time, low-paid temporary jobs, are unimpressed by Glendenning's boasts of a thriving and diversified local economy. Ask them about such grand talk, and they will tell you about 'the WonderWorld con'. WonderWorld Leisure Park was to be built on the old steelworks site; there was talk of a monorail stretching over the town, and promises of 10 years of construction work. The £500m first stage was due for completion in 1984, but planning permission will expire this year and WonderWorld is still nothing more than a noticeboard in the middle of a huge vacant lot. Locals have dubbed the project 'WonderWhen'.

They also note with alarm that the new chairman brought in to rescue Corby firm HunterPrint is none other than Sir Ian MacGregor, the hatchet man who closed the steelworks and then moved on to British Coal to lead the assault on pits and jobs. MacGregor's appointment is widely regarded as a sign of hard times ahead.

Far from an ongoing success story, Corby symbolises the way in which British capitalism has gone from slump to 'boom' and back again over the past decade. Like much of Britain's heavy industry, Corby steelworks was forced to close in the seventies and early eighties. Then Corby experienced the sort of frothy, credit-fuelled upturn which the Thatcherites tried to pass off as an 'economic miracle'. Now recession is back in town and, for the second time in a decade, Corby workers are being asked to pay the price for the failures of the system we live under.

ABOVE: Now they need a monument to the 'Corby Commodore worker' as well

the national identity debate

Not-so-Gro

The government makes heavy-handed attempts to revive the spirit of the E
heated rows about the issue of British sovereignty in Europe; these, argues
are the symptoms of a far more profound crisis of national identity

Beat Britain

Empire around the Gulf crisis, while the Tory Party continues its
s Frank Furedi,



The exaggerated terms in which the question of Europe is discussed in Britain suggests that something is seriously wrong here. The British establishment, which in the past built up a reputation for relaxed self-confidence, now seems insecure and ambivalent about its stance. Indeed the British ruling class appears threatened not just by Europe, but by the lack of a role in the changing international order, as a *Sunday Times* editorial noted last summer:

'Britain faces a world in which it can hope, at best, to play second fiddle to a regional superpower, which is a distinct demotion from running an empire or playing second fiddle to a global superpower (America). Even second fiddle to Germany is not guaranteed, since Britain is the poorest of the four big economies, behind France and even Italy, as well as Germany.'
(29 July 1990)

The relentless decline of its economic power also seems to have damaged Britain's self-image. Patriotic British film producer David Puttnam (of *Chariots of Fire* fame) has observed that there is no longer enough hard cash to promote a decent nationalist image, and warned that 'a nation that cannot celebrate its own heroes should start asking itself very serious questions' (*Financial Times*, 4 September 1990).

There is no obvious solution to the decline of British power. The experience of the past suggests that, in such circumstances, there is also a reluctance to ask serious questions. So instead of a meaningful discussion, we are confronted by a panicky assertion of British sovereignty in relation to the most trivial of matters, whether it be

Britain's finest?: right-wing Monday Club members contribute to the European debate by staging an 'Up yours, Delors' protest in Trafalgar Square, as suggested by the Sun

defending the British banger or demanding that German tourists give the Brits the lion's share of the poolside sunbeds.

Even in their more reflective moments, the publicists of the British way of life now express an intense intellectual schizophrenia. They have convinced themselves that the real problem is not the defensive displays of British nationalism, but the fact that the British are too abashed to display patriotic sentiment. The journalist David Blake suggests that 'people in polite society are just embarrassed about patriotism and its symbolism in Britain in a way that is not true anywhere else in the world' (*Sunday Correspondent*, 9 September 1990). A writer in the far-right *Salisbury Review* argues that, perhaps because of 'over-indulgence in jingoism' in the past, 'it has become difficult for the British to openly express their patriotism' (September 1990). The Cambridge don John Casey goes further, suggesting that the British are not only embarrassed about waving the flag but are also less aggressively nationalistic than other societies:

'British patriotism has always differed from the various nationalisms of Europe. It was not expansionist or particularly warlike: it did not define itself against anyone else.' (*Evening Standard*, 24 May 1990)

This flattering portrait of British patriotism sits uneasily alongside the *Sun's* exhortations to let rip at the French or the Germans. Certainly no foreigner who has lived in this country for more than a few months could have the slightest doubt about the robust character of British racism and xenophobia.

The anti-European outbursts, the claim that the British are embarrassed about patriotism, the proposition that British nationalism is less aggressive than most—these are all symptoms of the same condition. Whenever questions or doubts are raised about a nation's identity, it is confirmation of a serious social malaise. A glance back at past discussions of Britain's national identity may help to place the current speculation in perspective.

Confidence crisis

National identity is never a problem when everything is going well. It is only when there is a crisis of confidence, and when the ruling circles feel uncomfortable in a changing world, that questions are raised about what the nation stands for. In Britain these questions began to be asked around the turn of the

century, when the country started to suffer the symptoms of decline from its position as the dominant international power.

At the outset, Britain's economic decline was experienced as a cultural, social and even spiritual problem by the establishment. In contrast to other countries in Europe, nineteenth-century Britain had never needed to forge a self-conscious national identity. That Britain was great was self-evident. First to industrialise, Britain ruled the world through the Empire. No questions needed to be asked about what was British. To be sure, there was a national philosophy based on the theme of the English as a 'free people', a land where liberty flourished through the ages. But there was little need to promote this national character during the international triumphs of the Victorian era.

The situation changed as the turn of the century approached. By the late 1890s, the growing power of Germany and the USA, and Britain's own humiliating performance during the Boer War, had sensitised the ruling class to the dangers of decline. Against this background, the identity of the nation became a new focus for concern. The intelligentsia was particularly concerned with the absence of a coherent patriotic outlook in Britain, as Graham Wallas of the Fabian Society remarked at the time:

'We have not even a name, with any enshrined associations, for the United Kingdom itself. No Englishman is stirred by the name "British", the name "English" irritates all Scotsmen, and the Irish are irritated by both alike.' (Quoted in H Cunningham, 'The Conservative Party and patriotism', in R Colls and P Dodd (eds), *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, 1986)

Britain may have lacked a dynamic national emotion, but it had the Empire, and could more than make up for its image problems by projecting an aggressive imperialist philosophy. As Lord Rosebery argued back in 1885, 'sane imperialism' was nothing but a larger patriotism. The idealisation of imperialism into a morally uplifting ideal served as the inspiration for the ruling class. National identity was not restricted to the geographical confines of Britain. Rather, wherever the British settled in the Empire became Britain. This perspective, most eloquently articulated in John Seeley's *The Expansion of England* (1883), transformed imperialism into a superior British nationalism.

So it was that when Britain's decline forced the issue of national identity on to the political agenda, the themes associated with imperialism provided the raw material for the development of the new nationalist ideology. From the turn of the century, British nationalism was primarily expressed through the Empire, with the British monarch as the central character. For example, instead of celebrations of national holidays such as Bastille day in France or the Fourth of July in America, Britain had a large number of holidays and celebrations associated with the Empire. Imperial exhibitions and labels advertising 'Empire made' were standard. There used to be a school holiday commemorating 'Empire day', and the banner of a popular newspaper proclaimed that it stood for 'King and Empire'. One legacy of this is the Queen's annual Christmas message to the Commonwealth, although today it is primarily directed at domestic audiences.

For a brief period, a popular imperialist identity helped to provide an antidote to the pain caused by Britain's decline. There were always some who argued that imperialism was incompatible with English patriotism and attempted to establish an identity based on English rural life. But until the end of the First World War, the imperial orientation was successful in legitimising the authority of the British establishment. This was an identity which helped the British elite cope with the problems thrown up by an era of unprecedented conflict and uncertainties.

British bully

Between the wars, Britain's consciousness of itself as a highly moral imperial power suffered a major setback. Britain's own decline accelerated, and the imperial project became discredited. Even sections of the establishment became disillusioned with the Empire. It brought little prestige and it exposed Britain as an international bully oppressing relatively powerless people around the world.

The collapse of the imperial ideal provoked a moral and ideological crisis throughout society. The inter-war period was one in which significant sections of the middle class and the intelligentsia ceased to believe in Britain. Lord Eustace Perry wrote in 1934 that there was 'no natural idea in which we any longer believe. We have lost the easy self-confidence which distinguished our Victorian grandfathers, and still distinguishes our American contemporaries' (quoted in P Rich,



Images of Empire: John Bull strikes a blow for British civilisation by stamping on the 'Afghan scorpion'

'Imperial decline and the resurgence of British national identity 1918-1979', in T Kushner and K Lunn (eds), *Traditions of Intolerance*, 1989). The same sense of demoralisation and national decline is well expressed by George Orwell:

'The stagnation of the Empire in the between-war years affected everyone in Britain, but it had an especially direct effect upon two important sub-sections of the middle class. One was the military and imperialist middle class, generally nicknamed the Blimps, and the other the left-wing intelligentsia.' (*The Lion and the Unicorn*, 1941)

The sense of stagnation evoked by Orwell was almost palpable among the intelligentsia. One illustration of this trend was the reaction of this layer to the British Empire Exhibition staged at Wembley in 1924. This exhibition, the biggest ever mounted in Europe, was designed as a major public relations exercise for the Empire. Instead, to the chagrin of the organisers, it became an object of ridicule among the fashionable middle classes.

'Many people saw something flaccid, even ludicrous, to this self-conscious projection of the imperial theme. *Punch* thought it was

downright silly, and published a cartoon by HM Bateman captioned "Do you Wemble?"....The intellectuals of Hampstead, by now almost unanimously anti-imperialist, disapproved of it in principle, and some formed a society called WGTW—the Won't-go-to-Wembleys.' (J Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets*, 1974).

Of course anti-imperialism was far from a popular cause and millions of people did attend the Wembley exhibition. But it was now clear that the Empire could no longer serve as a focus for the development of a national identity. It is at this point, sometime in the twenties and thirties, that British patriotism begins to diverge from imperialism. With the collapse of the imperialist vision the creation of a distinct British national identity became the most pressing task for the establishment.

Dunkirk spirit

The British establishment learned to make a virtue out of necessity. It was no longer politically dominant or economically dynamic, so instead of boasting about British power it began to celebrate the virtues of its moral qualities. The new British identity emphasised the uniqueness of a land of liberty, honesty and equality. In literature and the media there was a perceptible shift towards the values of small rural communities, team spirit, common sense and tolerance. The plucky little Englishman who got on with the job became the national symbol. During the Second World War all those themes were successfully brought together in the image of Britain as a freedom-loving small nation which stood alone against formidable odds and, thanks to the Dunkirk spirit, prevailed over the forces of evil. Making a virtue out of failure became a British obsession. The Americans might have all the money, but the British possessed tradition.

This new identity based on morality was part of a changed political culture in Britain. The ruling class recognised that its traditional way of life had to give way to one that could win wider support. Thus after the Second World War, the Labour Party was allowed to run the affairs of state and a new social democratic consensus based on a system of welfare and economic planning prevailed. Through Labourism a new identity of a nation committed to equality and fair play was popularised, with the NHS replacing the Empire as the symbol of national pride. From the late forties through to the seventies, this new identity helped to counter and

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Tory thinkers will have their work cut out creating popular enthusiasm for the resurrection of Britain's imperial identity

eventually to overcome the sense of national malaise which had prevailed in the inter-war years.

In the post-Thatcher era it is difficult to grasp how widespread was the impact of the social democratic consensus. The project of creating a fair and equal society caught the popular imagination. Even the beneficiaries of the old capitalist order were forced to accept the premise of the new consensus, as Lord Annan recently recalled:

'My own generation in Britain lived with a mild form of guilt. This took the form of shame about what happened in the nineteenth-century industrial revolution, the poverty, the slums, and unemployment....From 1945 until 1979 there was a consensus in British politics that we should try to eliminate this stain on our national life....There was incidentally another form of guilt which the British lived with—guilt about imperialism and the way they had treated their colonies and India.' (Quoted in G Thomas (ed), *The Unresolved Past: A Debate in German History*, 1990)

Not everyone in the establishment accepted that Britain had anything to feel guilty about. Significant sections of the ruling class and the political right were bitter about the ascendancy of the social democratic consensus. They regarded any condemnation of Britain's imperial past as an act of treachery. The new system of welfare and economic planning was seen as an indulgence of indolence and envy.

In the fifties and sixties, the critics of the social democratic consensus remained isolated and marginal to political debate. After all, it was precisely because the old imperial-based themes were no longer relevant that the establishment had opted for building the new consensus. The new British identity proved reasonably effective in establishing popular acceptance of the capitalist system.

Nevertheless, the right-wing critics of social democracy were making an important point. The discrediting of Britain's imperial past meant that the new national identity lacked strong historical roots, and would be of limited use in times of crisis. By the late seventies this point had become clear to those at the centre of the ruling class. The Thatcher era represented the recognition that the post-war consensus could no longer serve the interests of the British establishment. The Thatcher 'revolution' was paralleled by an attempt to reassert Britain's imperial glories and triumphs. A Thatcherite professor of history at Cambridge

spoke for the ruling class when he dismissed a 'New Statesman era like ours, full of self-deprecation and envy', which 'can do with the corrective of a past that demonstrates virtue and achievement' (GR Elton, *The History of England*, 1989). Now everything that the *New Statesman* era stood for was to be questioned.

The attempt to forge a new national identity in the Thatcher era was based on a highly selective interpretation of the past. In particular, there was a demonstrable tendency to ignore the collapse of the imperial tradition in the inter-war years. Right-wing thinkers could not face the simple truth that the social democratic consensus had saved British capitalism's bacon when the imperialist perspective disintegrated. It was hard for them to admit that even sections of the establishment had stopped believing in Britain's mission, and that Labourism had temporarily provided direction and inspiration.

The right-wing thinkers ignored the unpleasant facts of the past and instead blamed the liberal intelligentsia for the sickness of self-guilt. According to this view, people who should have known better stopped believing in Britain; and all that is required to reverse the decline is for that belief to be reinstated. Ray Honeyford, the conservatives' favourite educationalist, posed the need to rehabilitate imperialism:

'Is it not time to challenge the supposed necessity for men of liberal sympathies to feel guilt-ridden about our imperial past?...Should not sensible, civilised people adopt a better informed, a more sceptical view of the disabling tradition that we might, as a nation, and forever feel remorse for what our forebears did in the name of Empire?' ('Anti-racist rhetoric', in F Palmer (ed), *Anti-Racism: An Assault on Education and Value*, 1986)

Honeyford's rhetorical question was to be answered in the affirmative by the new conservative ideology forged in the eighties.

It was relatively easy to replace the *New Statesman* consensus with the Thatcher era, since the vulgar public relations campaigns on behalf of a Greater Britain coincided with the disintegration of post-war Labourism. But this political restructuring could not on its own provide a definitive answer to the problems of Britain's national identity. The history of Britain's decline and the collapse of faith in the imperial mission have deprived the establishment of a past that can be readily mobilised. Moreover, the

sense of national decline has, if anything, become even more pervasive in recent years.

The quick fix of Thatcher-type hype about a national renaissance may just about motivate very dim and very impressionable young Conservatives. But as a dynamic national identity it simply will not do. Just listen to the pathetic attempt by poor old Peregrine Worsthorne to use the Gulf crisis as a way of reviving the imperialist ideal at the centre of a new national myth:

'It could be that the British people, or enough of them, feel that they ought to punish Iraq, because it is in their character to do so, just as in the nineteenth century it was in their character to suppress the slave trade....

'Refusing to adapt, as Britain is accused of doing, can sometimes pay off, since the wheel of fashion comes full circle. Possibly Britain was in danger of clinging too long to outmoded imperial values. Thank God she did. For the civilised world will soon need them again as never before.' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 16 September 1990)

According to Worsthorne, since the 'wheel of fashion comes full circle', Britain's day will come once again. The old imperial Britain will once more be recognised as the leading civilising force in the modern world.

Work cut out

Tory thinkers like Worsthorne will have their work cut out creating popular enthusiasm for the resurrection of Britain's imperial identity. Certainly in its initial stages, the government's imperialist response to the Gulf crisis has had even less public resonance than the media-orchestrated Falklands War. As Thatcher's rejection by her own party indicates, it is far easier to destroy the social democratic consensus than to replace it with a new, confident sense of nationhood at a time when the nation's international status continues to decline.

The differences which have erupted over Europe inside the Tory Party reflect the deep uncertainties about how to project an identity for the British nation. Neither the *New Statesman* outlook nor the Worsthorne school of imperial sentimentality are of any real relevance today. A full-blown crisis of identity looms on the horizon, as British capitalism heads for the next century in a worse state than ever before.



Marketing the monarch

Alan Harding looks at the changing face of royalty, as attempts are made to restore the monarchy's imperial image

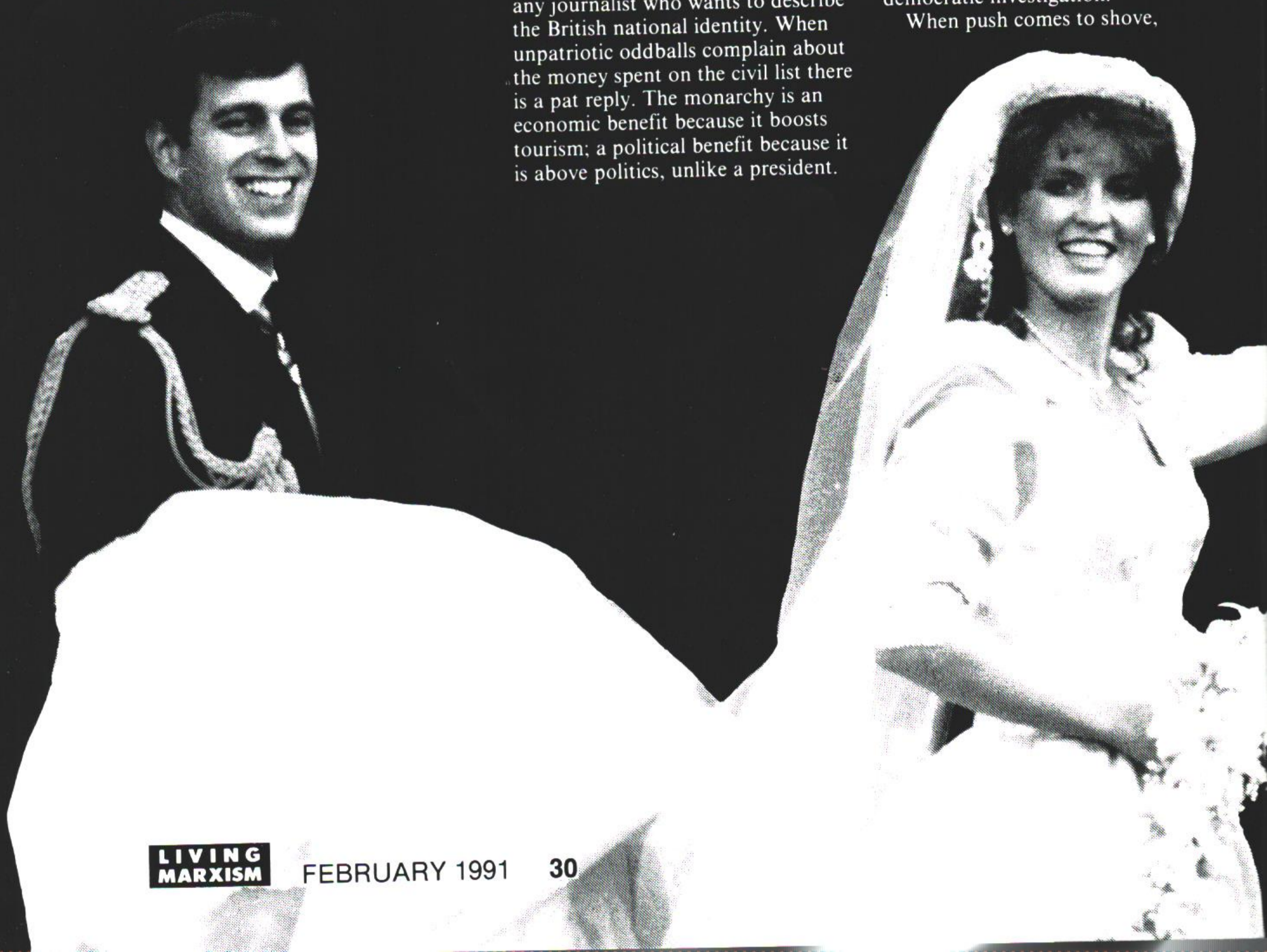
At some time you must have asked yourself why the royal family is forever being rammed down your throat. A royal brat relieves himself in public. Fergie reveals how she lost six stone in six weeks. Charlie gives his latest oracular statement on the state of the nation. Diana confides that she uses elderflower eye gel from the Body Shop. The nation's media corps is guaranteed to drool in servile wonder.

And just in case you haven't heard, the proposed name for the capital's American football team is the London Monarchs. Not the Good Old 1666s or the Ravens. I would even settle for the Sparrers. But no, the Monarchs is the favoured name, explained one of the new league's organisers, because ours is the most famous royal family in the world.

The monarchy is seen at home and abroad as the epitome of Britishness. It is the accepted shorthand used by any journalist who wants to describe the British national identity. When unpatriotic oddballs complain about the money spent on the civil list there is a pat reply. The monarchy is an economic benefit because it boosts tourism; a political benefit because it is above politics, unlike a president.

These commonplace arguments are updates of points made by the established authority on the constitution, Walter Bagehot. Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, Bagehot argued that the pomp and pageantry of the monarchy diverted the ignorant but potentially troublesome masses just like Roman bread and circuses. Moreover, as the titular source of power, the monarchy rendered the real power centres immune from democratic investigation.

When push comes to shove,



however, the monarch is neither above politics nor powerless in constitutional terms. You, I and Tom, Dick and Harry are not sovereign in Britain: Elizabeth Windsor is. John Major taking a car ride to the palace to receive the royal assent may appear to be a charade at the moment, but one day the royal veto could be used to defend the power and privilege of the ruling class against a challenge to the established order:

'In a moment of absolute crisis, the "Patriot King or Queen" could be the nation's ultimate safeguard against tyranny masquerading as "the will of the people". It is never likely to come to pass, for the British would not be the British any more.' (P Grosvenor and J McMillan, *The British Genius*, 1973)

The glitter of the monarchy is supposed to make the substance of its authority more palatable. If and when Charles III is crowned, the venue (Westminster Abbey) and the arcane ritual (holy oil poured over the monarch's head by a man with a shepherd's crook) will be the same as for the coronation of Edward the Confessor nearly 1000 years ago.

Yet while all the archaic paraphernalia remains unchanged, the public face of the monarchy has been transformed over the centuries. In the eighteenth century it was despised as a bastion of wealth and corruption; in the late nineteenth century it began to be partially accepted as a symbol of Empire; in the twentieth century it was sold to the public as a model family institution. Each facelift has been designed to ingratiate the monarchy with its subjects according to the needs of the establishment at any particular time.

She was not amused

For most of its modern history the monarchy has been a deeply unpopular institution. It was the Tory prime minister Benjamin Disraeli who began its rehabilitation in the 1870s, by making it synonymous with imperial power and the gains of Empire. Crowned in 1837, the priggish Queen Victoria had become an embittered recluse by the 1860s, so unpopular that she was jeered by the populace when she took a carriage ride through London. Disraeli is credited with turning her into a national institution.

However, it was only in the 1890s, when the British ruling class felt the heat of foreign competition and the icy fear of decline, that a consensus emerged among the establishment about the efficacy of propagating an

image of imperial splendour. The old widow of Sandringham and Balmoral became the Empress of India, and the Diamond Jubilee celebration of 1897 and the state funeral of 1901 became awesome manifestations of imperial might.

Even this public relations success was not sufficient to guarantee allegiance to the Union Jack, as demonstrated by a succession of social and political crises in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Irish people fought for liberation under the tricolour and the starry plough, while many British workers were inspired by the red flag of the Bolshevik revolution. The royal personnel didn't help matters: the ageing playboy Edward VII was followed by a stiff-backed martinet, George V. The new king was the embodiment of the British officer class which sent millions to pointless and horrible deaths in the First World War.

Happy families

The carnage of war, and the popular antipathy to imperial pretensions and hostility to class privilege which it evoked, demanded that the monarchy be made more palatable in order to serve a unifying function. The royals had to be made more accessible. They had to suffer the same trials and tribulations as the rest of us.

George V began broadcasting to the nation on Christmas Day, but his aloofness from and disdain for his subjects were all too apparent. The shift to more popular values accelerated in the thirties, when the future Edward VIII made occasional forays into the East End to see how the other half lived. When Edward was compelled to abdicate and replaced by his younger brother George, the prestige of the monarchy was again endangered. But George VI's mediocrity and his family image proved to be just the job.

During the Second World War the residual antipathy and indifference to the royals were finally overcome. Official propaganda carefully nurtured an image of the nation's number one family sharing the deprivations and dangers afflicting each and every family in Britain.

In the post-war period, the new cult of the royal family finally laid to rest the pomp and circumstance of Empire. The new Elizabethan age was about a commonwealth of nations, a you've-never-had-it-so-good society and unprecedented national consensus. At the head and heart of the caring welfare society was a royal family whose lives were more and more the property of the nation.

Today, several decades of economic and political decline have put new demands upon the monarchy. The British ruling class feels the need to assert a more aggressive national identity as its global influence wanes. There is now a concerted attempt to project the monarchy more forcefully into the popular consciousness and revive its old imperial role.

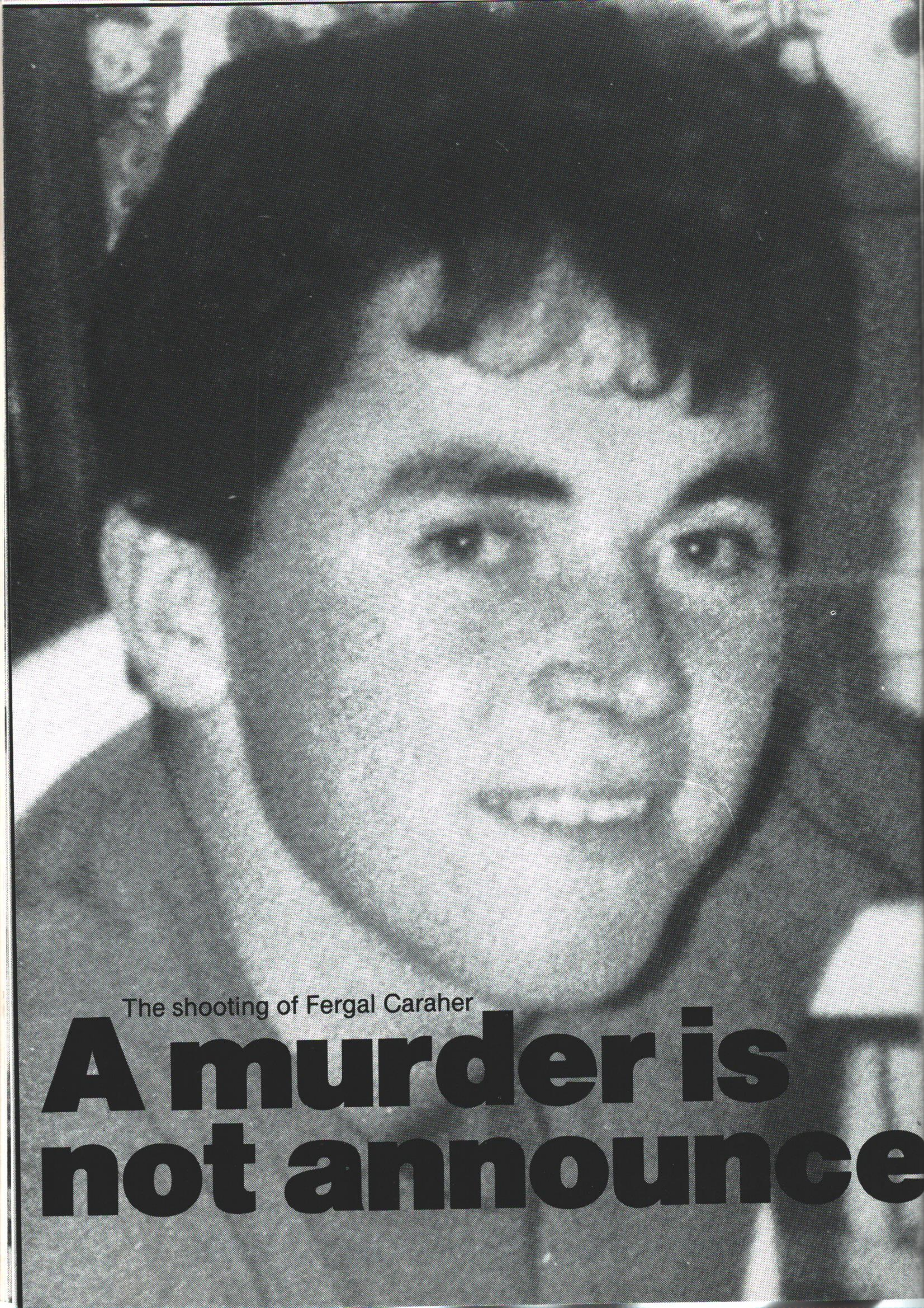
Pulling this off will not be easy. It is one thing for the queen to break with tradition by talking politics in her 1990 Christmas Day message, linking the Dunkirk spirit with Britain's war in Ireland and the defence of Kuwait. But it is another thing altogether to counter the growing popular perception that there is little or no substance to Britain's imperial power.

The recent years of familiarity have also been a mixed blessing, revealing the royal family to have feet of clay. The media may pass over in silence the alcoholic decline of the younger sister thwarted in love, or rise to toast her boozy mother. But even the patriotic *Sun* is forced to make subtle distinctions about the level of social parasitism among family members. It has come down hard on the royals who spend too much time skiing instead of working. Once the butt of cruel horsey jokes, Princess Anne is now a model of hardworking and dignified sobriety. But how can you sell Fergie to the nation? The *Sun*'s ludicrous distinctions are important. Life with the Windsors is not a convincing motif for national identity and unity.

Despite all the fuss, most people remain indifferent and cynical towards the charms of monarchy. I am not suggesting that there is an active republican tradition in the British working class, just that most people will leave the cinema to catch a bus rather than wait for the national anthem. They are not active monarchists either. Many may spout the prejudices of the ruling class in grotesque and exaggerated tones. About a third have always voted Tory. A smaller number parade behind the Union Jack. Even fewer worship at the icon of the monarchy.

This may stick in your throat, but the royal family will never be the laughing stock it is so well qualified to be while the likes of Neil Kinnock remain the most abject apologists for the monarchy. As long as Prince Charles is given credence as the most progressive voice in society, then the marketing of the monarchy as a model of national harmony will not be past its sell-by date.





The shooting of Fergal Caraher

**A murder is
not announce**

Fergal Caraher was shot dead by British soldiers at the end of December, in the village of Cullyhanna, South Armagh. He was 20. Fiona Foster went to the funeral to pay her respects to a friend, and to find the facts that the British media want to hide

'Massive security is expected in Cullyhanna, South Armagh today at the funeral of 20-year old Fergal Caraher, shot dead by soldiers at an Army checkpoint last Sunday.'

The radio report made me nervous. I'd just flown into Belfast that morning and the timing was tight; if I was stopped at extra security checkpoints, I'd be late for the funeral. I started preparing a story but the Belfast republican travelling with me laughed. 'You can say you're on holiday if you like', he said, 'but everyone headed for Cullyhanna today is going to Fergal's funeral, and they're well aware of that'. He was right; the people packed into the convoy of cars headed for the tiny Border village of Cullyhanna wore black ties and carried wreaths. As we got nearer black flags hung from houses and many hedges.

The news reports of massive security were meant to give the impression that the British forces were in control of events in South Armagh. Anybody familiar with the area would know that the opposite is true. Not a single soldier nor Royal Ulster Constabulary officer was to be seen at Fergal Caraher's funeral. The soldiers who had come to Cullyhanna three days earlier to shoot dead one unarmed man and badly wound another did not dare return to witness the crowds who came to Fergal's funeral, to mourn a friend and express their outrage at another British atrocity. They lined the streets while shops, pubs and garages closed out of respect, and listened in silent approval while local Sinn Fein councillor, Jim McAllister, gave a graveside oration condemning the murderers who now hid in the bunkers, barracks and spy posts that surround the republican heartland of South Armagh.

'You couldn't have met a nicer

young man.' The woman next to me offered a share of her umbrella as protection from the biting winds and sleet. 'Him and his wife were married at 17 and they've a little boy Brendan, you couldn't have asked for a happier little family.' She asked how I knew Fergal. I met him at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis (conference) in February last year. I was to write a profile of South Armagh for this magazine and Fergal was to be our guide to the wild rural area which the British call bandit country. He took us around the memorials and murals which dot the bleak countryside, using them to illustrate the nature of this community, a community at war

'And killed for nothing', said the woman as she strained above the crowds to catch the first sight of Fergal's coffin emerging from his parents' home. 'Killed for doing absolutely nothing. Fierce, isn't it?' I was impatient to find out what she was talking about. I had come to say goodbye to Fergal as a friend and ally, but I had also come to get behind the lies of the British media and find out how Fergal had died.

'The usual stuff'

A testament to the strength of British government propaganda is that even I, a disbeliever, arrived in Cullyhanna that day thinking that Fergal and his brother Michael had been shot after driving through a British Army checkpoint, injuring two soldiers as they went. Liam Murphy told me a very different story.

He was out with Michael Caraher on the Sunday afternoon before New Year's Eve. They decided to go for a drink in the popular Lite'N'Easy bar next to their parish church. As they approached it they were stopped at an Army checkpoint. 'They asked us the usual stuff', said Liam, looking to the ground as he recalled the day's events, 'who were we, where were we coming from, going to. I suppose we

were there 10 minutes or so'. They drove on into the bar car-park and noticed Fergal in a white Rover. He was stopped briefly at the checkpoint then waved on, and drove up to his brother and Liam.

'We decided to go for a drive out to Dundalk and I said I'd leave my car and go with Fergal.' Liam drove on up the road to leave his car with his wife who was in the local shop. As he and his wife walked back to the roadside, they watched Fergal's Rover driving slowly out of the car-park. British soldiers surrounded it and started shooting. Liam and his wife fell to the ground. The shots continued as the car drove towards and past them. 'When the shooting stopped I ran after the car, a local chap gave me a lift and we drove about a mile up the road. Fergal's car was at the side of the road with their bodies...' Liam couldn't continue.

Francis Caraher looked out of his living room window that Sunday afternoon to see his brother Fergal being questioned by a soldier in the car-park of the Lite'N'Easy. 'Things have been a bit heavy round here recently so I got into the car to go up there and see what the crack was.' As Francis approached the checkpoint a soldier shouted to him to 'step out of that fuckin' car'. Francis got out and looked ahead to see his two brothers drive out of the bar car-park, and soldiers surrounding the car.

No reason needed

'I saw one soldier go down on his knee, aim and start firing. I shouted that it was my brothers they were shooting but they wouldn't let me through. I turned and took a three-mile detour.' Local people stopped Francis before he got to the car where his brothers lay shot. 'Thank God Michael drove on', said Francis. In these parts of Ireland there are numerous stories of the security forces blocking off areas around such a shooting and allowing their wounded victims to bleed to death. Because Fergal and Michael drove past the soldiers, local people were able to get to the car and keep the security forces away. 'He's improving a bit now', Francis said of Michael, 'but he knows his brother is dead and that's very hard'.

Many witnesses give similar accounts of the shooting. Though the number of soldiers and the number of rounds fired differ in some of them, one thing is consistent: Fergal and Michael Caraher did not drive through the checkpoint and no soldiers were injured. There were no rows, no warnings, just two young men brutally gunned down on a Sunday afternoon. 'There was absolutely no reason for this to happen', said

'There have been more than 300 such shoot-to-kill incidents, and still only one soldier has ever been convicted'

Francis, 'but then British soldiers have never needed a reason to kill innocent men in this country'.

The crowds were such that we never made it into the church. We went to the graveside where locals were bailing rainwater out of the grave. I noticed Tommy Carroll from nearby Newry, a man to whom such funerals are all too familiar. Two of his brothers have been murdered in the Irish War, one, Roddy, in similar circumstances to Fergal. When Roddy Carroll and Seamus Grew (both members of the Inla, but unarmed) were killed in a hail of RUC bullets in Armagh in 1982, the security forces first claimed they had crashed through a police roadblock. When the RUC's own inquiry revealed that no such roadblock existed, they came up with the ludicrous claim that the unarmed Irishmen had attacked an armed police patrol. 'There have been more than 300 such shoot-to-kill incidents', said Tommy Carroll, 'and still only one soldier has ever been convicted'.

Several priests were leading the coffin out to the graveside. Tommy identified one of them as Father Malachy McCreesh, brother of Ray, one of the 10 republican hunger-strikers who died in 1981. It reminded me of the first memorial Fergal had showed us on the road to Cullyhanna, 10 large white crosses flanked by a placard reading 'My brother is not a criminal'. Fr McCreesh's tribute to his brother seemed to be echoed by this community today, who stood in defiance of British and Unionist claims that, because Fergal Caraher was an Irish republican, he must have committed a crime to have been shot.

War baby

At 20 years of age, born when the British army of occupation was already on Irish streets, Fergal had known nothing but war. At 18 he had joined Sinn Fein and sold its paper round his village. He had told me of his concern that the British forces' recent policy, of harassing known republicans while easing up on non-activist nationalists, might lead other young people to distance themselves from an active role in the struggle. As Jim McAllister appealed from Fergal's graveside for young people to stay calm, I wondered whether the latest shooting in South Armagh would steel yet another generation in its determination to rid its country of British forces. No matter how hard the British authorities try to make life in Northern Ireland look normal, sooner or later the reality of the war will make clear its colonial status.

It came as no surprise that British politicians and the media accepted

the official version of events without question. The *Sun* even suggested that the victims had effectively shot themselves, claiming that 'foolish individuals who crash through a checkpoint must know they are pursuing a "suicide policy" '.

'No one wants them'

Irish politicians and churchmen have to be a bit more careful. After all, the community crying 'murder' is their own voters and parishioners. Seamus Mallon, Social Democratic and Labour Party MP for the area, and Archbishop Cathal Daly, recently appointed Primate of All Ireland, called for an inquiry into the shootings—a tactic they often use to distance themselves from particularly extreme acts of violence by the British, while maintaining their support for the occupying forces in general. The official version of Fergal's killing, in which a soldier so badly injured he had to be airlifted to a military hospital in Belfast was back on duty within hours of the incident, had to be questioned by anyone with a claim to credibility among the nationalist community. But Archbishop Daly was quick to point out that no such Army checkpoints would exist were it not for IRA activity in the area, echoing the British view that the IRA bears ultimate responsibility for the sufferings of Irish people.

Jim McAllister seemed to speak for a whole community when he answered Daly's charges from Fergal's graveside:

'In fact no one in this part of Ireland, and certainly no one in Cullyhanna, wants the British government or British soldiers to be here in any shape or form. Fergal was not murdered because he sold a few papers for Sinn Fein—if that was the case thousands of us at this funeral would be murdered. He was murdered for being a young Irishman in the wrong place at the wrong time. Fergal and the rest of us are being denied our right to travel the roads of our own country by an occupying force who have no right to be here. Everyone in this community wants them gone.'

Everybody in that community also knows that the IRA is a response to the British presence, not the cause of it. The countryside is hemmed in by four massive British Army barracks, twentieth-century castles of iron and steel. The horizon between them is dotted with hi-tech surveillance towers, the 'Hillsborough wall' built since the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement in 1985. South Armagh has become a sort of open prison.

The British forces are confined largely to barracks and spy posts from where they chart the every movement of a hostile community in relative safety. When they do emerge it is by helicopter, Vietnam-style, flying in to set up roadblocks in areas where they hope the IRA won't attack. The spot where Fergal and his brother were shot was typical, within yards of the parish church, the local bar and the primary school where Fergal went and his mother still teaches. As usual, the British soldiers were using the local community as a 'human shield'.

A new commando of marines has been in the area for a few months, bringing with it a notable increase in threats and intimidation. Paddy Cunningham, the local school caretaker and bus driver, needed treatment for shock after they stuck a gun in his mouth at an Army checkpoint. Another man from nearby Newtownhamilton is too scared to leave his house after receiving threats from several Army patrols. On Boxing Day Kevin Murphy, the brother of Liam, told Jim McAllister of two separate reports that soldiers had threatened to kill him before the New Year. Other locals reported marines saying that two men would 'get it' before the year was out. At his son's graveside, Peter John Caraher described how on hearing Fergal was shot, he rushed to the scene only to be stopped at the same checkpoint and have a gun pointed at his head while a soldier shouted 'blow him away'.

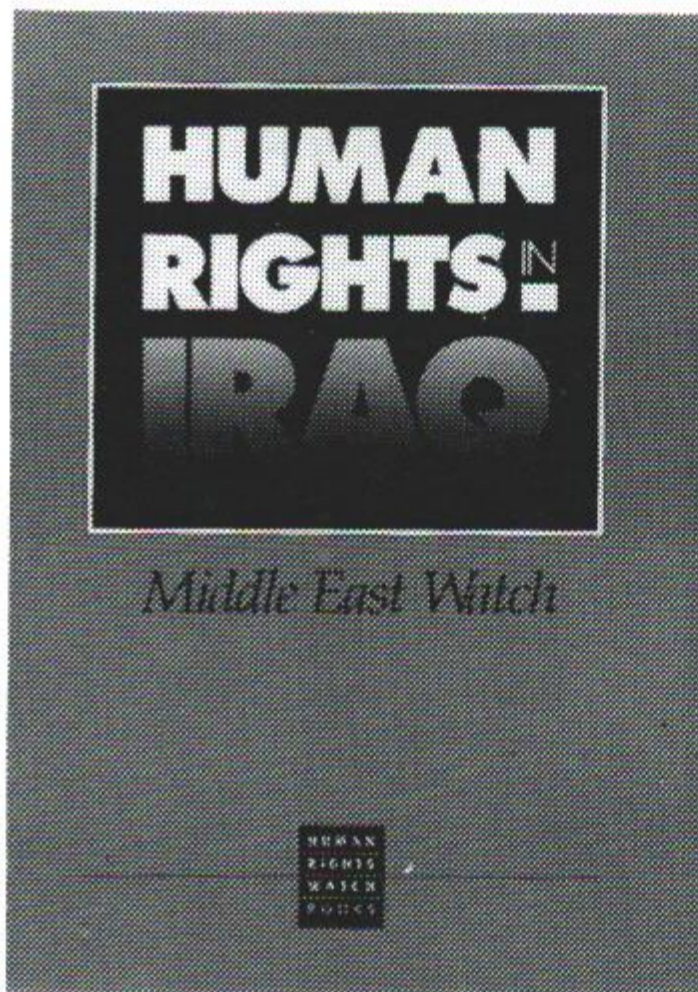
As we left the graveside McAllister called on locals to be vigilant: 'Watch what they do, whose house they're watching, if they stop and question someone, stand around and watch until that person is safely away. Those thugs are just waiting for the chance to kill again.'

Later we passed Fergal and Michael's four brothers, placing a wreath to mark the spot where they were shot. It was close by one of the memorials that Fergal had brought us to, dedicated to an IRA commander from Cullyhanna who was shot dead in the early seventies, and two young IRA volunteers blown up by their own bomb (locally believed to have been tampered with by the SAS) in 1988.

Soon the area would have yet another memorial to 20-year old Fergal Caraher: husband, father and member of Sinn Fein, murdered by British soldiers for being part of a community united in its desire to travel free on the roads of its own country.



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Hidden Agenda

British critics have panned Ken Loach's new film as IRA propaganda
 Joe Boatman talked to the director of *Hidden Agenda* about exposing Britain's war in Ireland on the big screen

Predictably enough, Ken Loach's *Hidden Agenda* has scandalised the British media. As a film it sometimes comes close to that edge of darkness which is found in the best political thrillers. But its detractors have not been interested in it as a film. Their not-so-hidden agenda is an attack on Loach for making a radical film about Ireland.

Predictably too, Ken Loach is not exactly defensive about it. He makes no bones about what he was up to with scriptwriter Jim Allen. 'We wanted to tell a story about what has happened during the British presence in the North of Ireland, particularly in the last 70 years. About the way British policy has worked, how it's affected the people who live in the North, and how it's contaminated British politics at large. To tell a story that hasn't been told. It's been told in one or two discreet columns in heavyweight papers, but the story has never been made available generally in a popular way. So we wanted to tell this story: the British state tells lies about republicans and the same method of lying has been used against British politicians.'

The references in the film to the grim reality hinted at in those discreet columns are easy to identify. Here's a character combining Fred Holroyd and Colin Wallace, there's a hard-faced John Hermon, the hero is a handsome John Stalker. To compound these sins, explicit mention is made of issues like the framing of the Birmingham Six. 'You have to make a film and not give a lecture, but the minute you start to unravel this film I hope it all connects. The moment you start asking why did this happen? what's his motive in doing that? why are they there in the first place? The answers are there within the film. We tried to make a narrative that people could follow without knowing anything, then unravel it afterwards if they want to.' In fact, to

many people the plot will seem like a fictionalised amalgam of just about every controversy to come out of Ireland in recent years.

The film has done good business in America and received better reviews in Europe than Britain. Despite its topicality, a group of British journalists asked the 1990 Cannes Festival to reject it because it didn't 'represent' Britain. Loach laughs at the memory of how the head of the festival dealt with that complaint. 'He replied that it wasn't chosen to represent Britain, it was chosen as a film. I think he quite enjoyed putting them down.' *Hidden Agenda* won the Special Jury Prize at Cannes, infuriating British critic Alexander Walker. 'Coming as he does from a long line of Ulster Unionists he tried to shout us down, which didn't work. I mean in press conferences you have the microphone and the audience doesn't. It was a silly gesture and it was quite amusing, some of the European journalists got a bit cross with him.'

Loach isn't shocked by the censorious attitude of the British media. Discussing the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein, he points out that it made official what already happened unofficially: 'The formal ban was only putting into law what was already happening anyway because you never heard them on television or radio except being put in a defensive position. You never heard them express any republican analysis or perspective, they were only there to answer questions like "Why did you murder these people?". I suppose it's idealist to imagine that broadcasting organisations will ever do anything other than represent the broad government point of view. It's not so much the government, it's the establishment consensus, which could be the Labour Party, as we know.'

While both acknowledging the value of

some documentary work and using elements of docudrama style, Loach chose to make a political thriller. This was not to avoid censorship: 'It's just the way I guess I've always made films, you try to make them believable. Documentaries already have been made and not many people would see them. The advantage of fiction is that you can express the conflict between the characters in a dramatic way and I think it often remains with people more than just in a documentary.'

He is critical of the political assumptions behind even the better programmes on Ireland. 'Once or twice, I mean fair play, there have been programmes about the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four. But by and large the given of those programmes is that British justice has worked imperfectly in this instance, rather than this is one consequence of the British in Ireland. It's seen as an aberration of British justice rather than part of the long process of the colonisation of Ireland.'

Although Loach himself may have no illusions in British justice, having decided to fictionalise events it is inevitable that some of his characters do. Sure enough, in *Hidden Agenda* there is a clean cop and a civil rights worker representing innocent honesty and shocked moral indignation respectively. In dramatic terms they set the standards and ask the questions, which is useful, but there is a danger that their continuing surprise at British violence and corruption implies that this is indeed an aberration, caused by a bad apple in the barrel.

Loach contests this interpretation of *Hidden Agenda*: 'It would be quite contrary to what's in the film for it to be taken as a "bad apple" type. The most sophisticated defender of the black propaganda says "if you reveal this, weigh up the harm you will do to the establishment, to the police, which you

PHOTO: Simon Norfolk



propaganda.

have spent your lifetime protecting; your duty is to protect Number 10 and Thatcher's possible implication". So in a way the argument for suppressing the truth goes to the heart of the establishment and isn't simply a question of a few maverick right wingers. And in the end the policeman, who has been the hero figure, doesn't reveal the corruption. So he is implicated in the cover-up and that's what stops it from being a "bad apple".

Though not portrayed in detail, the context of *Hidden Agenda*, the fight for Irish self-determination, was researched and sketched in with considerable commitment to getting it right. All the British soldiers were played by ex-Brits (put in touch with Loach through Fred Holroyd), the leading actors did question Belfast nationalists about their experiences of internment and torture before playing civil rights workers doing just that, and Sinn Fein's Jim McAllister makes a guest appearance. 'We didn't want to get into a discussion of the programme of the IRA because that was at a tangent to the main narrative of the film, and because it's too complex just to reduce it to a few sentences. So all we wanted in the film was to let somebody from Sinn Fein say this is the consequence of a colonial struggle, that there will be violence until the Border's gone, and leave it at that.'

One problem with having so little examination of what motivates armed resistance to British rule is that the film might fail to challenge the view that British violence is justified in the face of violent opposition. 'That's what the policeman thinks, that's what he would say in that situation. It's what a lot of people would say, it was Colin Wallace's rationale at the beginning for spreading disinformation against the IRA, because his priority was to defeat them. But that's obviously not the point of view of the film. The republican in the club, he's saying that there will be violence in the process of getting the British out, that people have had to fight for their freedom.'

'To really tease that out is more complicated, because I don't think Jim [Allen] or I or anybody connected with the film would necessarily support a full-scale bombing campaign. It's too complicated. Neither do we want to become part of the British campaign against the IRA which leaves the British clean. It's too complex to deal with here. Not all violence is the same, it depends on the motives. It can be the same in its consequences: one person's grief is as great as another wherever they come from. But the British violence in sustaining the Border, violence in defence of that is absolutely indefensible. Violence aimed to reunite Ireland, one can argue for it, one can argue against it.'

'I hope people enjoy *Hidden Agenda* as a good story first of all, people who are not political who just want to go to films because they want to go to films, will go along and see it as a good story and only begin to ask a few questions afterwards. I hope they find people they like, the people in it or some of the people in it, and that they care what happens to them and find the story takes them through them, frame by frame as it were. If it works at that level then we're in with a chance.'

Alan Fountain

Censorship on 4

Censorship is stealing up on even the most liberal of British television channels. John Fitzpatrick spoke to Channel 4 commissioning editor Alan Fountain

In January Lord Rees-Mogg ushered in the new television monitoring body, the Broadcasting Standards Council (as chairman) with an attack on the generation of television producers who are 'under 45, the children of the 1960s'. Blaming them for imposing 'lower standards', he promised to end the 'producer monopoly'.

Rees-Mogg has a particular grudge against the sixties. Many now blush at the memory of their headbands and beads, but the former editor of the *Times* simply cannot bear to be reminded of the time when as a desperate-to-be-trendy 40-year old he took tea on television with Mick Jagger, and a *Times* editorial called the young rock star a 'butterfly' who was not to be broken for a little drug-taking.

His recent outburst is the latest round in the incessant barrage directed at keeping broadcasters in their place. From Leon Brittan leaning on the BBC to drop *Real Lives* to Norman Tebbit's attack on Kate Adie's reporting from Libya, from the pulling of the Zircon spy satellite programme to the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein, from the removal of Alisdair Milne as director general of the BBC to the blitz that was last year's Broadcasting Act, all those working in television have been left in no doubt that they are under surveillance from the censors.

Alan Fountain sounds like the sort of television person Rees-Mogg has in mind. Since Channel 4 started nearly 10 years ago he has been its commissioning editor for independent film and video programmes. He has brought us several controversial series such as *Eleventh Hour*, *Out on Tuesday*, *Critical Eye*, *Cinema From Three Continents* and the *Media Show*.

Fountain is in a good position to observe how censorship operates on the ground. On one side he faces the independent film-makers all grinding some political/artistic/sexual axe. On the other he faces the programme controllers at Channel 4, up to chief executive Michael Grade, and beyond him the Board. Beyond them is the Independent Broadcasting Authority, not to mention the Media Monitoring Unit at Conservative Central Office.

At first Fountain claims that it is no more difficult now than it was 10 years ago for film-makers to get their programmes shown. He is also at pains to point out that his Channel Four superiors John Willis, Liz Forgan and Michael Grade are very supportive of his efforts. With a little prompting however (with reference to some of the films he has not been able to get on to the screen) he starts to get the last decade into focus.

'At the start it was possible for the channel to

have a higher percentage of opinionated programmes, which put one view forward. That has become more difficult. The question is why. At first the argument was whether the channel was balanced overall. Although it might have shown a very left-wing programme one week, a couple of weeks later it might have shown a very right-wing programme. That argument has got narrower and narrower. The next argument was whether a particular series was balanced. Now we've got close to asking whether a single programme is balanced.'

A question of balance

The problem of balance and its near relation impartiality are constant concerns these days. Fountain has a new series of open access programmes, *Free For All*, starting this month. 'The IBA wrote me a letter about *Free For All*, welcoming the series but asking me to bear in mind that like all other programmes it comes under the broadcasting guidelines. They were saying how balanced do you think this series is going to be? In the letter they said would you give us details of who is making programmes about what. How many shades of opinion do you need before you say this is a balanced programme? Our recent *Critical Eye* film on the Kurds is a good example; how many other governments do you have on?'

Fountain has no doubt that things have got worse under the Tories. 'It's not direct personal pressure. People are aware of Norman Tebbit standing up every couple of weeks saying I don't like the look of this. One knows the Tory Party takes the media seriously. There has been a pretty direct attack on broadcasting generally by powerful elements within the Conservative Party, I wouldn't even say the whole Tory Party. This in itself, without passing any legislation at all, has produced a certain amount of panic, panic is the wrong word, a bit of a crisis of nerves on the part of people running broadcasting. The whole controlling mechanism of broadcasting is more worried about so-called opinionated broadcasting than it was five or six years ago.'

There has been the dramatic banning of programmes, but the real change has been to the climate within which broadcasting operates. It is often very difficult to pinpoint the process whereby ideas, images and films are blocked or changed. In order to get programmes on to the screen people like Alan Fountain have to anticipate what their masters will tolerate. 'The IBA have considerable power. They can say, "this programme breaks the broadcasting rules, we do not give permission for it to be shown".'

They can call for any programme. At the beginning of *Critical Eye* we did a programme which was a pretty impassioned plea against factory farming. They rang up and asked to see it, and then said it wasn't as balanced as it should be, and did I think it would be improved by having another spokesperson from the farmers' viewpoint? I said I didn't really. In the end they said fair enough, we don't really like it but leave it.'

But the authorities are not always so compliant, and Fountain is increasingly sensitive to the need to plan ahead for their prejudices. 'What I tend to do more now than in the past is to say well, this looks like an interesting subject, let's discuss with the producers how to realise the programme in such a way that we will get it shown. So if someone says "I'm fed up with the situation in Ireland and I want to put across the Sinn Fein point of view using Gerry Adams and five Sinn Fein councillors", I'd say why don't we rethink this a bit.'

'We knew from the start that *The Battle of Trafalgar*, the programme about the poll tax march, was going to be difficult to get on to the screen. I said at the outset and there was no disagreement from the programme-makers that we ought to ask serious questions of the police about the way they conducted themselves on that day. In fact the police and the home office refused to be interviewed. The IBA saw the programme and were perfectly happy. The crucial thing from their point of view was that they were reassured that every effort had been made to obtain an interview with the police and home office.'

The most difficult subject is Ireland. Even before *Mother Ireland* fell foul of the broadcasting ban, Channel 4 was asking for cuts in anticipation of trouble higher up. The filmmakers were asked to cut scenes showing Mairead Farrell and also Emma Groves after she was blinded with a rubber bullet. Fountain

thought they were necessary to get the rest of the film shown. 'When we saw the programme I showed it to Liz Forgan, who has always been very supportive of it, and she thought there might be some problems with the IBA. Michael Grade was slightly more worried than Liz but was broadly sympathetic. I certainly took the view it might be a good idea just for strategic reasons not to have the footage of Mairead Farrell or Emma Groves, or a scene where an interviewee is filmed against a pro-republican poster.'

'My argument with the programme-makers was that even if you do cut the programme you're still able to put on television a perspective which really hasn't been there before. Even though it leaves out some very important material, my view is that it is better to show it than leave it on the shelf. The difficulty with all these banned programmes is that everybody forgets about them very quickly. It gets shown at a few small meetings, and it appears in lots of lists of banned programmes. The vast majority of the public have never heard of it, don't know what it is, and are denied the chance of seeing it.'

Where will it end?

Fountain is in a difficult position. On the one hand, he could end up encouraging filmmakers to shape their products according to the dictates of the authorities. On the other, he could see useful works being needlessly rejected. He is in no doubt about which direction to bend the stick. 'There was a programme some years ago, made by a black workshop called Ceddo, about racism in the context of Broadwater Farm. The IBA wanted cuts, so we made some cuts and then they wanted some more cuts and then they wanted to see a balancing programme before they would agree to show the first programme. I must

admit my view was that I would even have been prepared to go with that, it would still have made available for viewers a perspective they couldn't otherwise have got. I know it's a dangerous route to go down, but on the other hand it's always a calculation.'

'Ceddo were prepared to make cuts both at the request of the channel and the IBA. But the final straw was the IBA insisting on seeing the balancing programme before agreeing to the original programme going out. Of course this is a long way down the road to go. Nevertheless, the views that were put forward in that programme hardly see the light of day on British television. Part of what you got was some very tough interviews with young black people on the Farm basically saying watch out you lot because if things don't start to change we'll blow it all up. I would have gone quite a long way down what the apparatus wanted. Ceddo didn't agree. We respected their right not to have it shown.'

He is under pressure himself of course. 'The control is a very subtle process. In my experience very rarely is it particularly direct. For example, somebody in the building will have been up to the IBA and somebody will have said, "for the past six weeks all we've had from the *Eleventh Hour* has been undiluted whatever". So they'll come back and say "oh, they're getting a bit worried about *Eleventh Hour*".'

By this time Fountain was getting almost irate. 'I think television is ludicrously over-managed and censored compared to the average decent newspaper. We couldn't put the *Guardian* on the screen, that's the truth of the matter. Half the stuff would be seen as too one-sided and biased to be shown on television. It's ridiculous. Television has this very tight political control. I think we've all got used to it.'

Charity

All for a good cause?

Charity is now big business—and a dodgy one too, according to Toby Banks

The bunny rabbit outside Finchley Road tube station spotted my grimace and shook his tin at me. 'It's for charity', he said indignantly, as if I'd accused him of collecting for the Paedophile Information Exchange. Immediately disapproving eyes were upon me. A woman smiled sympathetically at the bunny and opened her purse. Suddenly it was like the Babycham ad—'Yes, I'll give to charity'....'Hey, I'll give to charity too'....'And me!'—as they waited happily to give a little something for a good cause. But then, one does what one can.

Leon Trotsky once wrote of his London landlord that there is no more disgusting sight than that of the petit bourgeois in the act of primary accumulation. But he didn't live to see the British petit bourgeoisie indulging in charitable accumulation *en masse*. For me, it's

a toss-up as to who's more obnoxious—the legions of sturdy citizens who at the drop of a hat will don furry animal suits; or the beaming commuters who queue up for a frisson of worthiness as they drop their 50p pieces in the tin.

Certainly the mood contrasted dramatically with the usual scene, with people breaking into a frosty-faced trot and hurrying past the local beggars. But today the beggars were nowhere to be seen, having been driven off their patch by this particular good cause. Perhaps this street-clearing service had spurred the generosity: there's nothing like a sniff of poverty to kill the respectable charitable impulse stone dead.

The state of charity says a lot about the state of the country. During the eighties it grew

steadily, creeping into every aspect of life. Not that long ago charity was a dowdy and old-fashioned vice, something indulged in privately with an Oxfam envelope, or through the discreet purchase of a cake at the local fete. Today it is flaunted at every turn: Live Aid, telethons, fashion shows, red nose days, charity credit cards, and so on.

Charity is big business, marketed by sophisticated executives and administered by hard-nosed professional fundraisers. It is the perfect testimony to the hypocritical and sleazy Thatcher years. The voluntary sector was a key element of Tory ideology and policy, and we all know what that meant: nurses and doctors collecting money in the streets to buy hospital equipment. But it also came to symbolise the new moral climate. Public Policy Unit director Nicholas True sees charity as a 'positive binding force in society', and there's no denying he has a point. Charity has replaced politics for young idealists, who would once have been drawn to radical campaigns and left-wing organisations.

The rise of the charities went hand in glove with the return of snobbery and Society. Charities will take anyone's cash of course, but they've always been partial to a bit of Old Money to put in the shop window. So the average nob is no longer idle; nowadays they 'work'—not in the sense that you and I work, but by sitting on charity committees and organising lunches 'in aid of'. And with all this blue blood around, charities are the perfect place for a bit of social climbing.

There has never been a shortage of people



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

ready to dig into their pockets for the Buy the Queen a Racehorse Charity in the hope of a knighthood. In the eighties, the process was extended to the Maggie fanclub (the right-wing Centre for Policy Studies and an anti-terrorist think-tank are both registered charities), and became more transparent. It is widely acknowledged that for a quick entrée to Society the safest bet is a hefty donation to Birthright, the fashionable 'unborn child' campaign patronised by the Princess of Wales and the 'ladies who lunch' circuit. And of course charity still provides a cloak for a multitude of sins. Gerald Ronson of Guinness fame was just the latest in a long line of crooks who sought respectability in return for largesse.

This is the side of the business about which the charities are understandably sensitive. The expansion of the industry has led to a corresponding increase in corruption and accusations that the money 'doesn't go to the right people' (witness the scandal surrounding the *Budgie the Helicopter* book—proceeds to the Duchess of York Luxury Ranch Fund).

Recently the charities have reported falling incomes, which they blame on bad publicity and economic recession. On balance though, the charitable community has not been too shaken by such distressing mutterings. All the major London venues are booked solid with charity functions for months to come. Of these, by far the most popular are balls, no doubt because there's nothing a young toff likes to do more after a few glasses of champers than say the word 'balls', to gales of laughter.

The other reason why balls have enjoyed a revival is that at last the upper classes have discovered a way to enjoy their traditional

excesses without the tiresome jibes they had to endure in the sixties and seventies, when their anachronistic recreations were scorned as immoral. In the eighties, conspicuous consumption and vulgarity became more acceptable. The *Tatler's* longstanding circulation decline was reversed by picturing drunken debs cavorting in the corners of marquees, in keeping with the Club 18-30 ethos of the Andy and Fergie set. The balls made adjustments for their gauche new clientele, and any remaining trace of guilt could be expunged if one partied for a cause: over-indulgence was a sign of commitment—every bottle of bubbly helps.

Dropped aitches

As proof of how far this rehabilitation has gone, 'The Season' is now heralded once more by the debs' coming out at Queen Charlotte's Ball, a tradition that was dropped in the seventies after decades of public ridicule. The pretext for its return? Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital, that well known deb factory.

But the clock cannot be turned back completely, however fervently the upper classes desire it. They are strapped for cash these days and have no choice but to open their doors to anyone with a big enough wad to make it worth their while. Even the sanctity of the debs' bash was spoilt by the massed ranks of minor celebs and the sound of dropped aitches. Today's balls concentrate on entertaining the dignitaries and corporate guests while fleecing the punters who have plenty of notes but the wrong school tie.

I attended a masked ball in a London park, held to raise funds for a leading charity. It was

organised by a public school spiv who has done very nicely out of the charity industry, and is as adept as any con-man at separating willing fools from their money.

The paying guests make or break a charity ball, and they assume an attitude to invited guests that is the inverse of the usual social relationship. They consider themselves superior in every way, and regard it as their duty to wave as much money around as they can and make a spectacle of themselves. The evening is organised in such a way as to make this as easy as possible, with raffles, tombolas, auctions, etc. At any one time, one may buy crates of wine and tacky hunting prints for huge sums, fall over in the Lambada tent, ride dodgem cars, or stamp one's feet to 'Hi ho silver lining' in the company of 20 red-faced Hooray Henries and a tentful of braying Carolines in taffeta gowns.

The money rolled in and the good work continued right up until it was time to go home. The programme said 'carriages at two', but then it advertised Her Majesty the Queen, and she didn't show up either. I found myself in the queue of disconsolate drunks waiting for taxis outside the park gates. Some freelance cabs appeared, but the punters were wary. 'Give the driver with the Glaswegian accent a wide berth', advised one. They glared at the nasty piece of work in his warm cab and waited. But it was getting nippy and their resolve was crumbling. 'I suppose we could ask...' said one, tentatively. 'Mmm...try saying "fuck" a lot when you speak to him, that should help.' They walked towards the cabbie, who grinned and drove off. 'Fuck!' said one, but it didn't help.



And Tarzan's desert adventure...?

As I write we are all living under the shadow of the possibility of another long, sordid, painful, pointless war. It may be a reality by the time you read this. I am working on *Coronation Street*. Writing scripts that are scheduled to be part of the normal daily routine for millions of people next March, I try to suppress my fear that the world will have altered beyond all recognition by then.

There is no debate in the press or on TV about the morality, sense or practicality of war. Journalists across the spectrum have been willingly filing copy under the MoD's dramatic restrictions. *Newsnight* and the *Independent* have climbed into bed with the *Sun* and the *Sport*; and who better to climb into bed with if you are going to masturbate in the national interest? In these uncertain times, BBC2 alone struck a blow for integrity and intelligence by showing a compelling, acute 10-part exploration of the roots and contradictions of America's imperialist ambitions. Although they were made (by MGM/RKO) 60 years ago, there has never been a better critique of American foreign policy than the Tarzan movies of Johnny Weissmuller.

In the original Edgar Rice Burroughs story and the recent Hugh Hudson fiasco, Tarzan is an English aristocrat—an extreme version of the adventurer gone native familiar from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. This angle disappears in the Weissmuller films where Tarzan is played by someone who was already an all-American hero (an Olympic swimmer) when he was cast. MGM and RKO made Weissmuller's contract exclusive to the Tarzan series and this—coupled with the long swimming sequences that cropped up in every movie—meant that the distinction between American real life hero and the screen Tarzan was constantly eroded. Weissmuller was Tarzan and Weissmuller was an American. Many of the films go out of their way in fact to stress this by making English aristocrats their villains.

In *Tarzan and the Huntress*, for instance, two upper class hunters and a strange cockney-Lithuanian destabilise the peace of the jungle utopia by using the mercenary soldiers of a rival state to help them exceed the game quotas. And in *Tarzan and the Leopard Women* a bumbling English commissioner allows scores of people to be murdered because he refuses to believe that the Leopard Women exist. On both occasions, Tarzan saves the day (with the help of his wife, child and chimp of course) by covertly backing native movements and by calling into play his mystical hold over the forces of nature. Tarzan is benevolent, unobtrusive and Green. Unusually for a hero, he seems to have no sexual insecurity, enjoying a marriage of affable equality and easy sensuality.

The image of the camouflaged, almost tribal jungle warrior (as opposed to the pith-helmeted sahib with his bearers) is of course a central icon of American military operations—from *Platoon* to the *A-Team*. Tarzan was its template. This theme of the New World 'Lord of the Jungle' is most explicit in *Tarzan Triumphs*, in which Tarzan

(well, Cheetah actually) routs a Nazi cell which has seized control of Pallandra (City of Wrap-around Tea Towels). As he lures the Nazi colonel into the den of a lion, Tarzan neatly inverts and appropriates Nazi philosophy, saying, 'In the jungle, only the strong survive'. This beastmaster theme is reworked at the end when Cheetah yammers into the Nazi radio and back in Berlin all the operatives leap to attention, mistaking the monkey for the führer.

If Tarzan engages intelligently with European ideas and politics, his relationship with Africa is more complex. You will not find patronising pictures of grinning black people in the Tarzan movies. In fact, you will find no black people at all. The City of Wrap-around Tea Towels is populated by redheaded starlets; the Leopard Women are all blondes. Africa is a blank space, a pillow for the imperialist dream. It offers no resistance to any fantasy. Lost cities and lost tribes come in many colours and designs, a good deal of time and budget is spent in each film on elaborating their cultures.

There are pearl fishers with ritualised synchronised swimming and good King Farrad is surrounded by flamenco dancers. All of these people speak English. The only creatures who don't are the animals. It

Newsnight and the *Independent* have climbed into bed with the *Sun* and the *Sport*

would be tempting to say that it is the dumb beasts who are playing the part of native peoples—obediently doing Tarzan's hauling and fighting for him—but even these tend not to be that local. All the elephants, for instance, are Indian. The sublime irrelevance of Africa is most strongly stated in the early films, where the lost cities of the studio are inter-cut with stunning, authentic location sequences. These were cobbled together from the out-takes of *Trader Horn*, the first ever location-made sound movie, which was shooting for seven months in Africa in 1930. Here we glimpse valuable footage of a vanished world of mighty herds and rolling savannah, before cutting back to the redhead in the loincloth. The tension between this documentary realism and the total fantasy of the story is explosive. The cuts are as bizarre and disorienting as anything in Jarman.

But if it's not Africa, then where is it? Well, there are a few clues: the extras are not black but they tend not to be Anglo-Saxon either. There is a high percentage of Latins and, especially, of people from the Pacific islands. Many of the lost cities look Aztec or Mayan, many Africans seem to live in pueblos like native Americans. Indeed in *Tarzan and the Mermaid* the male pearl fishers all look Hawaiian—riding round in painted war canoes and greeting their incongruously caucasian women with garlands. There is a postman in this

one who looks like Kid Creole and sings the news calypso-style.

The landscape is that of America's 'backyard'. The jungles are Middle American; the coast is Caribbean; the lost cities are pre-Colombian El Dorados. It is America before the coming of the Europeans—an idyllically prehistoric place where all the trouble is created by greedy newcomers. Now of course, the dominant social groups of the USA are themselves descended from greedy newcomers and they made space for their American Dream by an act of genocide. Imperialism begins at home. The Weissmuller Tarzan seems partly to be an attempt to project the values of European Americans back in time, to a golden age before the Europeans came, to suggest that they are natural, indigenous and rooted in the landscape; to create a native American Wasp, a white tribesman. In fact, come to think of it, Tarzan speaks just like Little Plum—the *Beano's* own Native American. It is a restatement of the making of a nation (by wiping out other nations) in mythic terms.

Of course in this version, it doesn't matter where Tarzan comes from. But then, we all know his name is Weissmuller and his wife is Maureen O'Sullivan. When MGM and RKO started making these pictures, the Second World War was on its way and the popular mood in America was for continued isolationism. You can see why reconstructing Tarzan as the Lost White Tribe of America was attractive. It was a way of stating that Americans were different from Europeans—who were rapacious, violent and cunning; and therefore individual Americans need not feel guilty about their cousins, aunts and uncles, and so on, who might be caught up in the conflagration. Tarzan is an American who grew out of the soil of America. As though all the white people in the States were descended from Prince Madoc or St Brendan. And that's why the mythic landscape of Tarzan had to be called Africa. To give it its proper name would make it look ridiculous. Heroes are always in danger of looking ridiculous. Superman with his undies on over his tights; Kirk in his kinky boots; Achilles, Hercules and the mighty Thor all had transvestite phases. I found myself worrying throughout the series about where Tarzan kept his knife and what would happen if he ever missed one of his lianas.

The great American yearning for isolation—and the guilt that yearning stirred up—is there too in Tarzan's reluctance to use force. This is a trait of all real heroes in America—Grasshopper for instance, in *Kung Fu*, and above all the crew of the *Enterprise*. Week in and week out, Kirk would nobly resist the temptation to fight or to interfere with other cultures. Most weeks these other cultures would be so provoking that even Kirk could not resist turning his phaser to stun at least. As the first days of January tick by I find myself thinking there was a lot to be said for the hero who hesitates. The only Tarzan film I missed was—ominously—*Tarzan's Desert Adventure*. I wonder how it turned out?

FRANK CASS

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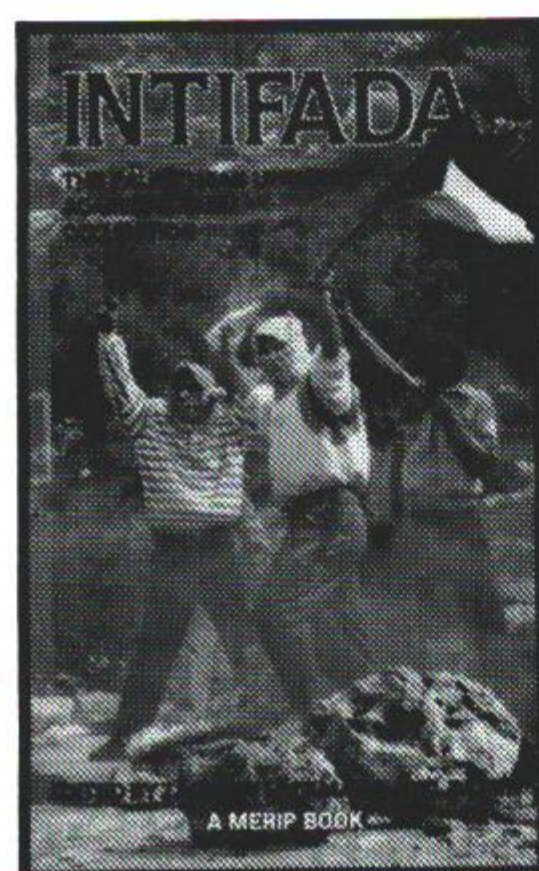
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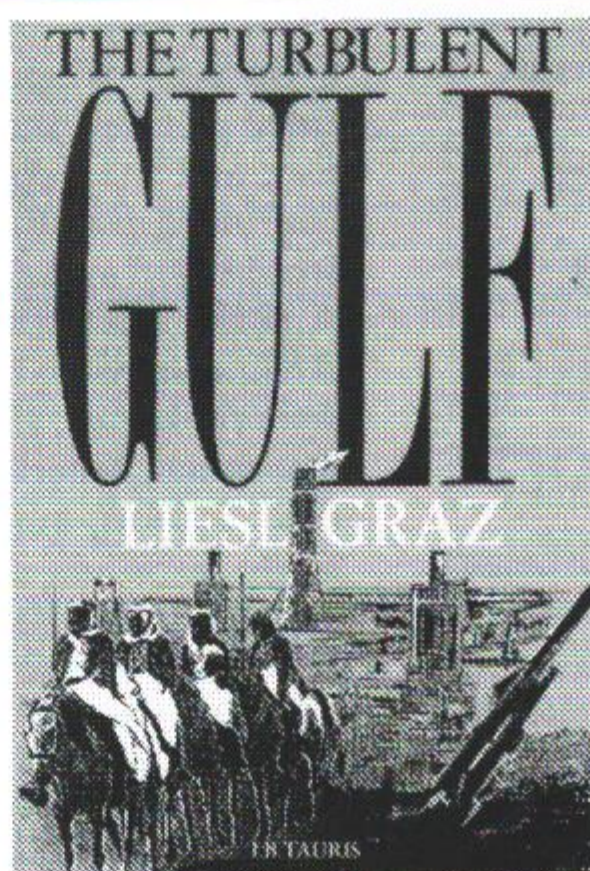
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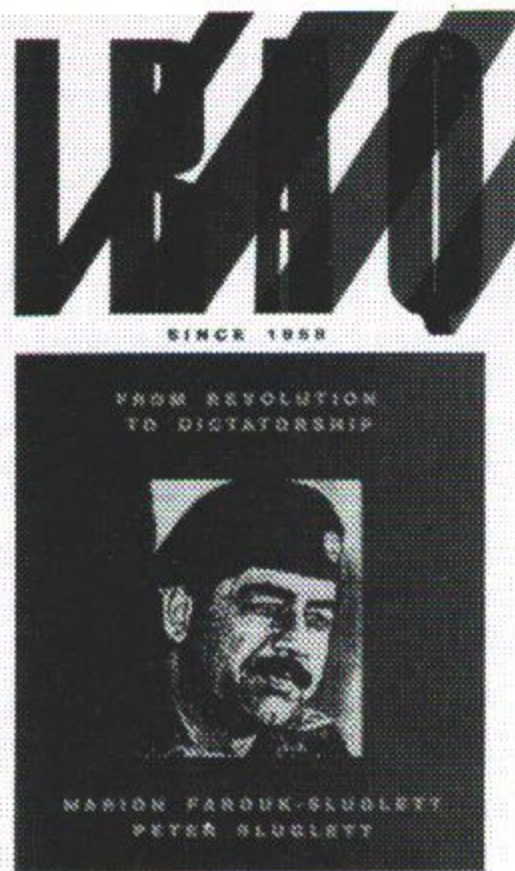
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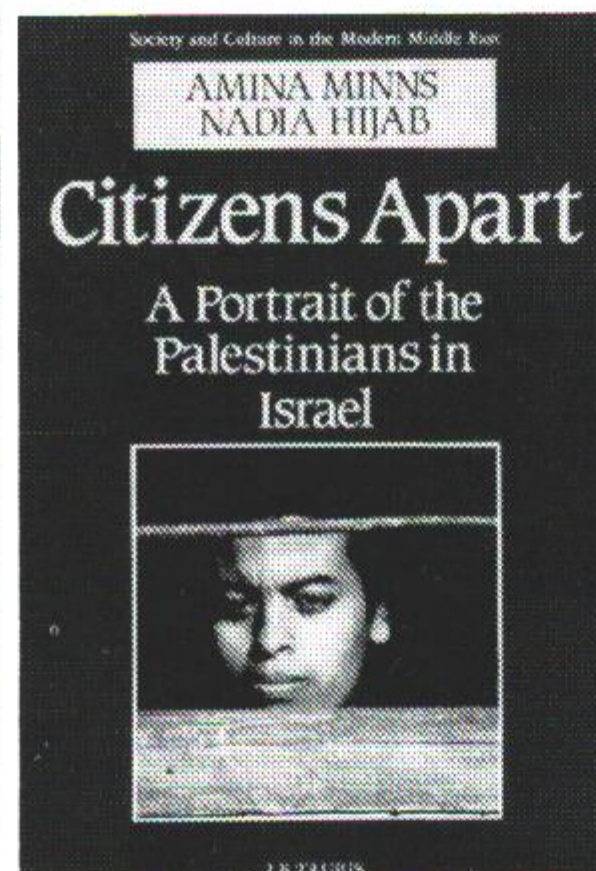
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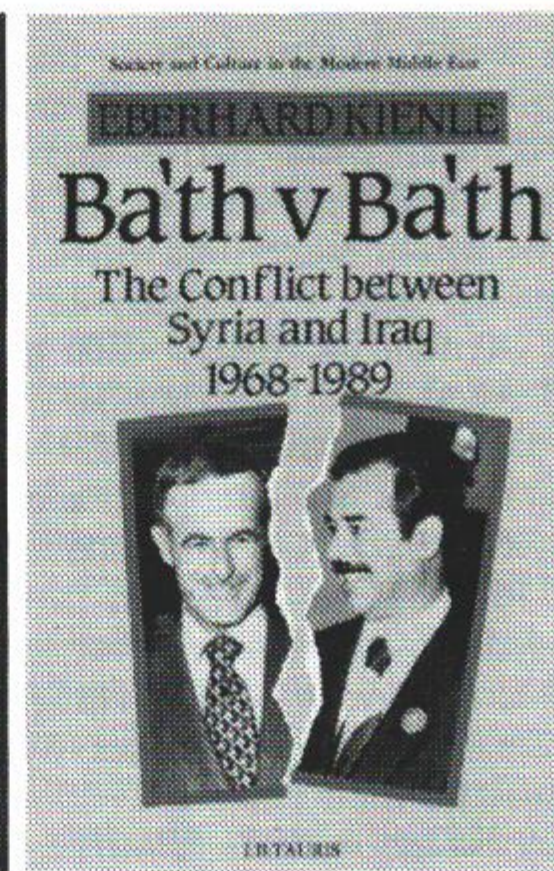
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the marxist review of books

Nigel Vaughan reviews

David Shapiro and Cecile Shapiro (eds), *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record*,
Cambridge University Press, £40 hbk, £13.95 pbk

Art in the American Century

Abstract expressionism was one of the big isms of twentieth-century art: *was* because like cubism, surrealism, futurism and the rest, nobody does it any more. In the fifties, abstract expressionism was widely acclaimed the triumph of American art. In today's jaded postmodernist times it isn't so easy to appreciate the excitement this new art provoked. It divided the art world and gave rise to much polemical writing about the nature of art. Some of the articles reprinted in this anthology are representative of the debate.

The new art came on the scene in mid-century New York. The original exponents of the style, also known as action painting, or the New York school, were William de Kooning, Franz Kline, Adolph Gottlieb, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko. Jackson Pollock, its most famous practitioner, became known to a wider public, establishing a stereotype for this new macho breed of avant-garde artist: pouring hard liquor down his neck and throwing paint, dervish-like, at a canvas on the floor.

The works of the abstract expressionists share certain surface style characteristics: drips and splotches; a reliance on spontaneity and painterly accidents; the gestural, violent brushmark (hence expressionism). Equally characteristic is the absence of any illusionistic references to the visual world (hence abstract). In terms of scale, these are some of the largest modern paintings ever produced.

Go beyond the superficial similarities and there is a great variety. Each artist developed a singular, easily distinguishable style through which to pursue his particular concerns. David and Cecile Shapiro have devoted the second half of this anthology to the achievements of the individuals mentioned above, by compiling interviews and critical assessments of their work. The first part of their book concentrates on exploring abstract expressionism, the movement.

Abstract expressionism became the choice of the critics and curators in the period following the Second World War, when New York became the centre from which all significant developments in modern art were henceforward expected to emanate. Since the USA emerged as the dominant economic and political power after the war, it is not surprising that New York should have become the cultural centre of the Western world. The really interesting question is why abstract expressionism? The essays, reviews and reminiscences anthologised here provide some important evidence, if not all the evidence, required to answer this question.

The principal source of abstract expressionism was the group of artists which physically originated it. By the 1940s, contacts were being established among artists from diverse backgrounds, who nevertheless shared a common desire to liberate painting from its past. What impelled them in the direction of abstract expressionism was a profound disenchantment with society, rather than optimism for the future.

The crisis in the world order that led to the upheavals they witnessed reappeared in their discussions on the crisis facing art. Before the outbreak of the war, hostility to Stalinism and Nazism was already directing their sensibilities towards heroic acts and the search for a new authenticity. Adolph Gottlieb described the mood: 'During the 1940s a few painters were painting with a feeling of absolute desperation. The situation was so bad that I know I felt free to try anything, no matter how absurd it seemed; what was there to lose?'

One thing to be deliberately lost was the tradition of American realist painting in its various forms. Regionalism was out because it celebrated the values of political isolationism. Also rejected was the socialist realism espoused by the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism which some of them were associated with in the Depression years. Many artists in the thirties were involved in the Public Works of Art Schemes initiated by the FD Roosevelt administration. The Depression caused them to sympathise with left-wing politics, but they shunned the Stalinist influence of the Communist Party. Socialist realism was regarded as a sterile attempt to turn art into a political weapon. Where did they look for inspiration and ideas once realism had been abandoned?

Abstract expressionism was a New York phenomenon more than it was an American one. By the late thirties, New York had become a truly cosmopolitan capital. In the late twenties, it was possible to see regular exhibitions of the best modern art at the Museum of Non-Objective Art and elsewhere. When Hitler came to power in Germany, New York's cultural milieu was further enriched by an influx of European artists and intellectuals fleeing fascism. One group whose influence was significant was the surrealists.

Another link with the surrealists and left-wing politics was Leon Trotsky. Together with André Breton he produced a seminal text, *Manifesto: Toward a Free Revolutionary Art*. Published in the leading Marxist journal *Partisan Review* in 1938, this was the antithesis of the socialist realist doctrine. The manifesto is referred to only briefly in this anthology, but another essay which appeared later in the same journal is reprinted in full. Called 'Towards a new Laocoon', it was written by Clement Greenberg, who was to become synonymous with the new painting, being its foremost champion and guru figure.

Illuminating explanations of abstract expressionism cannot be gained from the artists. They shared an aversion to verbal explanations of their art and were given to overblown pronouncements of a metaphysical character. Jackson Pollock says typically, '“She Wolf” came into existence because I had to paint it. Any attempt on my part to say something about it, to attempt explanation of the inexplicable, could only destroy it'.

It was left to sympathetic critics like Greenberg to explain the

significance of the new art. His contribution to making abstract expressionism a success cannot be overestimated. The commitment and sense of mission of the artists were sufficient to command some attention from the art world, but not to explain, for instance, why a publisher like Henry Luce carried a piece on the new art in *Life* magazine. Ultimately, it was critics like Greenberg who assisted its appropriation by the establishment. While its worth was hotly debated, abstract expressionism's apologists greatly outnumbered its detractors in the end.

Ironically, despite its radicalism and esoteric character, abstract expressionism was never attacked as communistic. Instead, through a series of museum trusteeships and private collections, America's elite was provided with a propaganda weapon to wield against communism in the cultural sphere of the Cold War. Because it was supposedly the 'pure' and 'free' creation of individual geniuses, it was naturally superior to the shackled art practice of the Stalinist bloc, the embodiment of the First Amendment on canvas.

Don Milligan reviews

Kevin Porter and Jeffrey Weeks (eds), *Between the Acts: Lives of Homosexual Men 1885-1967*, Routledge, £8.99 pbk

The making of the gay scene

Fifteen interviews with gay men born between 1892 and 1921. They are drawn from the solidly middle class, from the working class, from those who managed to be 'kept' and from those who worked as prostitutes. When these men were born the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 was in force. It had made all sexual contact between men illegal. By the time of the law reform of 1967 and the emergence of the modern gay scene during the seventies these men were middle-aged or already old.

The importance of their story is that they were in their prime during the decades from 1920 to 1960. These were the years when the possibility of a distinctively homosexual life arose for the first time. Furtive but semi-public meeting places were established. Codes of conduct and distinctive forms of address and recognition came into widespread use. Paradoxically, it was a period in which savage repression stunted the growth of consciousness and organisation. These interviews reveal the contradictory character of the period. They record a growing awareness of the particularity of homosexual experience alongside an inability to grasp the nature of oppression. They tell different stories of different lives, and of different lessons learned. But taken together they reveal a strikingly common experience.

Men who want to have sex with each other have been congregating in particular houses, taverns, alleys and courtyards in

apparently heterosexual clientele: favourite cinemas, theatre bars, tea shops and cafés. Unlike the modern gay scene, the gay crowd would blend decorously into the place. The overt and the outrageous were shunned by all 'sensible' people. They attracted the police, were destined for a ride in the 'Black Maria' and were more or less certain to end up in police cells, or even prison. But, of course, even the respectable had to take risks. Trolling art galleries, streets and parks was common. So was cottaging. As one man notes: 'But the police nowadays have more or less closed them all down, and I think they're so much more vigilant than they were. Strangely enough, since the law which has made it legal for two people inside a house to enjoy each other's company, the early sort of public meeting of homosexuals and so on seems to have disappeared, except in certain queer clubs.'

So, admission to the gay scene was by invitation only. Once accepted you had fairly fluid access, but it was a constantly changing, insecure and dangerous milieu: 'The first group that I went to, the birthday party, that group of people tended to meet quite frequently...were once...raided by the police and arrested and imprisoned. All of them.' This was how the authorities ensured that homosexuality had no public presence: 'With the place being what it was and the people being what they were, those who showed the slightest idea that they were queer, the slightest impression of being

'It is the public silence, the restricted access to the scene, or to gay company of any sort, that will seem strange and barbaric to modern readers'

London since the end of the seventeenth century. A social world open only to the habitués of sex between men is of considerable antiquity. However, it is not until the 1920s that associations and connections of this sort start to take root among a growing population of men both able and willing to live as homosexuals. This gay scene sprang up in provincial towns and cities and it flourished in London. Admission was by introduction only. If you were bold and somebody liked the look of you, you might be spoken to on the street or invited for tea or drinks. People who didn't find you attractive were almost as likely to introduce you to their circle as people who wanted to have sex with you. You got invited to Sunday tea or to a party. You were slowly introduced to a few people and you took it from there: 'In those days if you didn't find the key to the door to get on the inside you could be very lonely and very unhappy and not meet anybody. There were no gay groups, there were no clubs, there were few known bars. But once you'd been to one of those parties you got invited to others.'

For those initiated into the ways of the scene there were particular haunts: deserted hostleries and pubs that would have no trade at all without homosexuals. There were places where homosexuals could meet and recognise each other while immersed in a law-abiding and

gay, and they were out anyway. Completely out.' Homosexuality could not even be discussed: 'Homosexuality wasn't on the TV, or even the radio, never. It was never, never, never, mentioned. It was ignored, it just didn't exist.'

The cottaging, the cruising, the legal harassment and the repression will be entirely familiar to gay men today. However, it is the public silence, the restricted access to the scene, or to gay company of any sort, that will seem strange and barbaric to modern readers. These interviews are a description of lives disfigured by the criminal code and entirely defined by 'sexual perversion'. As one of the men remembers: 'It really was wonderful. They all spoke in the local dialect. In retrospect they were very intelligent and given a chance now I think they might have made something of their lives. But obviously, there was nothing they could do.' Consequently, it is in its etiquette and manners that the outlook of this older gay scene appears unfamiliar and archaic. With the opening up of the gay scene in the seventies the manners and outlook described by these men have all but disappeared. This is not to be regretted, but it does need to be understood, because it was in the thirties, the forties and the fifties that the foundations of the modern gay scene were laid.

Daniel Nassim reviews

Phyllis Bennis, *From Stones to Statehood: The Palestinian Uprising*, Zed, £12.95 pbk; Alain Gresh and Dominique Vidal, *An A to Z of the Middle East*, Zed, £29.95 hbk, £9.95 pbk; Zachary Lockman and Joel Beinin (eds), *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising Against Israeli Occupation*, IB Tauris, £5.95 pbk; David McDowall, *Palestine and Israel: The Uprising and Beyond*, IB Tauris, £14.95 hbk, £8.95 pbk

Beyond the intifada

Several years ago I passed through the railway station in Haifa, the home port of the Israeli navy, with an American Jewish friend. Suddenly he stopped and pointed to a large picture on the wall. 'It makes me so proud', he said, 'to see a Jewish submarine'. It took me some time to register the absurdity of this statement. It makes about as much sense to talk about a Muslim computer or a Christian tea-cosy as a Jewish submarine. From the point of view of the Israeli state, however, it probably seems perfectly logical. In a self-proclaimed 'State of the Jewish People' everything, including inanimate objects, becomes Jewish or non-Jewish. As David Ben-Gurion, soon to become Israel's first prime minister, remarked in 1945, by 'Jewish independence' or 'Jewish state' we mean 'Jewish country, Jewish soil, we mean Jewish economy, Jewish agriculture, Jewish industry, Jewish sea'.

This fetishisation of Jewishness has little to do with religion. It is the result of the creation of a colonial settler state in an area inhabited by non-Jews. The emergence of Israeli Jewish oppressors and oppressed Palestinians was a result of twentieth-century world politics rather than ancient history. The attribution of Jewish characteristics to material things emerged with the establishment of this relationship of oppression.

Unfortunately, it is not just Zionists who cling to absurd concepts. Even among those sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, there is a tendency to accept certain ideas as incontrovertible truths. For example, it is widely accepted even among radical commentators that there was something initially positive about the Zionist project which has subsequently been corrupted. The notion that the Israeli state has undergone a process of moral degeneration is implicit in several of the contributions to *Intifada*. Zachary Lockman's essay in the same volume should have demolished the idea that Zionism has degenerated from a more wholesome past.

Palestinians (a euphemism for expulsion) into context. Israel's extreme right, such as the Kach movement of the late Meir Kahane or the Moledet Party of Rehavam Zeevi, has been attacked for advocating transfer. In response, the right argues that it is merely articulating what the mainstream Zionist movement thinks. In fact the fantasies of the Israeli far right have been long since acted out by the Labour Zionists.

It is worth recalling that Israeli repression and Palestinian resistance predate the three-year old intifada. For example, between 1967 and 1982 Israel detained more than 300 000 Palestinians without trial. Between 1968 and 1983 Israeli forces killed 92 Palestinians on the West Bank, according to official Israeli figures. The intifada is significant only for the intensity and duration of the resistance it has inspired.

A more recent preoccupation of Palestinians and their sympathisers is the Palestinian declaration of independence of 15 November 1988. In *Intifada*, Edward Said, a Palestinian-American academic and member of the Palestine National Council, describes how he helped to draft the proclamation. In a patronising tone, Said explains his role in smoothing over Yassir Arafat's apparently unsophisticated use of language in the declaration, which is presented as a triumph of diplomacy.

Similarly, the last chapter of *From Stones to Statehood* contains an upbeat assessment of the declaration of independence and recent Palestinian diplomacy. The text by Phyllis Bennis, a radical American journalist, reminds me of a sandwich made with stale bread. The filling is wholesome enough but the first and last chapters suffer from their uncritical view of the PLO.

The declaration of independence is little more than diplomatic hocus-pocus. A genuine Palestinian state would be the result of a successful political struggle not a paper declaration. Yet while

'This fetishisation of Jewishness has little to do with religion. It is the result of the creation of a colonial settler state in an area inhabited by non-Jews'

Lockman reviews the recent writings of Israeli writers such as Benny Morris, Tom Segev, Simha Flapan and Avi Shlaim on the Palestinian flight from their homeland with the creation of Israel in 1948. These writers establish beyond all reasonable doubt what the Palestinians and their supporters have always known: that the 750 000 Palestinians did not flee voluntarily but were forced out by Israeli action.

Morris has uncovered the Israeli military's own intelligence report of 1 June 1948. This estimates that 70 per cent of the 240 000 Palestinians who had fled by then did so as a result of 'direct, hostile Jewish operations against Arab settlements'. His argument that the expulsion emerged spontaneously rather than as a conscious policy misses the point. The creation of Israel inevitably meant disaster for the Palestinians regardless of whether there was a deliberate expulsion programme.

Several other points emerge from the debate over the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948. One is the culpability of the left wing of the Zionist movement for the fate of the Palestinians. Until the Likud electoral victory of 1977 the Labour Zionists were dominant within the Israeli establishment. And, as Lockman points out, many of the Israeli military officers who presided over the expulsions were members of the 'Marxist Zionist' Mapam. In addition, many of the expulsions happened before the official establishment of Israel on 14 May 1948, contradicting the conventional view that the conflict started when Arab armies invaded Israel on 15 May. In fact much of the fighting, and notorious atrocities such as the 9 April massacre at Deir Yassin, happened earlier.

The events of 1948 put the current discussion of the 'transfer' of

Palestinian youth continues to confront Israeli troops, the PLO dreams it has won an important diplomatic victory. The declaration of independence, reproduced in a useful set of appendices to *Intifada*, confirms the failure of the PLO's diplomatic strategy. As Said notes, it paved the way for the PLO's explicit recognition of Israel within a month. Two decades of PLO diplomacy have won no freedom for the Palestinian people.

In some ways *Palestine and Israel* is an admirable departure from traditional introductions to the conflict. The substantial sections on Palestinians with Israeli citizenship are a particularly welcome counterweight to the commonplace treatment of the subject. The conventional emphasis on a two-state solution has focused attention on the West Bank and Gaza at the expense of Palestinians living inside the 'green line' of pre-1967 Israel.

British author David McDowall draws on the specialist work of Ian Lustick to outline Israel's system of control over Israeli Palestinians. There are three explicit areas of discrimination: the Law of Return (1950), which gives all Jews the automatic right to return to Israel while excluding Palestinian refugees; the Law of Citizenship (1952), which gives Jews the right to automatic citizenship in Israel; and the legal definition of Israel as a 'State of the Jewish People'.

In fact the system of control is far more extensive. McDowall follows Lustick in dividing it into three main areas: segmentation, dependence and cooptation. Segmentation refers to the separation of Jews from Palestinians socially, politically and administratively. Jews and Arabs generally live in different towns or neighbourhoods, so the routine question Israeli airport security personnel ask

tourists—'which areas did you visit?'—is a coded way of asking 'did you have any contact with Palestinians?'. Jewish areas receive far better funding than Palestinian ones. Army service is another instrument of segmentation. Only soldiers and their families are eligible for many benefits and jobs in Israel, a good way of discriminating against Palestinians.

Dependence has several meanings, most importantly the dependence of Israeli Palestinians on the Israeli labour market. Over the past four decades the Palestinians have been transformed from a predominantly peasant population into an overwhelmingly working class one. The strict controls on Palestinian land ownership have forced them to turn to wage-labour to secure a livelihood.

Cooptation refers to the development of a network of informers and agents inside the Palestinian population. This operates in virtually every *hamoula* (patrilineal extended family). Israel followed the Ottomans and British before it in cultivating a layer of *mukhtars* (village headmen) who would receive favours in return for their loyalty.

McDowall unfortunately remains attached to some of the more prevalent myths. Curiously he shares with the Labour Zionists an obsession with what they call 'the demographic problem': the fact that the Palestinian birth rate is substantially higher than the Jewish

one. Therefore, the argument goes, everything else being equal, the Palestinian population in areas occupied by Israel will eventually outnumber the Jewish one.

There are a number of problems with this argument. For a start, everything else rarely is equal. The massive exodus of Soviet Jews to Israel this year will certainly shift the demographic balance. Any attempt at transfer could also have a dramatic impact on the relative population figures. Much more important is the flawed assumption of this Zionist brand of Malthusianism. The problem in Palestine is political, not demographic. Instability in the area is a result of the imposition of a colonial state on the region by the West, not of Palestinian women having too many babies. Equally unconvincing is the argument that a larger Palestinian than Jewish population will lead to the negation of democracy. Even as a minority the Palestinians inside Palestine are systematically denied democratic rights; and the existence of Israel is a denial of the Palestinian national right to self-determination.

An A to Z of the Middle East is an excellent handbook on Middle Eastern politics, with a useful chronology, appendices and further reading list. It is a good starting point for anyone who wants to discover the facts behind the myths.

Theresa Clarke reviews

Boris Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika: A Soviet Chronicle*, Verso, £29.95 hbk, £8.95 pbk

Are Soviet workers socialist?

Boris Kagarlitsky is a key figure in Soviet politics today. During the Brezhnev era he was imprisoned for his involvement in the oppositional journal, *Left Turn*. In April 1990 he was elected to the Moscow soviet and subsequently formed a new political movement, the Socialist Party. He has now thrown his political weight behind the popular fronts.

Farewell Perestroika is a detailed and vivid account of events in the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev. From the striking coalfields of Siberia to the mass popular front demonstrations, Kagarlitsky describes the escalating turmoil and conflict within Soviet society. By his own admission, he has not sought to give an objective analysis of events as they have unfolded, but simply to chronicle month by month the difficulties and conflicts facing the Soviet bureaucracy. As a descriptive account of the momentous changes of the past few years, the book is a mine of useful information. As a political critique of the problems facing the Soviet working class, it is sadly lacking.

Kagarlitsky's political analysis falls down on a number of accounts, but his most important mistake is to equate the Stalinist system of bureaucratic control with democratic centralism. His understandable hatred of the system has led him to support any group that encourages the fragmentation and decentralisation of the Soviet Union. Thus he gives his wholehearted backing to the popular front movements, now over 140 in number. This fear of centralisation has blinded him to the reactionary character of the national movements.

Kagarlitsky acknowledges that local Stalinist bureaucrats have attached themselves to the national movements in order to advance their own interests against the centre: 'The rapid success of the popular front was engendered by the patently sympathetic attitude to it by a significant section of the local party and managerial apparatus, which strive to gain greater autonomy from the central authority in Moscow.' He also accepts that in doing this the local party leadership has sometimes managed to build a mass base which it had never previously established. Yet Kagarlitsky still insists on giving critical support to those whom he identifies as progressive bureaucrats such as Boris Yeltsin and Gavriil Popov.

The basis for the growth of the popular fronts is that all the republics are now facing severe shortages of food, essential materials and consumer goods. Each republic is holding back supplies from the centre and other republics, to safeguard itself against hunger and unemployment. The struggle over resources has fuelled the rise of nationalism within the Soviet Union. Rather than uniting the Soviet working class against the entire Stalinist bureaucracy, the nationalist movements have turned the working class in on itself. The popular fronts are not waging a progressive struggle against oppression, but are simply fighting to ensure their own particular privileges. For Kagarlitsky, however, they are 'genuine socialist movements speaking with one voice'.

Kagarlitsky also deludes himself about the political outlook of the working class. Against all the evidence to the contrary, he insists that the working class is nothing if not socialist in its disposition: 'Socialist ideas, despite the changes in the political environment, are so firmly rooted in the public consciousness that any organisation not advancing socialist slogans is perceived by the broad masses as suspicious, if not downright dangerous.' In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. After 70 years of inefficiency, poverty and misery under a bureaucratic system which claimed to be socialist, socialism is the last thing the working class wants. Instead, Soviet workers are demanding food, consumer goods and the lifestyle which they identify with the market system of the West.

To substantiate his argument that the working class desires socialism, Kagarlitsky cites the summer of discontent in 1989. But while workers have shown a willingness to strike over the past two years and have begun to organise their own unions, their demands have been limited and have hardly betokened a desire for socialism. For example, the token one-day action by coalminers last summer was coupled with demands for a market economy and regional autonomy beyond the rule of Moscow.

Unfortunately, we can now expect to see the emergence of a new level of chauvinism and reaction in response to the insecurities arising from the disintegration of the old system. Chaos, violence and pogroms cannot be ruled out. In the absence of a clear working class alternative the process of fragmentation can only continue. Kagarlitsky's Socialist Party appears incapable of providing a progressive pole of attraction for angry workers. It seems content for the moment to lend critical support to the Democratic Platform, acting as a pressure group within the established party political framework.

Kagarlitsky has moved on from the political analysis put forward in his last book, *The Thinking Reed*. Then he looked to the intelligentsia to play a potential revolutionary role as the vanguard of the working class. Today he looks to the popular fronts as the future working class leadership: 'Whereas the mass democratic and national movements at first strove to act within the framework of official legality and perceived themselves as reformist movements, the lawlessness of the authorities has brought about a transition to revolutionary methods of struggle.' Whichever movement seems to have the most weight at any particular time is the movement for Kagarlitsky, be it sections of the bureaucracy, the radical intelligentsia or the popular fronts.

For all his protestations about the socialist convictions of the working class, Kagarlitsky has lost sight of its role as the only revolutionary class. He finishes his book by stating that an alternative to the bureaucracy has yet to be created: 'Before us are hard times. But before us is the future. We live, we act and that means we have hope.' Hope is not enough. Unless the working class finds its own voice, it faces far worse than hard times.



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