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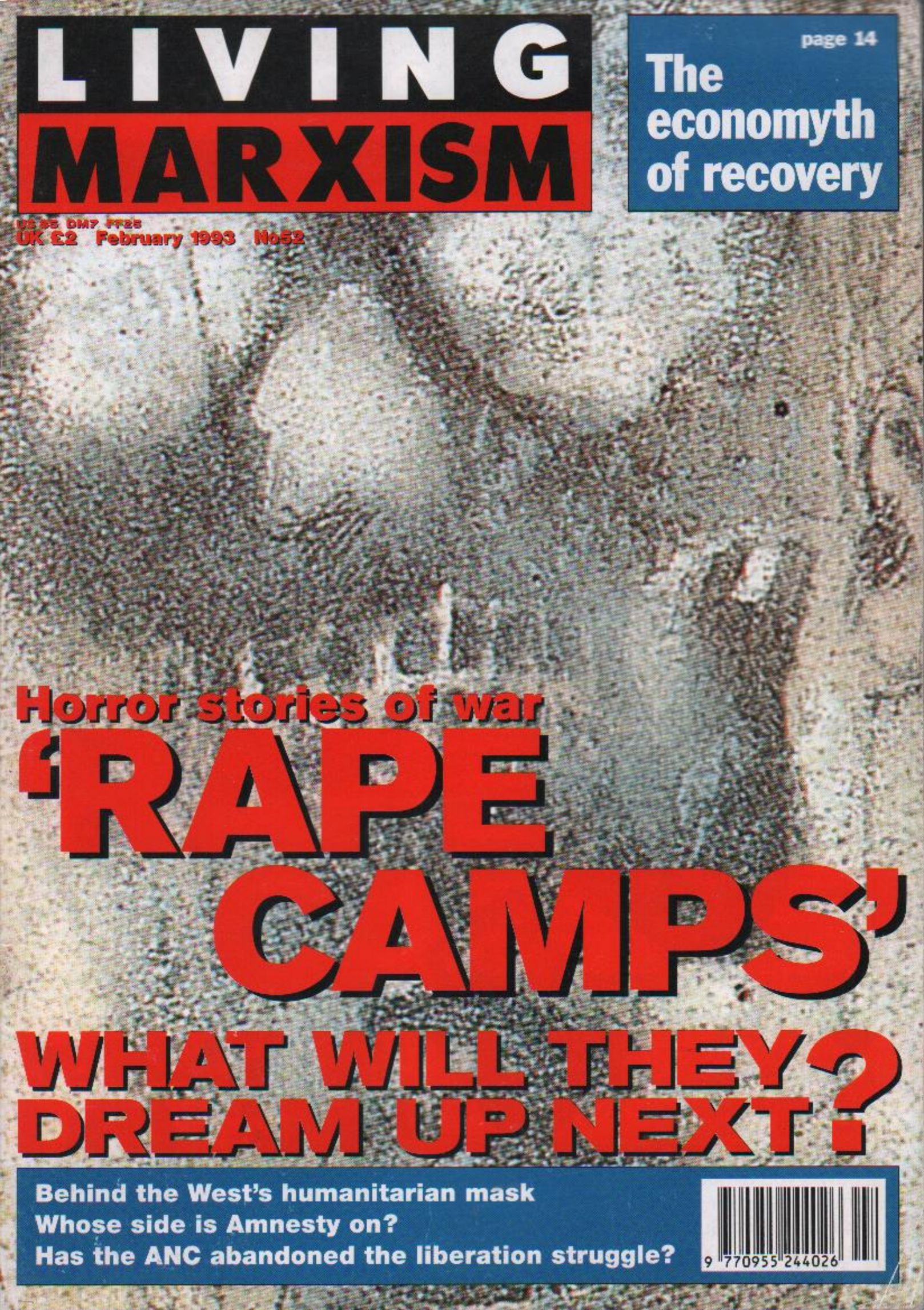

Horror stories of war

'RAPE CAMPS'

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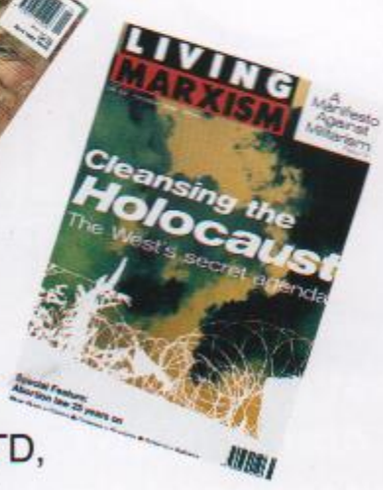

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No gags on the gutter press

At the time of writing there is much heated debate about the Calcutt Report on press freedom, Labour MP Clive Soley's privacy bill, and various proposals for more control of the press. *Living Marxism* would like to make clear that we are against all such controls, whether they be statutory, voluntary or whatever.

We do not care how many embarrassing revelations the *Sun*, the *Mirror*, the *Star* and the rest publish about members of the royal family or government ministers. Our only objection to such tabloid journalism is that too much of it is about their boring sex lives, and it does not go far enough in exposing the corruption, scandal and lies at the centre of public life.

Of course, these papers also publish poison about ordinary people. But there's no point expecting judges or press commissioners to save us from that. Any restrictions on who can publish what will be used to protect the rich and powerful, and to clamp down on critical coverage.

The British media is already so tamely conservative and unquestioning of those in authority that it's hard to see why they would want to censor it. The last thing we need is more controls on the press. Let's have everything out in the open, where we can see who's dirty and argue our case for a clean-out.

The message from *Living Marxism* is: Hands off the *Sun*!

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mick hume

'Rape camps' and other horror stories

The two-month old baby girl in the newspaper photograph looked like the picture of innocence, but she was apparently a tragic product of evil. The caption said that her mother, a 16-year old Bosnian Muslim, had been 'held in a rape camp and deliberately made pregnant by Serbs'. Those Serbs again; bomb the rape camp-running bastards.

But hold on a minute. That story and photograph appeared in the *Mail on Sunday* on 3 January, and the *Independent on Sunday* a week later. Which means that the picture was taken in late December at the earliest. Which means that the two-month old baby was conceived around January or February 1992. Which means that the 'rape camp' story must be rubbish, because the war in Bosnia didn't even begin until April.

So why was this story published without question, not once but twice? Perhaps the explanation is just that the editorial teams on British Sunday newspapers cannot count months very well. And then again, perhaps there's more to it than that.

Stephen King's horror stories have got nothing on the spine-chilling tales which the Western media have been broadcasting about war crimes in Bosnia. The most emotive ones, of course, involve babies. But if no wet-eyed child is available, the press have turned to tales which hit that other soft spot of the great British public: animals.

First, according to a front-page story in the *Times*, Bosnian Muslims were 'fed to dogs' by Serbs (7 August 1992). Then, suggests British dignitary Dame Anne Warburton, Serbs 'ordered' Bosnian Muslims to 'rape animals' (*Times*, 1 January 1993). Finally, says a German MP, at least one Bosnian Muslim woman died after Serbian 'concentration camp doctors' implanted an animal embryo into her womb in an attempt 'to make her give birth to a dog' (*Mirror*, 4 January 1993). No doubt the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will soon demand the right to inspect Serbian dog kennels under armed UN escort.

These horror stories are all, surprise to say, uncorroborated. They are typical of the rumours and exaggerations which breed like wildfire on the fear created in a conflict like the Bosnian civil war. Nobody should be surprised to hear such stories coming out of Bosnia or any other war-zone. The striking thing, however, is the eagerness with which politicians and the press in the West now endorse these incredible tales as the truth, and use them as evidence of the need for firmer Western intervention around the world.

The saga of the 'rape camps' in Bosnia provides the worst example to date of how a hysterical scare story can be accepted as good coin in the West. We have been told that between 20 000 and 60 000 Muslim women have been raped in Bosnia, and that up to 30 000 have been made pregnant. Many of the reports claim that the Serbs have been carrying out a 'systematic campaign' of rape or a 'deliberate policy' of getting Muslim women pregnant, organised around 'rape camps'. The campaign has variously been described as an attempt to destroy the Bosnian Muslims' national identity, and as a bid to breed more Bosnian Serbs.

What are the facts? No evidence has been produced to substantiate the claims of a 'systematic' campaign centred on 'rape camps'. Neither the International Red Cross nor the UN High Commission for Refugees has come across any such camp in Bosnia. The only evidence is anecdotal.

Anybody who refused to suspend their disbelief would surely find the alleged reasons for the Serbs' 'systematic' rape campaign ridiculous. Take the claim that the Serbs want to impregnate Muslim women with half-Serbian babies, so as to destroy their national identity. This makes no sense. There are no ethnic or racial differences between Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia (or Serbs and Croats for that matter). They are all Slavs, who are simply brought up to practise different religions—and you can't pass that on in the genes.

The flipside of this argument is that the forcible impregnation of Muslim women is part of an organised campaign to create more children of Serbian descent in Bosnia. This makes no sense either. If the Serbs were practising some crazy policy of biological *lebensraum*, why would they let the women wander off to have abortions, to bring the babies up as Muslims, or to have them adopted by Croats? Then again, perhaps it is all true, and that infamous dog-in-womb experiment was really an attempt to breed a Best Friend for the new Serbian Master Race.

Western commentators and statesmen have not allowed the lack of facts or sense to get in the way of a good horror story. So at the end of the Edinburgh summit in December, the EC governments condemned the mass rape of Muslim women in Bosnia, and despatched a mission, led by Dame Anne Warburton, to investigate. In January, Warburton's team had to admit that they had no proof of Serbs being

'ordered' to rape 'systematically'. But who needs proof? In the same breath a leading team member, Irish foreign minister David Andrews, found the Serbs guilty of deliberately using rape as 'an instrument, not a by-product, of war'.

On 18 December, the United Nations security council voted unanimously to condemn 'atrocities committed against women, particularly Muslim women, in Bosnia and Herzegovina', citing 'massive, organised and systematic detention and rape'. Fritz Kalshoven, head of a commission of jurists on Bosnia set up by the UN security council, added that 'the numerous cases of rape amount to a war crime when it is connected to a situation of war'.

There can be no doubt that women have been raped in the Bosnian civil war, as in most wars. After all, rape is an act of violence and that is what war is about. If the Western authorities want to know about the relationship between rape and war, they might start by asking the American troops who went to Vietnam or the British soldiers who fought in the colonies.

But the horror stories about Serbian rapists suggest much more than this. They place a careful emphasis upon the allegedly 'systematic' and 'mass' character of the rapes, with their talk of 'war crimes' carried out in organised 'camps' with shadowy Dr Mengele figures in the background. No opportunity has been missed to imply parallels between the situation in Bosnia and the Nazi experience. The message is that here is a special case of evil, and that the West has a moral right and responsibility to intervene and end it.

By spreading tales like the one about the Serbian rape camps, the West has established a new, humanitarian case for intervening in the post-Cold War world. Whether they are launching air-strikes against Iraq, occupying Somalia or bullying the Serbs over Bosnia, the USA and the other Western powers now always seek to justify their actions by repeating some emotive horror story or other. It is like a global version of the way in which the authorities at home prey on public concerns about rape or child abuse to win support for the police. As a result, Western intervention has become institutionalised as a widely accepted fact of international relations today.

Yet the case of the rape camps also reveals how thin the West's horror stories are on plot. Ask a few pertinent questions about whodunnit, and the storyline falls apart. It becomes easy to see that these scare stories are just convenient pretexts for cynical interventions which are really designed to demonstrate the authority of the Western powers. As Frank Richards explains on page 18 of this issue of *Living Marxism*, behind the humanitarian mask the face of Western foreign policy is as ugly as any rapist's.

The trouble today is that almost nobody is asking critical questions about the true motives for Western intervention. Many of the erstwhile liberal critics of Western colonialism have now become the loudest supporters of the West invading other countries in pursuit of its bogus 'humanitarianism'. Typical of this trend is the way that some women's groups in the West have demanded firm action against the Serbian 'rape camps' in Bosnia. They are effectively handing the Western powers the moral authority to stage air-strikes for feminism.

The trend towards increased Western intervention in the third world and Eastern Europe today marks a new age of global conflicts and power struggles. It has nothing to do with humanitarianism, women's rights or the prevention of cruelty to babies and animals. Horror stories are for frightening children. Grown-ups, on the other hand, have to deal with the world as it really is.

November 1992, *Living Marxism*
'What can we expect next? "Serbian Dr Mengele found experimenting on Muslim prisoners" or "Gas ovens discovered in Banja Luka"?' (Joan Phillips, 'Lies, damn lies and Bosnia')

4 January 1993, *Daily Mirror*
'One Bosnian woman is said to have died after an attempt to make her give birth to a dog....The [Serbian] concentration camp doctors are copying the methods of Nazi wartime monster Josef Mengele, claimed German MP Stefan Schwarz.'

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letters

Bomb warnings

Mick Kennedy's desire ('Bomb warnings', December) for the IRA to blow up more agreeable targets and for Gerry Adams to talk tough to the faithful is a little wide of the mark.

Surely, uncritical support flows from the fact that there exists a context in which any assertion of the right of the Irish to self-determination will necessarily be at odds with the objective interest of the British state, no matter what form that assertion takes. Nationalism of course, on its own merits, will always be a woefully inadequate vehicle with which to articulate the social interests of the Irish or any other masses, and is inherently unstable, but we already know this, don't we?

A better way of understanding the current situation would be to present a detailed outline of the strategy of the British state as pursued since the hunger-strikes, and who it is aimed at. This spawned the Hillsborough accord and the more recent 'talks', as part of a package of bringing the Republic 'on side', boosting the Catholic middle-class, pacifying the Americans, and pouring oil on the turbulent waters of the evangelical Protestant fringe, while simultaneously maintaining the low-intensity operations of the Brian Nelson kind. Sinn Fein's current impasse reflects the success of this strategy in the light of the brittle, narrow confines of their own politics.

The logic of Kennedy's article is that criticism can now be levelled at the republican movement due to the low level of anti-Irish chauvinism, and that the reason for this low ebb lies in the slide to compromise that is evident in Sinn Fein and most other national liberation struggles. But this is to turn unconditional support on its head, as the shortcomings of republicanism are posited as the axis around which this conditionality revolves.

The low ebb of anti-Irish chauvinism surely reflects the low ebb of just about everything else of substance in contemporary politics, as well as the subtle but significant strategy that has contained the conflict within parameters which are now confidently determined by Whitehall. To be sure, we need to be able to comprehend the often bizarre tactics of a movement which has caused the establishment such a headache throughout the twentieth century, but not in the way Kennedy does.

Steve Bowler *Belfast*

The criticism made by S Davies (letters, January) of Mick Kennedy's article on the IRA bombing campaign was that 'the campaign's problems merely reflect the broader difficulties of the [republican] movement' and that Kennedy should have taken as his starting point the republican movement's political strategy.

I am glad Davies appreciates that the bombing campaign is a reflection of the republican movement's political direction. The point of the article was precisely to take that 'reflection' as the starting point for a discussion with a British audience about the problems of the political strategy.

The muted response to the IRA's campaign is a reflection of a broader shift in British politics. That is why it is nowadays possible to shift the balance from putting all of our energy into countering anti-Irish hysteria, into a discussion about the dangers facing the liberation struggle. This brings me on to Justin O'Hagan's letter.

He suggests people on the left should be critical of the IRA/Sinn Fein because they have no mandate, and because their acts of violence have led to nothing but misery. But people on the left in Britain have a duty to challenge existing prejudices and clarify the real issues. This still means pointing out that Britain started the Irish War, and that it keeps the violence going through the maintenance of a sectarian state.

The fact that the IRA are engaged in a conflict with a colonial power which is denying self-determination to the Irish nation gives the struggle a democratic content. In such a conflict it is essential to take sides, rather than to waste time deploring the violent consequences. The criticism that we should make is against any tendency to degrade the liberation struggle.

Stuart Sharp *London*

Given an IRA presence in Britain, it's hardly surprising that many British people would be critical of IRA strategy. Many Irish people feel the same about the British military presence on their soil. It's pointless to debate whether or not a particular response to bombs and bullets is appropriate.

It's also true to say that most British people are unable to participate in any meaningful debate on the Anglo-Irish conflict, simply because they don't know enough to talk sensibly on the subject for any length of time.

We desperately need more information, articles and interviews from the people at the sharp end of the war, the voices of the people and politicians who are marginalised and ignored by most sections of the British media. In the past, *Living Marxism* has broken through the wall of censorship and silence, and published some excellent, informative articles from the front line. Let's have more of this and less of the abstract debate.

Pauline Hadaway *Newcastle upon Tyne*

US terror in Somalia

I received a copy of *Living Marxism's* statement on Somalia the day that US troops began their invasion. Anybody seeing the news that evening could not help but reach the conclusion that the reason for the presence of the US troops had little to do with a 'humanitarian' mission and a lot to do with the US flexing its military muscle.

US troops began as they mean to continue—by terrorising the Somalis. Four Somali airport workers were forced, at gunpoint, to lay on the ground. One brave US marine broke one of the workers' arms in the process. The four were then handcuffed and abused by a large group of marines until the commander of the Pakistani UN contingent was forced to cut the workers loose.

What is noticeable about all this is the confidence which the US establishment is exuding. In Vietnam the US suffered its greatest embarrassment partly as a result of the media exposing the barbarity of the US forces. In Somalia, US troops can act like braggarts in front of the whole world and expect to get away with it. With the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the end of the Cold War, Western imperialism is facing no opposition. More than anything, this shows the urgency for building an anti-imperialist movement.

Although all the hype is focusing on US aggression it must be borne in mind that Europe is also trying to get in on the action. On the same day 180 French foreign legionnaires were landed in Mogadishu to prepare for an invasion by 2100 French troops.

We can no longer be taken in by the 'White Man's burden' argument. The 'humanitarian' excuse that is being put about by Western imperialists and their apologists is, in essence, no different from the 'humanitarianism' of saving the despot regime in Kuwait and reducing Iraq to rubble, or saving South Vietnam from the 'tyranny' of the North.

Iraq, Yugoslavia, Somalia...the question is not 'where next' but 'what next?'.

Joe Daly *Leeds*

Another view of queer

Andrew Greenlees ('A different view of queer', January) is wrong to criticise Hugh Mitchell and Kayode Olafimihan ('A queer view', November) for exposing queer as the nineties edition of the same tired old navel-gazing identity politics that held sway over radicals in the eighties. People need to know that, despite all the posturing, there is nothing new here.

Greenlees is probably right to point out that the banality of 'gay politics' was a consequence

of the left's failings. But he fails to mention that Outrage is itself lead by long-standing Labour left activist Peter Tatchell, and that queer represents nothing other than the collapse of radical thinking into a conservative resignation to the status quo.

Greenlees says that queer is an expression of the 'determination for change'. This is nonsense. I cannot understand how celebrating the diversity of individuals' 'sexual identities' is supposed to help in the project of social change. These identities already exist and are often the product of the rotten ghettoised existence that anyone who fails to conform to the sexual 'norm' is forced to endure. If anything the contemporary obsession with these identities is both an expression of the problem of inequality and one of the obstacles to solving it.

Queer has arisen out of the failure of the old left to bring about any change. The only thing it challenges are the laughable attempts of Sir Ian McKellen to be respectable. Andrew Greenlees understands that queer is nowhere near what is needed, but it is symptomatic of the low horizons shared by many that he feels the need to defend them as they retreat up the tedious cul-de-sac of gay sensibility.

David Wright *Manchester*

The problem with modernism

The idea that there is a direct or even a mediated causal connection between the formal self-absorbtion of modernism and the social elitism of the modernist intelligentsia ('The fear of the masses', Marxist Review of Books, December) in my view equates two entirely different phenomena by seeing them as expressions of the same thing: the inherent limitations of bourgeois thought.

The relationship between the obscurity of modern art and any social elitism of modern artists is generally, at most, a metaphorical one. As a general rule 'fear of the masses' is not an adequate explanation of the failings of modernism. Inability to relate meaningfully to the masses is a failing of Marxist, Liberal and Conservative alike. The failure of modernism is linked much more to the total inability of modern thought in general to grasp the true nature, meaning and direction of modern social life, and hence to find a place for itself in that life.

If the intelligentsia have ignored Marxism and the needs of the masses this is as much the fault of the Marxists—and the apparent lack of any realistic revolutionary alternative—as it is of the intelligentsia. Even this has had as much to do with objective historical conditions as with any ideological inadequacies.

At the end of the day modern art failed to find any meaningful order in modern life. And so to preserve itself from chaos and incoherence it cut itself off and sought order within itself. Thus it denied itself any social or human validity and so, paradoxically, became a symptom of that wider lack of meaning and order anyway. This has had as much to do with the lack of influence of the masses as it did with the liberal intelligentsia's fear of them. The main thing was the decline of the world revolutionary movement and the loss of all optimistic hope in the future.

Martin Hughes *Sussex*

Hands off Madonna

If Madonna is powerless as Kevin Reid makes out (letters, January) because 'she finds it necessary...to present herself as a sex object', then what's the point of attacking her? If she is more a victim than part of the power that oppresses women, then going against her won't help women who don't even have the choices that Madonna has. The inferior position of women in society is not because of Madonna's 'powerlessness'. Neither is it reinforced by it.

And if Madonna's presentation of herself as a sex object where 'it is the body, not the brain, that matters' implicates *'all'* women' as Reid says, then does it mean *'all* women' are sex objects? This is definitely the old stereotype he talks about. It's one that Madonna subverts. Hence she says 'where is the rule you can't use your mind *and* your body from start to finish?' ('Neurotica', December).

The fact is Madonna is in control, and this control doesn't create or reinforce sexism as I see it. The difference between her and other 'sex objects' is precisely because she does have complete authority over her artistic output. Reid should remember, it's not pornography itself that oppresses women, it's what it reflects: the social and economic subjugation of women by capitalist society.

Even if you take away the 'nude bits', capitalism will still be there. However if you positively change society, the nature of female pornography will change with it. Society creates pornography not vice versa. So why the fuss? We've got bigger problems.

As for Madonna representing 'a move in the right direction for those of us interested in emancipation', few are that naive. We all know Madonna doesn't go far enough. Women need more than just the choice over what to do with their bodies.

Also in these conservative, reactionary times, I wouldn't criticise her for posing naked on cans of lager. Besides being good for a laugh, it will be one in the eye against moralism disguised as feminism.

Theodore Odeluga *South London*

Banks syndrome

So Toby Banks thinks, about Down's Syndrome, that it's 'sick' to say that a society which contained only normal children would be an impoverished one ('Some more sick ideas', January).

I don't know whether he's ever met one, but I'll bet he can't tell us for sure what the difference is between him or me or someone with Down's Syndrome. Some of them can read and do sums, some can't. Some can do gymnastics, some can't. Some can hold down simple jobs, some can't. So what?

I'm a committed Marxist, but I can't see how having people like this around gets in my way or anyone else's. I don't think it's abnormal to be illiterate, or clumsy, or unemployed. But I know some people in the Tory Party and further to the right who do.

I suspect our jovial Toby is really a bit uptight—he's probably scared that having Down's Syndrome means you're the sort who are liable to grab hold of him and pull his underpants down in public. Come on son, loosen up.

Mike *Essex*

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, or fax them on (071) 278 9844

The African National Congress claims that it is close to securing a historic victory for blacks in South Africa. Charles Longford looks at the ANC's latest policy document and concludes that, in fact, Africa's oldest liberation movement has finally abandoned the struggle for black majority rule

When four white people were killed by members of the Azanian People's Liberation Army in King William's Town at the end of November, South Africa's president FW De Klerk loudly condemned the attack as 'an act of terrorism'. It was a predictable piece of apartheid hypocrisy. These were the first white civilians to die in such an attack for years. Meanwhile, De Klerk's government has presided over the deaths of thousands of black people in South Africa, while denouncing the smallest sign of retaliation as murderous terror.

Terrorist brush

The remarkable thing was not De Klerk's routine condemnation, but the response of the African National Congress (ANC). In the past, the ANC has often been tarred with the same 'terrorist' brush. This time, however, the ANC agreed with the regime that such black violence constitutes 'an act of terrorism'. That was just for starters.

By the end of the week, Cyril Ramaphosa, ANC secretary-general, and Roelf Meyer, De Klerk's minister of constitutional development, had issued a joint statement after three days of closed talks, stating that there was now a 'shared responsibility to ensure a multi-party negotiated transformation to a democracy', which had to take place 'rapidly'. And just as the ANC endorsed the government's definition of what now constitutes terrorism, so it has accepted the De Klerk regime's redefinition of exactly what sort of 'democracy' South Africa should rapidly be transformed into.

Sham rights

The ANC leadership has accepted the government's proposal for a general election to elect an interim government of 'national unity', in which minority political parties with proven support will be guaranteed representation. This body, serviced by the existing civil service of the apartheid state, will draft a new post-apartheid constitution in which South Africa's diverse ethnic groups will receive constitutional protection.

The proposals may sound democratic and fair, but in the context of the realities of South African society they are a sham. All the talk about 'minority rights' is simply a diversion from talking about the basis for real democracy; black *majority* rule. In South Africa, 'minority rights' has long been a code word for protecting the socio-economic power of the white minority elite. The fact that the ANC will now entertain such a scenario indicates the extent to which it has retreated from the democratic principle at the heart of the liberation struggle: the principle of one person one vote, black majority rule.

It is sometimes inevitable that, in the course of political struggles, a liberation movement will be forced to accept compromises. The problem in South Africa today is that the ANC is trying to sell its compromise on majority rule as a great step forward for the black majority. Instead of explaining that the 'interim government of national unity' has been forced upon them by the authorities, ANC leaders are presenting as a victory the prospect of their involvement in a government which will enshrine the principle of 'minority rights'—that is, white capitalist power.

Compromise today

This is not the action of a liberation movement taking pragmatic temporary steps in difficult circumstances. It suggests that the ANC is going much further, redefining what constitutes a victory and therefore what the liberation struggle is really all about.

The new ANC policy document, 'Negotiations: a strategic perspective', adopted in November after some debate and controversy, has became the basis for these compromises. In section five of the document, 'Goals of the National Liberation Struggle and our immediate objectives', the ANC tries to explain the relationship between liberation tomorrow and compromise today:

'The fundamental goals of the National Liberation Struggle should not be confused with the immediate objectives we set ourselves in each phase of the transition. At the same time we should ensure that the immediate objectives we pursue do not have the effect of blocking our longer-term goals....The objectives we set, and can attain in each phase will depend upon the balance of forces.' (p6)

This counterposition between the long-term 'fundamental goals' of the struggle and the definition of immediate objectives is the key to unravelling how the ANC is abandoning the struggle for black liberation in practice.

Balance of forces

What are the 'fundamental goals of the National Liberation Struggle'? Well, until the end of the Cold War, the goal was said to be the socialist transformation of South African society. The collapse of Stalinism and the ANC's conversion (along with its Communist Party mentors) to market economics has got that little confusion out of the way. Now the only 'fundamental goal' remaining is black majority rule and the removal of white social, economic and political privileges. The question is whether the 'immediate objectives' which the ANC is pursuing through its deal with the government advance or set back this goal.

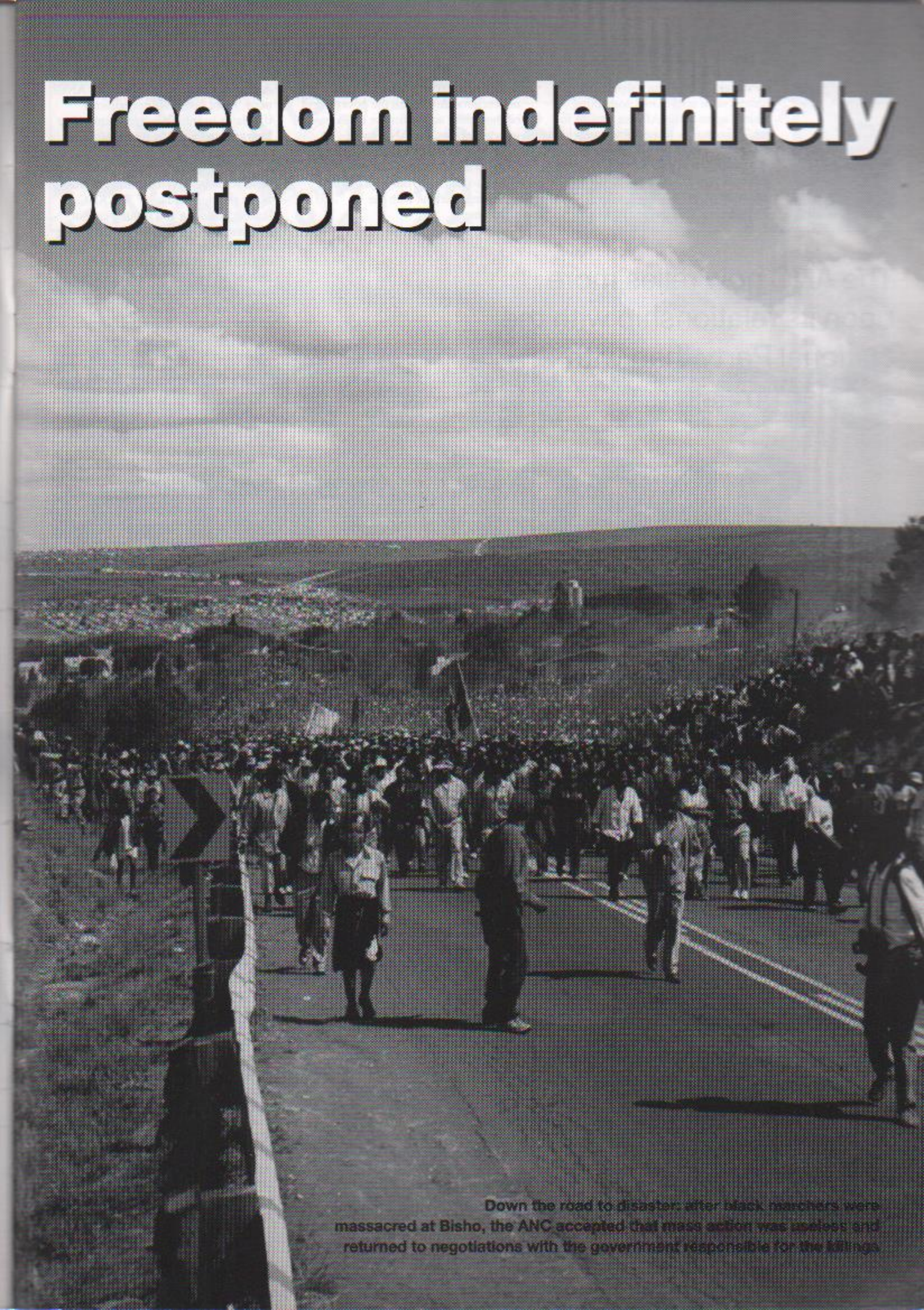
It is fair enough for the ANC policy document to suggest that the tactical objectives to be pursued depend upon the current 'balance of forces' between the state and the black opposition. Everybody has to take account of realities. But there is a problem here. The 'balance of forces' between two sides is dictated by political struggle; each side subjectively seeks to tip the balance in its favour. To read the ANC document, however, you might think that the balance of forces has fallen from the sky, and imposed an 'objective' requirement for the ANC to compromise and form an alliance with the De Klerk regime.

Act of God?

In section six of the document, 'The need for Government of National Unity', for example, we read that 'objective reality imposes a central role for the ANC and the NP [National Party] in the transition....This means the balance of forces has forced on to the South African political situation a relationship between the ANC and the NP'. (p7) ▶

PHOTO: RUSSELL OSBORNE

Freedom indefinitely postponed



Down the road to disaster: after black marchers were massacred at Bisho, the ANC accepted that mass action was useless and returned to negotiations with the government responsible for the killings.

It sounds as if 'the balance of forces' is an act of God, something visited upon South African society for which no man is responsible and which all are powerless to resist. Of course, this is nonsense. The present situation in South Africa has not been brought about by chance nor by divine intervention. It is the result, as we have consistently argued in *Living Marxism*, of a conscious political strategy ruthlessly pursued by the De Klerk regime, that has exploited the flaw in ANC politics.

The ANC now relies more upon its relationship with the National Party than with the black masses

Moderating the ANC

When the ANC claims that 'objective reality' has imposed certain limited 'immediate goals' upon the movement, it is really saying that it accepts the results of De Klerk's strategy. The 'objective reality' it is talking about is the conservative-influenced political climate in South Africa, which has been brought about by the government's successful attempt to moderate the liberation movement.

From the outset, De Klerk's aim in legalising the ANC was to transform the liberation movement into a junior partner of government. He has pursued this aim along two tracks: moderate the ANC leadership, while isolating those hostile to compromise.

Black civil war

The government has used Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha movement and dirty tricks by its own security forces to transform the liberation struggle into a civil war within the black community. In the process of dividing the majority black population, the Pretoria regime has isolated militancy and fostered moderation. You need only recall how the ANC more or less accepted the charge that its mass protests were responsible for the massacre of demonstrators at Bisho, to see how successful De Klerk has been in moderating the ANC's outlook.

By caving in to pressure from the regime, the ANC has redefined what constitutes a realistic political strategy today. When the government said that armed struggle was a barrier to the 'peace process', the ANC abandoned it (the government did not reciprocate). When the government blamed mass action for the breakdown in negotiations, the ANC gave in again. Having forsaken the armed struggle and conceded that mass action is a non-starter, the only 'strategy' left is negotiations with the government.

In this situation, the ANC's relationship to its base of support has become less important than its concern to keep the negotiations process alive. Anything that threatens the talks must be sacrificed. Whether they are condemning black 'terrorism' or criticising militant protests, the ANC leaders have almost adopted the language of apartheid's rulers and are already acting like junior partners in government. They now rely for their survival more upon their relationship with the National Party than with the black masses.

Wordgames

The ANC's reliance on the National Party is the uncomfortable truth which the policy document seeks to disguise. If that truth were to be admitted, the ANC's 'immediate goals' would be exposed as the acceptance of a shady deal based on what De Klerk is offering today, rather than as positive steps towards the 'fundamental' goals of the liberation struggle. That is why the document is at pains to obscure reality with convoluted Stalinist-speak, talking about everything from 'dialectical interconnection(s)' to 'changing the conjuncture'.

The most disastrous diversionary manoeuvre the ANC leaders are going through is their claim that negotiations represent a victory for the liberation movement and a defeat for the 'forces of apartheid' (p5). But if negotiations represent a victory, why is it the ANC that is compromising its principles? Moreover, how does conceding the principle of black majority rule today ensure its achievement in the long term? The ANC argues that, in the phase of interim government, it can create 'more favourable conditions' (p6). But how can giving into the enemy's demands improve the conditions? And in any case, why should the ANC need 'more favourable conditions' if today's negotiations represent a step forward, and a defeat for the 'forces of apartheid'?

The key question which all of this avoids is, who has the initiative in the political struggle? The ANC leaders' twisting and turning cannot disguise the way that they are clinging on to De Klerk's coat tails in the hope of gaining a place in government. Behind all of their talk of 'objective realities' they have embraced short-term expediency as a way of life, while the long-term 'fundamental goal'—freedom—has been postponed indefinitely.

Over the rainbow

The tension between short and long-term goals has always existed in the ANC programme. In the past, the struggle against apartheid for black majority rule was the 'immediate goal', while the socialist transformation of South African society was the 'long-term' one. The separation of these stages in theory, in conditions where it was impossible to separate them in reality, meant that the 'long-term' goal of socialism was always put off until somewhere over the rainbow.

Today there is no longer any talk of the 'socialist transformation of South African society'. The collapse of the Soviet model, which many in South Africa saw as the alternative to capitalism, means that market economics rules. There is nothing particularly startling about this. Most leading members of the ANC were always hostile to anti-capitalist politics. But what is significant is that yesterday's 'immediate goal'—the achievement of black majority rule—has now become the long-term one, something to be hoped for in the indefinite future.

This 'objective reality' did not come about through Providence. Nor was it inevitable. Instead it is the result of a government strategy which has both taken advantage of the favourable 'balance of forces' brought about by the end of the Cold War, and exploited the fundamental tensions at the heart of ANC politics.

With the threat of a challenge to South Africa's socio-economic system lifted by the collapse of Stalinism, De Klerk has been able to draw in the liberation movement's leaders by offering them the prospect of black participation in the institutions of a post-apartheid capitalist South Africa. 'Negotiations: a strategic perspective' reveals how far De Klerk has been successful in making the ANC a part of the 'objective reality' now working in his favour. ●

Calling all *Living Marxism* readers

What's in store before 1994?

In the January issue of *Living Marxism,* we asked for your views on how the slump might affect our lives in 1993. We have had a lot of responses already, just some of which are published here.

We want to keep the discussion going, to try to clear up some of the confusions that exist about where the world is heading today. If you want to take part, please keep your contribution (on anything you like) as brief as possible and send it to Tessa Myer, *Living Marxism,* BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX

Neil Joseph, Sheffield

Who's to blame?

In the topsy-turvy world of slump politics, you'll take a pay cut because you asked for a decent wage last year. You'll lose your job because you want the right to work. And Britain is in the worst slump since the 1930s because...you were too greedy in the 1980s.

While those in charge are increasingly incapable of offering any solutions to social problems, irresponsible single mothers and sponging immigrants find themselves blamed for cuts in benefits because they just grab and grab without a thought for anyone else. The new-found 'underclasses' of Newcastle, Liverpool and Manchester need further police repression to contain their criminal urges. And the peoples of the third world and Eastern European countries are now too stupid and too dangerous to run their own countries.

So who will the government blame for their problems in the year to come? Perhaps the Queen will be getting a divorce because of errant fathers on Leeds council estates. Or maybe we won't get our new toilets on the M1 (as promised by John Major) because a bunch of New Age travellers might turn them into communes. ●

Mike Belbin, London

More of less

In 1993 there will be more of less. Many things will get smaller (pay-packets, job prospects, cars) or shorter (policy statements, spaces between ad breaks). Distances will matter less, communication will be instant though information restricted. Differences between the Recollected Past and the Trendy Present will work away to nothing. (Get set to revive the nineties.)

Expectations will shrink, as will services, jobs, social security and the credibility of most people in public life. Only a few experts, bankers, Tory back-benchers will be consulted; only a few opinions heard; only a few 'incidents' reported. All political parties from Conservatives to Conservationists will look and sound like clones. Economic growth will be measured in smaller quantities ('the increase in the rate of decline is less than last year'). But all this will be tolerated less by the public.

The difference between news and soap opera will narrow as will the distinction between movies and advertising (or pornography). Most records will sound the same—a sort of pop-funk, folk-rock operetta. The BBC will sound like the government. All 47 TV channels will look like the *Big Breakfast Show.*

All gaps will grow smaller, shorter, less, except the one between liberty, equality, peace and world capitalism. ●▶

What's in store before 1994?

David Yates, London

Hard lessons

In this academic year per capita spending on higher education has been cut by 20 per cent. 1993 will bring a further cut in funding and a fall in already dreadful educational standards, especially in the new 'universities'. The standard of education in the former polytechnics is being lowered to the level of sixth form colleges.

There has been a huge rise in student numbers, thanks to the dearth of jobs for school-leavers and older people alike, and the desire of colleges to cram students in to ensure that they get as much as possible of the ever-dwindling funds available. As the slump deepens the situation will become desperate.

As usual, the students and staff will suffer most. Staff will be faced with larger lectures and tutorials. Students will be forced to do more and more undirected work with less and less library and computer resources. John Major's vision of one in three entering third level education by the year 2000 may come to fruition (unlike most of his other dreams), but the one sure prediction we can make is that this new-found access will be to an under-funded, under-resourced, and devalued education system. ●

Bill Hawk, North London

Taking stock

What might 1993 bring for the world's major stock markets? Is another 1929 or 1987 on the cards?

The Tokyo stock market has performed very badly over the past two years. 1993 could be bad but, whatever happens, the world markets seem immune to a Tokyo crash. The New York market has survived two years of American economic recovery that has hardly been noticeable. However what could upset the Big Apple Cart might be the continued appalling results of the biggest companies in the world. If companies like General Motors and IBM continue to lose billions of dollars every three months then panic may well ensue. Panic in New York would sweep the world's markets.

Now London. In a slump with no sign yet of a significant return to profitability, the London market is continually touching new highs. When the British recovery is seen as yet another false dawn, perhaps in the spring or early summer, there is a very good chance of a dramatic collapse.

What is most likely over the coming year is poor stock market performance and high levels of government intervention. A crash of the size of 1987 is possible, but it is difficult to see the same level of international cooperation to overcome it. ●

Mark Reilly, London

Turmoil in Ireland

The British government will suggest new constitutional arrangements in return for an indefinite IRA truce. The IRA will declare an indefinite ceasefire pending the outcome of constitutional negotiations which Sinn Fein will attend. British strategy against the nationalist people will break down into two phases.

Phase One: The ceasefire coincides with an escalation in attacks by Loyalist gangs. Britain's use of the Loyalists is modelled on the South African government's use of Inkatha against the black masses. The purpose: to demoralise a disarmed nationalist community, to portray the conflict in the North as a problem of communal violence, and to recast the British as neutral peacemakers. Sinn Fein accuse the British of complicity in the attacks, and threaten to scupper the talks. Discontent grows in the nationalist community and sections of the IRA call for reprisals. Sinn Fein calls for EC teams to be sent to hotspots to monitor the truce.

Phase Two: New escalation in Loyalist attacks, with the death toll climbing to levels not seen since 1972. In rural areas like South Armagh and Tyrone freelance republican units break ranks to attack British bases and Loyalist strongholds. The British use the conditional release of prisoners—all closely vetted for moderate views—as a carrot to the nationalists, and as blackmail against Sinn Fein. In the face of IRA inaction, desperate nationalists demand RUC patrols to curb Loyalist attacks. Pressurised by the EC, the Southern and British governments, Sinn Fein finally allows the RUC to enter unhindered into nationalist areas—the first time in 23 years. Rural units of the IRA are hunted down in joint British/Southern army operations. ●

Noel Cunane, Archway

No justice

The reining back of legal aid, which is sure to begin in 1993, will reduce still further the chances of receiving anything approaching a fair trial. The little matter of being innocent will scarcely register in the courtroom control culture of the nineties.

During 1993 expect legal aid to be withdrawn for those with previous criminal convictions. This is not likely to arouse much outcry; I wouldn't wait for the Labour Party's 'Social Justice Commission' to spring to your defence. This assault will be followed by the withdrawal of legal aid to anyone accused of a crime who, if found guilty, is unlikely to receive a custodial sentence (that is to say, a clear majority of those brought to trial).

A judicious fog shrouds the exact details of the legal aid proposals but it is clear that the mooted cutbacks can only be bad for us, whether innocent or guilty of our 'crimes'. The curtailing of legal aid, like other injurious legislation, is advanced in the knowledge that the working class feels intimidated, divorced from power and uncertain about the future.

As it stands the legal system is racist, sexist and inherently class biased. Though 1993 is going to be a bad year in court, it also offers an opportunity for us to win back the lost ground and to establish the difference between their 'justice' and ours. ●

Rob Lennon, Edinburgh

The McPerot factor?

People are experiencing recession in the absence of any plausible working class alternative. In Scotland, this places the national question on the agenda. Here, to blame the English, especially the south-east, is as commonplace as blaming clouds for rain. 1992 saw a real rise in interest in the ideas of 'democracy' and 'self-determination' for Scotland, not really matched by the Scottish National Party's performance in the general election. Although its vote rose, it ended up with one fewer MP and is back in third place.

I think this indicates two things. First, like everywhere else, there is near complete cynicism towards the established parties, including the SNP. Secondly, the peculiar form of anti-politics in Scotland is the call for independence. I find no great faith in the idea that independence could change the fundamentals. Rather, it has become popular in a negative way, as a change from what exists at present, when any change will do.

In 1993, we can expect that sense of grievance, and the desire for a parochial solution, to get stronger. Whether that will have any effect will depend on whether an individual or group, untainted by associations with the past, emerges to take advantage. It will require a kind of 'McPerot' factor to turn latent cynicism into a popular movement. ●

Doug French, Sheffield

Year of the moral panic

After following the media over the past few years it is amazing that the average British citizen is not sporting several condoms, a Sierra Cosworth proof suit of armour, and clutching a hand full of pitbull repellent while going to the shops to buy a Nicorette patch and some alcohol-free drinks.

Mass hysteria is always very useful in hard economic times. We live in very unstable political times. As well as the economic slump the establishment is going through a political crisis. No longer can our 'leaders' justify their role with threats of communism corrupting society's moral fabric. In these uncertain times the moral panic becomes an invaluable weapon for the ruling elite. It makes people more preoccupied with their own lifestyle. So instead of questioning the inadequate NHS people are preoccupied with giving up smoking, healthy eating or cutting down their alcohol consumption. Even more worrying is the fact that hysteria about crime allows the state to increase police repression.

Throughout 1993, as the establishment becomes less confident of its ability to control society on its own merits, it will be forced more and more to fall back on moral panics. The New Year promises new peaks in hysteria from the media. No doubt we will be under siege from armies of 'immoral' single mothers and Aids-ridden basketball players among other things. ●

Dave Alvis, East London

Fear and anger

There is considerable fear, uncertainty and anger at the effects of the slump. However, the lack of any organised political response from the working class to the slump means its consequences are experienced in an individualised way by its victims. They are seen as a series of personal tragedies seemingly inflicted at random by an outside force beyond anyone's control. In such a climate, people's response will take on an individual character.

The sight of backbench Tory MPs speaking in support of the miners, and the TUC and CBI joining together in a National Day of Recovery are among recent events that seem to suggest a lack of class polarisation in British society. The prevailing sentiment appears to be one of 'we're all in it together'. Such a climate benefits the bosses as they implement any measures they see fit in a vain attempt to revive profitability.

Yet it is a fallacy to state that there is anything approaching a genuine sense of consensus in Britain. Like many other Western countries in the aftermath of the Cold War, Britain is experiencing a questioning of its political and constitutional institutions. But the lack of any political context in which people's fear can be placed means that their mood can best be described as volatile. In such a climate, reactionary ideas are just as likely to gain a foothold as progressive ones. The challenge is to provide the political leadership that will ensure the progressive solutions are the ones that take hold. ●

Bill Durrant, Hornsey

Been here before?

The gap between talking up the economy (as carried out by the government and city spokesmen) and the grim reality of the slump will widen in 1993. But can you spot when these quotes were published?

'The present recession, both for stocks and business, is not the precursor of business depression' (2 November);

'a depression seems improbable; [we expect] recovery of business next spring, with further improvement in the fall' (21 December);

'there are indications that the severest phase of the recession is over' (18 January);

'manufacturing activity is now—to judge from past periods of contraction—definitely on the road to recovery' (1 March);

'by May or June the spring recovery forecast in our letters of last December and November should be clearly apparent' (19 April);

'[business] will turn for the better this month or next, recover vigorously in the third quarter and end the year at levels substantially above normal' (17 May);

'the present depression has about spent its force' (30 August);

'we are now near the end of the declining phase of the depression' (15 November);

'stabilisation at [present] depression levels is clearly possible' (31 October, a year later).

Sounds familiar? All quotes from the 'Weekly Letters' of the Harvard Economic Society between 1929 and 1931 before it was dissolved into the dustbin of history. ●

PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

The economyth

The experts on both sides of the Atlantic are busy spotting the 'green shoots of economic recovery' again. Phil Murphy thinks that everything in the garden is a lot less rosy

After more than two years of slump, the New Year brought many predictions of recovery for 1993 on both sides of the Atlantic. In America, statistical economic growth of nearly four per cent in the third quarter of 1992 was interpreted as definite proof that the recovery had arrived. For many observers it was then only a matter of setting the date for the official end of the US recession.

In Britain the discussion was a bit more tentative; there were no figures for output growth in 1992 to encourage grand claims of recovery. Nevertheless, the prognosis was firmly positive. John Major used his New Year interviews to predict that 1993 would bring 'clear economic recovery' and could mark the start of 'a virtuous circle of sustainable growth and prosperity'. Chancellor Norman Lamont claimed in his holiday outings with the media that 'all the conditions were now in place for recovery', a phrase remarkably reminiscent of what he said at the beginning of 1992.

Most people in Britain approached these claims of recovery with holiday jocularity and with more than the usual quantity of salt. Very few were taken in by Lamont's devious but obvious manipulation of the statistics to 'show' that British manufacturing performance was a 'source of confidence and pride'. All Lamont's

# of recovery

juggling of the figures cannot disguise the fact that manufacturing output in Britain rose more slowly during the 1980s than in any other leading industrialised country. Nor is his claim that the one fifth drop in manufacturing's share of the British economy during the eighties was a sign of dynamism likely to improve Lamont's reputation for accurate economic analysis.

Yet, despite the well-founded scepticism that greeted Major, Lamont & Co in their economic projections, the stories about the Anglo-Saxon recovery haven't died. While many agree that Japan, Germany and most of Continental Europe will be joining the world slump in earnest this year, the emerging supposition is that America and Britain are escaping it.

This sentiment does not reflect any significant improvements in the productive dynamic of the world economy. Instead it is based on superficial factors, none of which points to anything like the full-scale restructuring which international capitalism would need to get out of the slump.

One such factor is the influence of wishful thinking. Messages of hope are what politicians are supposed to give, especially at the start of each new year. It is not considered good government for them to tell us that next year things are going to get really bad, and that there is nothing they can do about it.

Cheap talk

In the case of America, talking up the recovery is particularly useful for the new administration of president Bill Clinton. A professed belief in recovery makes it easier to drop some of the more extravagant campaign rhetoric which promised more federal spending to counter the crisis. If the recovery has started, these plans for investment subsidies and building up the infrastructure can be scaled down. This in turn reduces the threat of higher state expenditure compounding government indebtedness, which is already burdensome enough for US capitalism.

At a time when American and British politicians and their advisers have no ideas for new effective counter-slump policies, talk of recovery having already arrived comes as a cheap alternative. It postpones the need to come up with answers and solutions.

Many politicians and economists believe their own publicity about recovery, because of their underlying faith that economic history will eventually repeat itself. They see economics as a repetitious cycle of ups and downs. After having such a long 'down', we must be due, they figure, for an 'up' sometime soon. There may be debate about the length of the dominant cycle—is it 10, 30 or 60 years? etc—but they all agree that in the end economic life repeats itself and downturns become upturns. Every time Lamont predicts recovery he probably feels that, by this 'law of history', his chances of being proved right must be improving.

This is story book stuff and has nothing to do with the real world and the real economy. Like any other history, economic history never repeats itself exactly.

Economic booms—vigorous rises in national output—do not last forever. Neither do recessions of continuously falling production. But there is nothing which automatically dictates that recovery and boom must follow recession. Things are not repeated because the condition of the production process itself is always changing.

For example, the British economy has experienced three recessions in the past 20 years: 1991-92, 1980-81 and 1974-75. Each one was different, because the economy was different going into and coming out of each recession. The British economies of the mid-1970s, the early 1980s and the early 1990s had different structural features.

They had different sectoral make-ups between services and manufacturing, different competitive relationships to the world economy, different volumes of credit lubrication, and different levels of dependence on state intervention. In each case the post-recession period of economic activity was coloured by the particular structural features of the economy bequeathed by the previous boom and recession. So every boom is unique, every recession is unique and so is every end-of-recession period.

Living in the past

Sometimes recovery follows recession quite smoothly; sometimes it requires extensive intervention of some form (as with government policy in the 1970s and 1980s); sometimes (as today) the slump is so serious that a massive scale of restructuring is the necessary precondition for a further phase of steady expansion.

When John Major had his New Year vision of an upturn, it was based upon looking for a rerun of the past. He anticipated a 'sustainable recovery' by comparing Britain in 1993 with Britain at the beginning of the 1980s; since things had gone from recession to boom back then, he implied, they could do so again this time. But the historical comparison Major chose only exposed the fallacy that economic history will repeat itself.

For a start, Major conveniently forgot that the 1980s period of growth was anything but 'sustainable'; it ended in today's slump. More importantly, he ignored the fact that the particular character of the eighties' expansion has shaped today's recession. For example, the brief credit-fuelled boom of the 1980s is not repeatable in the 1990s. Instead of credit offering an escape route today, the high debt levels ▶

accumulated over the past decade act as an extra depressant on capitalism in the nineties. Far from previous successes repeating themselves, it seems that yesterday's solutions have become another of today's problems.

In both Britain and America the search for credible evidence of recovery has only identified superficial factors. None of them points to the restoration of profitable conditions for production, which remains the vital precondition for a real capitalist recovery. In many cases the 'proof' of recovery only reveals more about the depth of the slump.

Today's obsession with psychology, confidence and the feelgood factor is itself a symptom of the ongoing slump

Most of the discussion of an Anglo-American upturn has been concerned with a bounce in consumer spending and retailing figures. It appears from the initial reports that people on both sides of the Atlantic went on an end-of-year shopping spree—buying Christmas presents and going to the sales. No doubt this has helped to reduce warehouse stock levels, which is likely to prompt some replacement factory production. But this does not substantiate the notion of a recovery.

The slump is not caused by a lack of demand among consumers, but by a lack of profitable investment opportunities for capitalists. A short spending fling may stimulate a bit of production, but it can't kickstart a world recovery. Capitalists are unlikely to be persuaded to invest heavily in new technology by the fact that last year's goods have been sold off cheap in the sales.

Back to fundamentals

In any case, consumer spending is unlikely to really take off as long as mass unemployment and the fear of losing your job remain major preoccupations. And this can't change until there is a substantial boost to investment in new plant and machinery to provide many more workplaces. Once more the problem comes back to the need to restore profitable conditions for production, a much more fundamental factor than the state of retail sales.

For Britain and America, the structural weaknesses of domestic industry are such that higher consumption only leads to higher imports. This tends to exacerbate the imbalances in trade and international payments which are destabilising the world economy. Far from fostering recovery, this makes the slump more intractable.

A recent rise in demand for personal credit has also been pointed to as proof of a recovery. But this is just a corollary of higher consumer spending, and an equally untrustworthy indicator of an economic upturn. The fact that people have been prepared to use their credit cards means some of us got more expensive presents than we might have expected. That is likely to lead to a temporary boost to output or imports early this year. But it won't alter the fundamental problems at the level of production.

Confidence fixation

If high-street spending isn't the lasting solution that capitalism needs, the other favourite preoccupation of economic debate today, 'consumer and business confidence', can make even less of an impact. In both Britain and America confidence surveys turned upwards from about November, boosting commentators' own confidence about the recovery. In America this coincided with the buzz surrounding Clinton's election victory, reminiscent of the short-lived euphoria which greeted the Tories' victory in Britain last April. But confidence doesn't even have as much consequence as consumer spending. Consumer confidence doesn't make the cash tills ring, never mind assist in restructuring the production process.

The fixation with confidence levels is itself a symptom of the ongoing slump. The ineffectiveness of traditional economic theories and policies in solving the crisis has contributed to today's obsession with psychology, confidence and the feelgood factor. The focus on feelings and confidence has grown almost by default as the last resort in trying to come to terms with an economy which appears more and more outside the control of economic managers.

Sterling fantasies

The other indices looked to for signs of the green shoots of recovery are equally peripheral to the production process. For example, the slight rise in the international value of the pound in January led some journalists into flights of fantasy about currency speculators regaining confidence in Britain. Some claimed this was because of a new recognition of the strength of the British economy, which foreshadowed good news for the recovery.

In fact the rise in the value of sterling, like its earlier plunge, was primarily caused by factors external to Britain—in particular the strains in the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European Monetary System. The money markets were simply buying sterling as an overnight storage point for their money, as they speculated against the Irish punt and the French franc. The fact that the pound can suddenly rise and fall in value for no apparent reason reveals how the British economy is now so weak that it can be buffeted about on world markets like a piece of driftwood.

Paper activity

The New Year euphoria surrounding the rise of the London stock market was equally false as a recovery indicator. Just because people put money into company shares in Britain, does not mean that the corporations concerned are in a healthy state. On the contrary, it means that the owners of the surplus funds washing around the economy are unable to find lucrative real investment opportunities in new plant and machinery. They turn to gambling on the stock exchange instead.

Once share prices start to rise, other holders of spare cash will also buy shares in the hope of making a killing. The bull market becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. All of this paper economic activity can be entirely divorced from the real fortunes of the companies whose shares are being traded. The ups and downs of stock markets provide no conclusive evidence of movements in the real economy. All that a volatile stock market tells us is that the lack of real investment possibilities means there is a lot of money around for speculative wheeler-dealing.

Worse and worse

All in all, the trends and indices which economists have pointed to as evidence of recovery are more indicative of the entrenched character of the slump. Recessions do come to an end (as may be the case now in America). That means the economy stops contracting, but it does not mean an escape from slump. Instead we can expect production to fluctuate up and down, but without any sustainable dynamic. The US economy remains in slump, bumping along at the bottom. Even the more optimistic forecasts envisage mass unemployment in America of above six per cent for years to come. And things in Britain remain in an even more dire state.

No doubt factory closures, job cutbacks and lay-offs will boost productivity figures, cut costs and widen profit margins. But these one-off boosts for capitalists cannot create a sustainable economic dynamic towards recovery. For most of us, they can only make things worse. ●

ANN BRADLEY

Willy wars

Women's magazines always claim to reflect the concerns of the women who buy them. They may all look the same to the untutored eye but each glossy is carefully tailored to appeal to a particular type of woman and to fill a particular niche in the market. That's why publishing houses can own several different women's titles—there may be rivalries between Nat Mag's *Company*, *Cosmopolitan* and *She*, but they're not strictly in competition.

Company hits the under-25, single girl who likes to think the world is at her feet. *Cosmo* pitches for her slightly older sister, more likely to be at work than at college, perhaps living with her man but no kids. And *She* is altogether more grown up—for the professional woman who 'juggles her life' between career, kids and kisses. But the one thing that unites them is their obsession with sex. Whether you're *Just 17* or just 37, sex sells.

You might think that the preoccupation with a reasonably straightforward physical function would pose a few problems for the editors who are paid to commission original and interesting copy. After all, there isn't really that much you can say about sex that hasn't already been said. Every month, *Living Marxism's* editor rips his hair out trying to decide which pressing new world problems should be subjected to analysis in his esteemed organ. There is intense pressure on space. Can we get away with only giving three pages to the slump this month? What can we drop to squeeze in a piece on Somalia?

It's hard to see the editor of *Cosmo* having the same problem. After all, what is there new and original to say about an orgasm? At the risk of sounding ahistorical, people have been having them in much the same way for years. There are only so many articles you can write about them. You can do the 'what happens physically' article, the 'what happens emotionally' article, the women's view and the man's view, the reasons why some people do and other people don't. It may sound blasé but an orgasm is just an orgasm after all.

What is there new to say about an orgasm?

Women's magazine editors are trying to solve the 'what can we do that's new about sex?' problem by becoming more visually explicit. Last year we saw the battle to win the willy war. Where tits were once considered *risqué*, so pricks have now risen in their place. *Company* started it with a 'Men and Sex' supplement containing a 'compare and contrast' collection, and since then men's dangly bits have been popping up all over the place.

Well, actually it's not true to say that they have been 'popping up'. The erect todger remains the last great taboo. No mainstream women's magazine has yet broken the obscenity guidelines which insist that men's bits have to appear in a flaccid state pointing in a downwards direction.

Women's magazines are about packaging rather than content, and that's why sex is such a good issue for them to lead on month after month. There's only so much you want to know about lycra, or formulations for moisturiser, or new places to go on holiday—but we are very susceptible to the notion that there's more to sex than we know already.

Articles about sex kick your insecurities in the crotch. If you're not getting good sex then they are compelling because you think you might learn something to set you on fire. If you are getting good sex, they are compelling because they suggest that it could be even better. Either way, the idea is that there is a great wisdom that we don't know, and need to. Editors can repackage the same old drivel and sell it by the ream.

Take the recent spate of articles on the newly discovered Cat technique by various 'sexperts'. Cat stands for Coital Alignment Technique—and it is supposed to guarantee women an orgasm. In essence it involves the bloke lying on top of the woman and the pair of them positioning themselves so that the top of her pubic bone rubs against him when he pushes down. Sounds familiar? Of course, it's just that good old-fashioned, tried-and-tested missionary position executed with common sense. But it has now generated article after article, filled with 'how to do' guidelines complete with diagrams and eulogies from women about how it's improved their sex lives.

We see sex as *the* big issue because we invest so much in it. Sex is where the 'what matters' buck is finally supposed to stop. What does it matter if your job is on the line and your pay has been cut as long your man (or woman) loves you? Who cares if the kids are driving you to distraction as long as he still cares and shows it? You can put up with living in a flat from hell providing there's a loving smile to brighten your darkest evenings.

And how do you know if your relationship is all it should be? The answer: it's in his kiss. The formula runs something like this: your life is good if your private life is good, your private life is good if your love life is good, your love life is good if your sex life is good, your sex life is good if your Cat is good. We are obsessed with sex because it's supposed to epitomise all that's important in our lives.

Of course the truth is the other way around. If you are stressed out because you are about to be evicted, or frantic about your financial future, you'll be too preoccupied to have much fun between the sheets no matter how many hours you spend swotting up on having the ultimate orgasm. Which is ultimately why so many people have lousy sex lives. And why sex sells videos, books and magazines. Never in the history of humanity have people been bombarded with so much information and advice about sex. And never have people been so preoccupied with their sexual inadequacies.

So if you've been thinking of buying your swain a book on Cat, forget it. A subscription to *Living Marxism* addresses far more significant problems, and while it may not improve your sex life much, it'll increase their 'interest quotient' far more than a sex manual.

Happy Valentine's day! ●

US marine
in action
in Mogadishu

PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

Behind a humanitarian mask

The American invasion of Somalia has been uncritically accepted as a life–saving mission launched for the best of motives. Few people have bothered to ask why the hard–headed Western powers, which have never shown any regard for life in the third world before, should suddenly have become so charitable.

Frank Richards looks behind the humanitarian mask to identify the true motives driving the USA, Britain and the rest to intervene around the world today. The real face of Western foreign policy, he finds, is an ugly and menacing one

According to the Western media, Operation Restore Hope has been a unique initiative. For the first time in history, a superpower has deployed tens of thousands of troops in a no-expense-spared operation, not out of self-interest, but to fulfil its basic humanitarian obligations. As outgoing president George Bush put it, the American invasion of Somalia was intended to do 'God's work' and to 'save thousands of innocents'.

The American press too was at pains to emphasise the humanitarian motives which had propelled the marines into Somalia. The *New York Times* described the intervention as 'a turning point in American foreign policy: for the first time American troops are entering a country uninvited, not to shore up an anti-communist regime, protect American wealth or stifle a strategic threat, but simply to feed starving people' (5 December 1992).

Everybody now seems to use new terms such as 'war for humanitarian purposes' and 'humanitarian intervention' with abandon, to describe 'uninvited' interventions which in the past would have been aptly characterised as gunboat diplomacy.

According to mainstream accounts of Western foreign policy today, it appears that hard-headed ▶

PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

realpolitik has gone out of fashion. National and class interests have been suspended, and instead global diplomacy is now motivated by moral imperatives. No sooner had the marines landed in Mogadishu than American diplomats were pressing for an escalation of military intervention in Bosnia—again to save innocent lives.

Experts in international affairs now argue that the invasion of Somalia is part of a new humanitarian cycle of world diplomacy. It is widely suggested that the rules of diplomacy have changed, and that moral concerns have become the central element in foreign affairs. The *New York Times* has again captured the tone of the discussion, linking the Somali invasion with the creation of 'safe havens' for Kurds in Iraq at the end of the Gulf War.

'The action in northern Iraq, like that in Somalia, was a response by president Bush to a humanitarian outcry. Pictures of Kurdish refugees huddled in the snowy mountains, and of emaciated Somali children, produced much critical comment in the press about what was seen as Mr Bush's indifference.' (*New York Times*, 4 December 1992)

The attempt to depict American foreign policy as driven by altruistic concerns is not new. The White House itself has always claimed that its foreign interventions, from Vietnam to Nicaragua, were motivated by moral concerns. What is new today, however, is the apologetic consensus which uncritically accepts the humanitarian rhetoric of Western diplomacy as good coin.

Endangered species

For instance the American journalist quoted above, who connects the humanitarian theme in the invasion of Iraq with that of Somalia, does not bother to ask what has happened to those Kurdish refugees who made the fashionable headlines 18 months ago. (For his information, they have been repeatedly attacked by forces from America's Nato ally, Turkey.) Or for that matter, what has happened to that other famous endangered species, the 'marsh Arab', whose survival provided the pretext for establishing an air exclusion zone and threatening the Iraqis once again? Apparently the West's humanitarian concern has a short attention span.

It seems that, in today's uncritical political climate, there is no need for a sophisticated explanation of the new rules of international relations. The simple argument generally used is that in the post-Cold War era, new considerations have come to dominate global diplomacy. According to one American journalist: 'In a world without menace from another superpower, the US military must be ready to act against mass murder, which breeds hate and revenge, and menaces stability.' (A Lewis, 'Changing the Rules', *New York Times*, 4 December 1992)

Just why the demise of the Soviet Union should impose on the United States such onerous moral responsibilities is never explained.

Why are prison camps in Bosnia an outrage to human decency while similar camps housing Vietnamese refugees in the British colony of Hong Kong are a matter of indifference?

Which is not surprising, given that there is no logical link between the two. Why should Western powers which were clearly driven by *realpolitik* in the past have suddenly come over all humanitarian today?

It is also worth asking why some third world famines demand a military intervention while many others are ignored? Moreover, why are prison camps in Bosnia an outrage to human decency while similar camps housing Vietnamese refugees in the British colony of Hong Kong are a matter of indifference? The West appears extremely selective in its dispensation of humanitarian concern.

In truth there are several motives behind the recent development of American and Western foreign policy. But none of them is humanitarian.

At the intellectual/ideological level, Western diplomacy today is primarily concerned with the rehabilitation of imperialism. The different adventures in Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia are all oriented towards reclaiming the moral high ground of international relations for the Western powers.

Until the 1940s the West had always possessed the moral high ground. It could promote itself as superior to the colonial world, and depict empire-building as part of a civilising mission. This was the White Man's burden. From this standpoint, imperial intervention made perfect sense. The civilised elite of nations decided what was in the best interest of the non-civilised masses. Of course, from time to time colonial powers got carried away and went too far in oppressing their subjects. But this was seen as a small price to pay for all the good that Europeans were doing in the colonies.

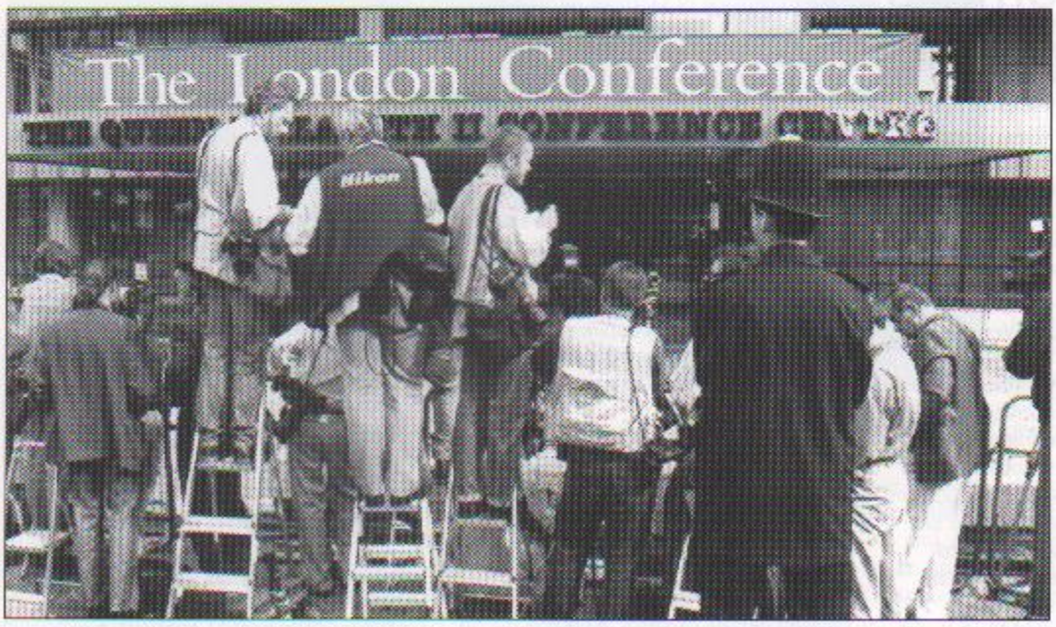
Belief in Western moral superiority came to an end in the forties. The horrors of the Second World War—the systematic extermination in the concentration camps, the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki—called into question Western standards of civilisation. The ruling elite of Western nations became increasingly uneasy about defending imperialism, colonialism and notions of racial superiority. Imperialism, which until the thirties had neutral and sometimes even positive connotations, became a term of abuse.

Moral crisis

After the Second World War, the revolt of the old colonies against their masters further undermined the moral claims of the West. The moral crisis of Western imperialism was reflected in a change of diplomatic language. So in 1949, members of the International Law Commission agreed to 'refrain from using the expression "civilized countries" because...it dated back to the colonial era with its concept of the "White Man's burden" '(see GW Gong, *The Standard of Civilization in International Society*, p90).

As the culture of imperialism was eroded, so the third world came to occupy the moral high ground. On the floor of the United Nations, American and British diplomats were constantly lectured by their non-aligned counterparts on the evils of colonialism.

Worse still from the point of view of the self-esteem of the Western ruling classes, for a time the cause of the third world became fashionable among middle class youth at home. They opposed military adventures like the American war in Vietnam, and identified with third world figures such as Che Guevara. This new mood was experienced as a rejection of the West's imperial past. The fact that third world causes could now command moral authority struck a direct blow against the old coherence of the superior Western self-image.



London Conference, August 1992: the media has never questioned the West's right to interfere in the affairs of Yugoslavia

Western elites could not entirely reconcile themselves to this body blow to their self-image. Throughout the postwar period there survived a strong undercurrent of resentment at the new moral ascendancy of the third world. During the Cold War, the West could do little other than grumble about the moral claims of the third world. Occasionally it would gleefully point to some atrocity or political disaster in Asia or Africa as confirmation that 'these people' could not really rule themselves. But the Western powers were generally wary of going too far, for fear that the Soviet Union would be able to exploit any hint of colonial attitudes to increase its influence in the third world.

West vindicated

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the new global climate of conservatism has provided the West with an unexpected opportunity to rehabilitate its past. All of the conflicts and economic disasters which are the consequence of the anarchy of the capitalist world market can now be blamed on 'corrupt' third world and Eastern European regimes. The failure of the various radical experiments in the third world now serves as a vindication of the West. The collapse of Stalinism around the world has allowed the rhetoric of Western imperialism to make a comeback.

This is the context in which the so-called humanitarian war has now emerged. These wars create useful precedents for 'uninvited' Western intervention in the affairs of other countries. But that's not all. They also retrospectively legitimise the entire history of Western imperialism. If American troops are so altruistic in Somalia today, why should we doubt the humanitarian impulse behind imperial adventures in the past?

During the past three years there has been a growing demand in the Western media to absolve imperialism of any guilt, and to condemn the third world idea. After the Gulf War, Robert Harris of the *Sunday Times* explored 'How old-fashioned imperialism could be the Kurds' salvation'(14 April 1991). A year later *Newsweek* exhorted 'Let's abolish the third world' (27 April 1992).

Gunboat diplomacy

The revival of the vocabulary of empire is by no means confined to journalists. Last September in an interview in the *Independent*, British foreign secretary Douglas Hurd called for a new imperial role for the United Nations. Hurd's vision of a new imperialism implied that Western powers should now enjoy a permanent right to intervene in the internal affairs of peoples in Eastern Europe and the third world.

At present, it is critical for the Western powers to conceal their foreign interventions behind a humanitarian mask. If gunboat diplomacy can be presented as a response to a genuine demand to feed the starving (Somalia), or to save the victims of a holocaust (Bosnia), then it is likely to enjoy full support at home. The power of this approach has been well demonstrated in Germany.

Since the Second World War, Germany has been constitutionally forbidden from launching foreign military adventures. For sometime now, however, the German authorities have sought to win domestic support for their right to intervene militarily abroad once more. The wave of humanitarian concern about Somalia provided the solution to the problem of how to restore a militarist culture in Germany. The announcement on 17 December 1992 that German troops would be sent to Somalia provoked virtually no opposition.

Promoting Western intervention as a humanitarian mission legitimises imperialism not only in the present, but also, by implication, in the past. Many apologists for imperialism have used the invasion of Somalia as the point of departure for defending the idea of colonialism in general. The *Wall Street Journal* observed that it was not 'pining for the return of unfettered nineteenth-century colonialism'. But:

> 'We are, however, quite eager to repudiate much of the theory, articulated mainly by US liberals during the post-colonial era, that the system erected after World War Two—capitalist, democratic, American-led, grounded in British traditions of contracts and property rights—was somehow "not right" for the indigenous groups and cultures of what came to be known as the third world...American leadership and property rights look to be precisely what the starving of Somalia very much want.' (7 December 1992)

In case the message was lost, the *Wall Street Journal* added that what 'Desert Storm did for America's military credibility, Somalia may do for its moral credibility'.

The *Journal's* aside about moral credibility is important. There is now a widespread recognition that Western society is going through a time of acute moral uncertainties. The West has failed to find a substitute for the powerful Cold War myths. In the post-Cold War era there seems to be no new vision or political inspiration. Instead, moral uncertainties are paralleled by an erosion of consensus.

When the *Wall Street Journal* writes of 'moral credibility' over Somalia, it reveals that its real preoccupation is with domestic concerns. So we are told that in Somalia, 'we assume the US security forces won't have to read the teenage thugs their Miranda rights, as they must for the Crips and Bloods in south central Los Angeles'. It is as if the problems raised by the Los Angeles riots have been ▶

relocated to Somalia, where they can be resolved to a satisfactory conclusion with a kick up the backside from the humanitarian marines.

The rhetoric of humanitarian diplomacy at once rehabilitates the imperial past, and provides our rulers with a moral antidote to the social malaise that now afflicts Western societies.

It is important to emphasise the theme that *Living Marxism* has called the *moral rearmament of imperialism*, since this motive behind Western intervention is usually ignored. The failure to examine this issue has led many critics of imperialism to misunderstand the dynamic which drives the Western powers to intervene in the third world today.

Oil and Islam

For example, many misguidedly argued that the Western invasion of Iraq was really motivated by the quest for oil. The argument was superficially plausible but fundamentally flawed. The West already had a surfeit of oil. And in any case, it had complete access to Iraqi oil. So why launch a military operation for something you already possess? When it came to Somalia, finding the 'obvious' cause of intervention was not so easy. Somalia has no oil or little else for that matter. For some critics of Western imperialism, the threat of Islamic fundamentalism served as the substitute for oil. This threat was about as real as the motive of oil in the case of Iraq. In neither case is there a single cause—economic or otherwise—that accounts for the military intervention.

The starting point for understanding Western diplomacy in the post-Cold War era is the dislocation caused by the crumbling of the old world order and the ending of the old balance of power. The Western Alliance is no longer bound together by the anti-communist politics of the Cold War. This has enabled tensions among the Western powers themselves to come to the surface, and has helped to expose America's loss of the unquestioned world leadership which it enjoyed after the Second World War.

The fate of the Somalis today is of no concern to Washington

In the absence of an international equilibrium, it is no longer clear what are the rules of the great power game. The new fluidity in international affairs creates a situation where major powers often react to each other rather than pursue any pre-determined objective. So it was the high-profile German diplomacy in the former Yugoslavia which forced the other main Western powers to become involved—not so much to contain the Serbs as to contain the expansion of German influence.

America lacks the clout to retain the initiative in the Balkans. Instead it has sought to reassert its global authority through its intervention in Somalia, by demonstrating to the European powers how indecisive they have been in Bosnia. Somalia has no importance for Washington other than as a stage upon which it can strengthen its claim to world leadership. Until this claim is recognised by others, or until a new international balance of power is established, there will be many more Somalias.

A walkover

Once it is understood that Washington has been actively seeking opportunities to demonstrate its military power, it should be clearer why the USA intervened in Somalia. It invaded Somalia because that was likely to be the least complicated adventure. Here was a country with minimal military capacity and with no infrastructure to speak of, waiting for a Western saviour. The carefully crafted public relations exercise about ferocious warlords threatening the lives of millions made this intervention a realistic option. America invaded not because of famine or any other reason to do with Somalia itself, but in order to give a demonstration of American 'leadership'. The primary role of this invasion is to provide a precedent for the future. The fate of the Somalis today is of no concern to Washington.

Of course, even the most carefully calculated move does not always achieve its objectives. Until a stable new balance of power among the Western nations is established, every major foreign policy initiative will invite a counter-response. If it is all right for the Americans to intervene in Somalia today, what is to stop the French from invading Algeria tomorrow. There is already considerable tension among Nato countries around the Balkan crisis. The risk of conflict between Greece and Turkey cannot be discounted. Where will the West's humanitarian military forces strike next?

Facade of unity

The current emphasis upon high-profile military intervention is part of reorganising the world order. The decline of American dominance and the breakdown of the postwar settlement has unleashed forces which will eventually lead to the redivision of the world among the major players. This process is still at an early stage. National differences between America, Germany or Japan are seldom allowed to gain momentum. A variety of international organisations acts to curb the tendency towards conflict. However, this facade of unity is wearing thin. The rows over world trade indicate the shape of things to come.

While direct conflicts between the Western powers remain muted, there is nothing to inhibit Western rivalries from being played out in the third world and even Eastern Europe. Behind the mask of humanitarian intervention, the deadly game of great power conflict gathers pace.

There are many vivid symbols of the new imperialism. The devastation of the Iraqi conscripts on the Basra road by Allied saturation bombing is one striking reminder of the barbarism of the civilised West. The landing of American Special Force personnel on the beaches of Mogadishu, only to be welcomed by hundreds of journalists, illustrated the unprecedented capacity for hypocrisy within Western diplomacy today.

But for me the most haunting image of all was the sight of an American television reporter consuming a diet drink in front of starving Somalis at a feeding centre. For a brief moment, everyone who cared to look could see the grotesque visage that is usually masked by the rhetoric of humanitarian gestures. ●

Mick Kennedy asks if 1993 will be the year Britain finally imposes a solution on its longest-running colonial conflict

Republicans under pressure

Just before Christmas Northern Ireland minister Patrick Mayhew offered to withdraw British troops to barracks and to negotiate over a united Ireland with Sinn Fein if only the IRA repudiated the armed struggle (*Daily Telegraph*, 17 December). Mayhew's speech provoked predictable outrage in predictable quarters. Democratic Unionist leader Ian Paisley denounced it as 'wicked and shameless' and the *Sunday Telegraph* considered it 'appallingly misjudged' (20 December).

Shrewder politicians and commentators recognised Mayhew's statement as the latest coded message attempting to draw the leadership of the Irish republican movement into talks on Britain's terms. Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams briskly repudiated Mayhew's proposal as 'the Pax Britannica formula which has created the political conflict in Ireland for generations' (*An Phoblacht/Republican News*, 17 December). However, Adams promised to study the speech in detail before giving a fuller response.

Explicit appeal

Mayhew's appeal was targeted explicitly at 'leading Sinn Fein members who voice their wish for a peaceful solution and their desire to follow a constitutional path'. This influential trend within Sinn Fein was reflected in the February 1992 policy document, *Towards a Lasting Peace*, and in a series of talks last year with Protestant clergymen and with the Catholic bishop of Derry.

Adams' detailed response to Mayhew, published in *AP/RN* on 31 December, was more significant for what it omitted than for what it included. Mayhew's central condition for admitting Sinn Fein to talks—the IRA's abandonment of violence—is simply ignored. While reassuring republican activists of the leadership's commitment to ending partition and pursuing national self-determination, Adams' repeated emphasis is on Sinn Fein's 'democratic mandate' to negotiate and its readiness to engage in 'comprehensive' talks without preconditions. Acknowledging Britain's reluctance to involve Sinn Fein in such a 'peace process', Adams looks to Dublin, to the EC, the UN and the USA (now with a president who made some opportunist noises to secure the Irish vote).

Adams' evident desperation to be involved in talks with Britain reflects the intensifying pressures on the republican movement and the narrowing of its options. After 24 years of heroic resistance to the ruthless coercion of the British military occupation, several factors are now converging to give Britain a decisive advantage.

The international balance of forces in the post-Cold War world has swung gravely to the disadvantage of national liberation movements. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, radical nationalist movements and regimes have everywhere been in retreat; some have collapsed, others have been forced to settle largely on the oppressors' terms. The other side of this coin is the new freedom enjoyed by the major Western powers to intervene in third world countries, to dictate political terms and, if defied, to threaten—and indeed to deploy—military force.

Cutting edge

The very institutions to which Sinn Fein looks for support—the EC, the UN—are at the cutting edge of the new imperialism. A pre-Christmas letter from congressman Joseph Kennedy (son of Robert and regarded as a sympathetic Irish-American politician) to Adams indicates the likely direction of US policy under Bill Clinton (*Daily Telegraph*, 17 December). He bitterly condemned the IRA bombing campaign and urged Adams to call it off. As the *Telegraph's* Irish correspondent noted, this letter was 'part of a concerted drive to force the IRA into ending its campaign of violence permanently'.

The changing international climate has reduced pressure on Britain over a war that once caused it some embarrassment. Though last year's inter-party talks in Northern Ireland collapsed in November, they helped to strengthen Britain's authority in diplomatic circles. Through these talks the British government brought closer the Unionists and the nationalist SDLP in the North, the Northern parties—including the Unionists—and the Dublin government, and the governments in London and Dublin. These manoeuvres helped to isolate and marginalise Sinn Fein, and to push republicans towards accepting the terms agreed by all the mainstream parties.

Britain has also enjoyed more freedom to enforce its rule in Ireland through military might and sectarian terror. While Mayhew talks of withdrawing troops to barracks, they retain a high profile in nationalist areas, and their barracks and forts have been extended and reinforced into a sophisticated network of surveillance and repression.

Last year was the first in the Irish War in which Loyalist sectarian assassinations topped the list of fatalities. The fact that nine Sinn Fein members have also fallen victim to these murderous gangs reflects the extent of British military intelligence collaboration with the Loyalist paramilitaries. It is only when they have British assistance that the Loyalists are able to go beyond random attacks on Catholics. Another measure of the strength of Britain's position is that the exposure of such links caused the government little embarrassment at home or abroad.

Beleaguered nationalists

There can be little doubt that the cumulative effect of more than a decade of British and Loyalist barbarism has been demoralising for the beleaguered nationalist communities of Northern Ireland.

The recent elections in the South were also a blow to the republican movement. Not only did Sinn Fein candidates fare uniformly badly, but the final emergence of a Fianna Fail/Labour Party coalition government in Dublin, with Labour leader Dick Spring in charge of Northern affairs, is a major boost to Britain. It means that Dublin's constitutional claims to jurisdiction over the North, long-resented by Unionists and championed by nationalists, will now be up for negotiation.

In the event, despite Mayhew's conciliatory offer and Adams' cautious response, the Christmas ceasefire proved short-lived. Within days there were more bombs going off in litter bins in London and more sectarian assassinations in Northern Ireland. Yet the initiative remains in British hands and the republican movement remains on the defensive, hoping to overcome its military and political impasse through talks. The problem is that any solution negotiated under the existing balance of forces could only reinforce British domination over the whole of Ireland. ●

PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK

Whose side is

'"Death camps." Cattle trucks. Mass graves. It's enough to make you write a letter of complaint.' That was the headline on Amnesty International's full-page advert about Bosnia, published in the quality newspapers at the end of last year. Well, it was enough to make Joan Phillips write a letter of complaint—to Amnesty

Dear Amnesty International,

I'd like to complain about the way your advert draws a parallel between the Nazi Holocaust and the civil war in Bosnia today. Given the care with which you have selected your words, images and stories, there can be no doubt that the construction of such a parallel was deliberate.

'"Death camps." Cattle trucks. Mass graves.' These words immediately evoke memories of the Second World War, when the Nazis shunted the Jews to concentration camps in cattle trucks and disposed of their victims in mass graves. The implication is that similar crimes are being committed in Bosnia today.

Why the quotation marks around the words 'Death camps'? If you believe there are death camps in Bosnia, why the squeamishness about saying it straight? If you do not believe there are death camps in Bosnia, why use these words at all?

Loose talk

Has Amnesty any evidence to support the view that there are death camps in Bosnia? Despite all the loose talk in the media about the Serbs running Nazi-style death camps, no evidence has so far been produced to substantiate such claims. I notice that you do not use the words 'death camps' in your October 1992 report on Bosnia, in which you refer only to detention centres (*Bosnia-Herzegovina: gross abuses of basic human rights*).

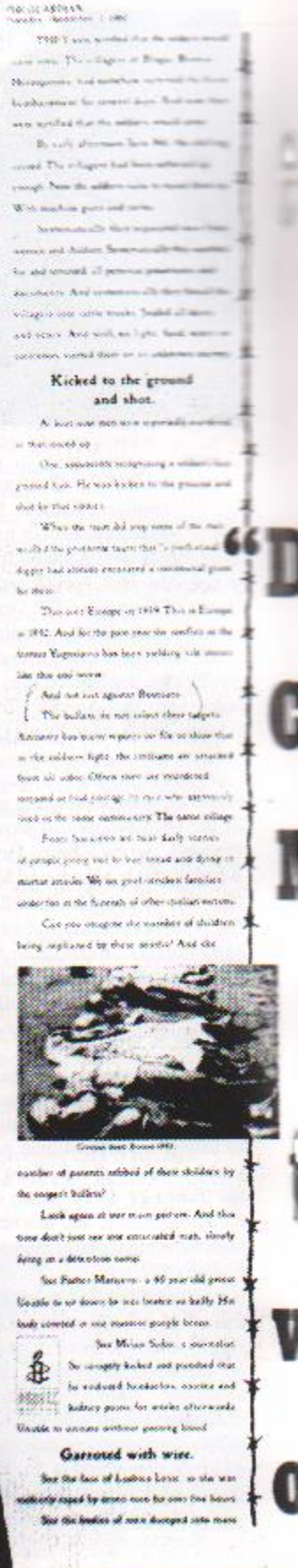
In the text of your advert you refer readers to the main picture, showing an 'emaciated man, slowly dying in a detention camp'. The man was emaciated, but he was not dying. Happily, he is alive and well and living outside the war zones. After his release from detention he appeared in *Hello!* magazine in the autumn of last year. It is not necessary to be a fan of detention camps to question the use to which this picture has been put.

The story with which you begin your advert supports the message contained in the headline. It is the story of the Muslim villagers of Blagaj near Bosanski Novi. It tells how the villagers were rounded up by soldiers one afternoon in June 1992 and sent on a journey which invites comparisons with that experienced by Jews in the 1940s:

> 'Systematically they separated men from women and children. Systematically they searched for, and removed, all personal possessions and documents. And systematically they forced the villagers into cattle trucks. Sealed all doors and vents. And with no light, food, water or sanitation, started them on an unknown journey. When the train did stop some of the men recalled the gruesome taunt that "a mechanical digger had already excavated a communal grave" for them.'

Just in case we hadn't yet got the message, we are reminded that 'This isn't Europe in 1939. This is Europe in 1992'.

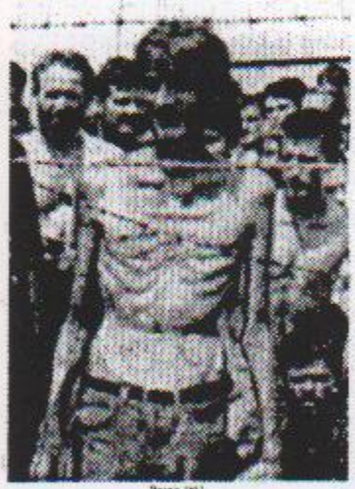
It is instructive to compare this shortened version of the Blagaj story with the longer one that appears in your October 1992 report. And it should be borne in mind that very few people are likely to read the


Kicked to the ground and shot.

Garroted with wire.

open letter

Amnesty on?



Death camps."

Cattle trucks.

Mass graves.

It's enough

to make you

write a letter

of complaint.

Make your voice heard.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International advertisement, *Guardian*, 1 December 1992

detailed Amnesty reports, while you claim that three million will have seen the full-page adverts in the press.

In the report the word 'systematically' was not used once. Yet in the advert it is used three times in the space of three sentences, creating the impression that the Serbian soldiers behaved like the SS. In the report we learn that the 'cattle trucks' mentioned in the advert could have been freight wagons. Yet the words cattle trucks are preferred, presumably because they have connotations which the advert is keen to bring to our attention.

Mass grave

In the advert we are left to ponder the fate of the villagers, who are told that a mass grave is waiting for them. Yet in the report we are told that when the train stopped the detainees were allowed to leave the wagons and were given water; that women, children and men over 60 were released; and that men under 60 were taken to a camp and detained for anything from a few to over 48 days before being released. The villagers of Blagaj had to endure privation and terror, but, contrary to the impression created by your advert, they did not end up in a mass grave.

It is not especially what is said here that is objectionable, but rather what is not said. Amnesty's sin is one of omission. As it stands, the reader could draw a very different conclusion from this story than the true one. Amnesty may not have told lies, but it has not told the whole truth.

No names

Which brings me to my second complaint about your advert. I would like to complain about the insidious way in which the advert endorses the anti-Serbian bias that has become the hallmark of Western media coverage, especially in liberal papers such as the *Guardian*.

How can it possibly do this, you might reply, when not once does it mention the Serbs? But who needs to mention the Serbs by name when they have already been cast as villains by the press and TV? Your advert appeared in the context of a media campaign which has already found the Serbs guilty of just about every crime committed in Bosnia, and a lot of crimes that have not been ▶

committed in Bosnia or anywhere else in Europe since the 1940s. In this context it is hardly surprising that when people hear the words death camp, cattle truck, and mass grave, they immediately assume that the Serbs are responsible.

The story of the bread queue massacre was one of the biggest propaganda lies to come out of Bosnia

You try to avoid the charge of bias by being careful not to mention any ethnic group by name in your advert. But I would like to complain about your use of the word 'Bosnians'. After telling the story of the Blagaj villagers, the advert says that there are plenty of vile stories like this and worse—'And not just against Bosnians'.

Who are the 'Bosnians' that Amnesty is referring to? Do you mean Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats or Bosnian Muslims—or do you mean all of these groups? After all, before the war the population of Bosnia was made up of 31 per cent Serbs, 44 per cent Muslims and 17 per cent Croats.

Presumably, 'Bosnians' is supposed to mean 'Muslims' in this context. Although the sentence suggests that Muslims are not the only victims of the war, which is true, it also suggests that only Muslims live in Bosnia, which is false. Bosnian has become synonymous with Muslim to the majority of British people. When you say that terrible crimes are being committed, 'and not just against Bosnians', it implies that the Serbs are not Bosnians, and confirms people's prejudice that they are foreign aggressors who have invaded Bosnia from without.

Who did what

The underlying anti-Serb message of the advert is reinforced by the examples of atrocities that you choose to use. The advert refers casually to 'stories of people going out to buy bread and dying in mortar attacks' in Sarajevo. Again, the advert carefully avoids being too specific about who did what to whom.

Yet the one incident of this sort which is likely to have stuck in people's minds is the bread queue massacre in Sarajevo on 27 May 1992, in which 16 people were killed and scores maimed. At the time, the attack was blamed on the Serbs, who were accused of firing a mortar from their positions on the hills above the city. The scenes of bloody mutilation in Sarajevo encouraged the EC to impose tough trade and oil sanctions against Serbia the same day.

The story of the bread queue massacre was one of the biggest propaganda lies to come out of Bosnia. Subsequently, it emerged that the carnage was not caused by a mortar bomb, and nor was the attack carried out by the Serbs. United Nations officials revealed that an explosive device had been planted at the scene, and voiced their suspicions that the atrocity had been perpetrated by Muslims in order to shock the 'international community' into action. Yet the mud has stuck to the Serbs ever since, because organisations like Amnesty have not bothered to question the media version of what happened.

Similarly, the advert says that in Sarajevo 'we see grief-stricken families under fire at the funerals of other civilian victims'. The incident that will probably have stuck in people's minds is the funeral of two small children killed by snipers, at which the grandmother of one of the dead girls was badly wounded when the mourners came under attack in the Lion cemetery.

Damage done

Again, the Serbs were blamed both for the sniper attack and the attack on the funeral. Nobody bothered to point out that one of the dead children, Vedrana Glavas, was Serbian. After the event UN officials expressed their opinion that the attack on the funeral had been carried out by Muslim forces. But by then the damage had already been done. By making casual reference to this event, Amnesty's ostensibly neutral advert ends up endorsing established prejudice against the Serbs.

You may protest that you have been careful to relate stories of atrocities committed against all sides—Serbs and Croats and Muslims. We are told about Father Matijevic, unable to sit down because he was so badly beaten; Milan Sobic, assaulted so savagely that he did not recover for weeks; Ljubica Lesic, violently raped by seven men; and Smilja Jusic, who saw her son garrotted with wire.

But who is to know that Matijevic is a Croat, that Sobic and Lesic are Serbs and that Jusic is a Muslim? Your readers are given names but no more. How are they to know the ethnic origin of these victims? In fact, given what they have been reading in the newspapers about Serbian 'rape camps', they are likely to have concluded that Lesic was a Muslim, and no doubt that all the others were victims of Serbian atrocities too.

Amnesty has always maintained that it never takes sides in wars such as that in the former Yugoslavia. It is true that Amnesty has not thrown in its lot with the Muslims, Croats or Serbs. But it has, in effect if not intent, taken sides. It has lent its authority to the view that the Serbs are the bad guys, and so strengthened the consensus in the West that action must be taken against Serbia. Many thousands of people will have seen your advert and, without seeing the name Serb mentioned once, will have concluded that the Serbs need to be taught a lesson.

Finally, I'd like to ask what is the point of this advert? You say it is to encourage readers to send a letter of complaint to the leaders of the warring factions and 'the other governments present' at the International Peace Conference of the Former Yugoslavia in Geneva. The advert suggests that these letters 'will goad them into action'. But sending letters, even in their thousands, has never stopped a civil war.

In fact the only place the advert could make an impact is in the West, not in Bosnia. It will have endorsed the view that 'the other governments present'—the Western powers—and various Western agencies have a key role to play as protectors of human rights amid the savagery in the former Yugoslavia.

The advert does not spell out what sort of action Amnesty has in mind. No doubt you will say that all Amnesty wants is action to end human rights abuses in Bosnia. But why do you think that the Western governments can help to achieve this aim?

The fact is that all intervention by the Western powers has had the effect of encouraging human rights abuses in the former Yugoslavia, not stopping them.

More of this

At every stage, Western interference has escalated the conflict and made things worse. It has turned a local conflict into a major international crisis. European support for Croatian nationalism triggered civil war, and set in motion a chain reaction that made conflict inevitable throughout the length and breadth of Yugoslavia. The anti-Serbian crusade conducted by Germany and America has further raised the stakes. The West's endorsement of the break-up of Yugoslavia has created minorities everywhere, and set ethnic groups at each other's throats as they vie for Western support. The result of Western diplomacy so far is a heavy toll of human misery, and the likelihood of more to come as the conflict spreads across the Balkans. Are you really saying that we need more of it? ●

PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

'Beyond peace-keeping'

The United Nations seems to be intervening everywhere these days. Andy Clarkson explains why—and why the UN cannot create a peaceful New World Order

'The purpose of peace enforcement units would be to enable the United Nations to deploy troops quickly to enforce a ceasefire by taking coercive action against either party, or both, if they violate it....the concept goes beyond peace-keeping to the extent that the operation would be deployed without the express consent of the two parties.' (UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1992/93, pp93-94)

Today many are looking to the United Nations to play a leading role in the creation of a new, more stable, world order. These increased expectations have generated an air of assertiveness around the formerly moribund New York-based body. Boutros-Ghali's posturing about the UN going 'beyond peace-keeping', setting up permanent 'ceasefire enforcement' units and using 'coercion' matches the high profile that his organisation has now adopted.

In reality, however, the UN's more interventionist role is not about constructing a more peaceful and stable post-Cold War world. It is a consequence of the breakdown of the old global order, and a sign of the new age of international conflicts. The UN has been projected into the limelight as a useful front through which the Western powers can demonstrate their authority. And it is in danger of cracking up under the strain.

The United Nations is an institution of the Cold War years. The USA emerged in 1945 as the dominant nation on Earth, but the discrediting of imperialism through the Second World War imposed constraints on the exercise of American power around the world. Leading US statesman Isaiah Bowman was already arguing in May 1942 that the USA needed to rule the postwar world but also to 'avoid the conventional forms of imperialism'. The new United Nations Organisation established at the San Francisco conference in April 1945 was intended to make the exercise of American power appear like international cooperation.

Stitch-ups

Washington had to arrange various stitch-ups to ensure that it maintained ultimate control over its new creation. For example, Washington ordered its Latin American client states formally to declare war against the Axis powers in the last days of the Second World War, so that they could all qualify as UN members. Similarly, even when the Maoists had taken power in China in 1949, the Americans insisted ▶

that Chiang Kai-Shek's deposed Nationalists should be treated as a world power by the UN. Thanks to the USA, from 1949 until 1972 one of the five permanent members of the UN security council was a small island on the edge of the Pacific officially described as 'China', but now better known as Taiwan.

Although the United Nations was an American invention, Washington recognised that the UN had to look like a relatively even-handed and genuinely global institution during the Cold War stand-off with the Soviet Union. In this it proved very successful. Even the most radical third world regimes wanted to sign up as members of the US-run organisation. In addition, the UN sponsored many worthy bodies such as the educational Unesco and the World Health Organisation. When it mattered, however, America either got its way in the UN or rode roughshod over UN conflict procedures to attack third world states. From the Korean War in 1950-53 through to the invasion of Grenada in 1983, Washington manipulated UN regulations or brushed them aside to pursue its own interests.

'The UN is coming more and more to look not like an autonomous actor in international relations, but like a rubber stamp for decisions taken by the White House, in consultation with certain other Western capitals.'

African expert in international law, *Newsweek*, 18 January 1993

Great expectations

With the ending of the Cold War, there was a general outburst of optimism that the United Nations could begin to live up to the ideals upon which it had ostensibly been founded. The end of the Cold War has certainly changed things, but in a way that has nothing to do with idealism. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of third world radicalism has removed the major constraint on the Western powers using the UN as they see fit. While secretary-general Boutros-Ghali has stepped up the UN's universalist rhetoric, in practice the UN's universal pretensions have been shelved. It has become a vehicle to promote more overt Western intervention in the third world and the East.

The UN has carried out as many political/military interventions in the past four years as it did in the previous 40, and it has violated its most sacred principles to do so. For example, the UN's founding charter, adopted in 1945, explicitly bans it from interfering in the internal affairs of member states:

'Article 2 (7). Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorise the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially the domestic jurisdiction of any state.'

Who cares about such formalities nowadays, as the UN intervenes in people's internal affairs from Serbia to Somalia? The first big post-Cold War breach of the UN charter came in 1991, when the USA and Britain occupied northern Iraq under the pretext of creating 'safe havens' for Kurds. Not one UN member objected that this intervention violated Iraq's national rights.

The way in which the Western powers are using the United Nations more blatantly than ever before to pursue their geopolitical interests was made clear in January 1992, when John Major called the first ever UN security council summit. It was a conference of the nuclear powers club, convened to discuss the problem of post-Cold War nuclear proliferation. It ended by issuing a declaration which amounted to a Western threat to the third world—a pledge by the security council to use 'appropriate measures' against any state suspected of violating the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Anybody in the third world with doubts as to what 'appropriate measures' might mean only had to look at the way in which the USA and Britain had destroyed Iraq, partly on the pretext of preventing proliferation, under the flag of the UN.

A knife in Swapo

An early post-Cold War example of the United Nations acting as a proxy for imperialism came when it helped South Africa to deal with the Namibian liberation movement, Swapo. At every stage of the 'peace process' which it presided over in Namibia, the UN imposed demands and restrictions on Swapo which gave the advantage to the apartheid regime. When the South African administration in Namibia integrated its (supposedly disbanded) Koevoet death squad into the local police force, the UN shrugged off Swapo protests. When Swapo members returned home to Namibia on 1 April 1989, believing themselves to be under UN protection, thousands were gunned down by Koevoet forces. The UN then endorsed the South African story that Swapo had provoked the violence by breaking a ceasefire agreement. The United Nations held the Namibian victims of South African imperialism responsible for their own fate.

A more recent intervention has been in Cambodia, which the UN has virtually colonised. Japan has sent nearly 2000 troops there—the first time that the Japanese military has officially been abroad since 1945—as part of the 20 000-strong UN contingent. The special UN representative in Cambodia is Japanese diplomat Yasushi Akashi. Until elections are held, his UN team is to run five key areas of Cambodia's administration: foreign affairs, national defence, internal security, information and finance. In other words, everything that matters.

According to the *Far East Economic Review*, 'these unprecedented powers for a UN operation, essentially allowing the world body to assume control of all important state functions, are designed to prevent partisan manipulation of the 1993 elections'. By posing as democratic UN peacekeepers, the Japanese are able to reassert their authority directly in South-East Asia for the first time since the end of the Second World War.

Pulled apart

The UN's adoption of a more high-profile role has, however, been far from unproblematic. Interventions motivated and shaped by the global interests of the Western powers have proved unable to meet people's increased expectations of the UN as a humanitarian peacemaker. Instead, the UN has become a focus for the breakdown of the old global balance of power. The more that the United Nations acts as a Western agent around the world, the more it risks being pulled apart by growing rivalries and disagreements among the Western powers themselves.

The disputes over the state of the UN's finances are symbolic of the way the organisation is being torn between the powerful Western competitors. It is cash-strapped because many of its leading members are not paying their dues. By the end of July 1992, UN members collectively owed $1 billion (with the USA owing half of that).

The unwillingness of leading UN members to pay up reflects their disagreements over what shape such an international body should take in the future. Germany and Japan are deeply irritated at still being considered 'enemy nations' in the UN charter, and being excluded from the top table of the permanent security council. For its part the USA, annoyed at the tendency for other powers to question its leadership role, is increasingly

PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

acting in a unilateral fashion over issues such as Somalia or the Iraqi 'no-fly' zone, regardless of UN procedures.

The end of the Cold War has brought the tensions among the Western powers to the surface in the United Nations. When Mikhail Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union was dissolved on Christmas Day 1991, it left the UN security council in some disarray. In order to prevent either Germany or Japan from taking the Soviet Union's place, the American, British and French members of the security council hastily ensured that the seat went to Boris Yeltsin's new Russian Federation in an informal arrangement made with no consultation among ordinary UN member states.

Major then called the special UN summit in January 1992 to ensure that the permanent membership of the UN security council survived in its present form. According to the *Independent's* diplomatic editor Annika Savill, 'the object of the summit was all along to ensure quickly the transition from a Soviet to a Russian seat on the security council—that is, to ensure that the body remained one of five permanent members with the right of veto, with Britain as one of them'. Britain views its UN permanent seat as the sole remaining proof of its Great Power status.

As the UN has assumed a higher profile in international affairs, so Germany and Japan have become more anxious to have a leading say in its affairs, especially since they are expected to pay a large slice of the UN's bills. On the other hand, the existing five permanent members of the UN's security council—the USA, Britain, France, Russia and China—want to preserve the international status quo.

This turmoil in the higher echelons of the UN is exacerbating the trend towards more militarised international relations. To block the German and Japanese campaigns for a permanent seat, the five have criticised Bonn and Tokyo's failure to commit troops to UN police actions. In September 1992, both the Germans and Japanese had their applications for permanent seats on the UN security council rejected. Japan then sent 1800 troops to Cambodia to aid its campaign. In December, chancellor Helmut Kohl justified the despatch of German troops to Somalia on the grounds that 'the issue is whether Germany is able to fulfil its duties in the international community, in the UN, in accordance with its size and importance'.

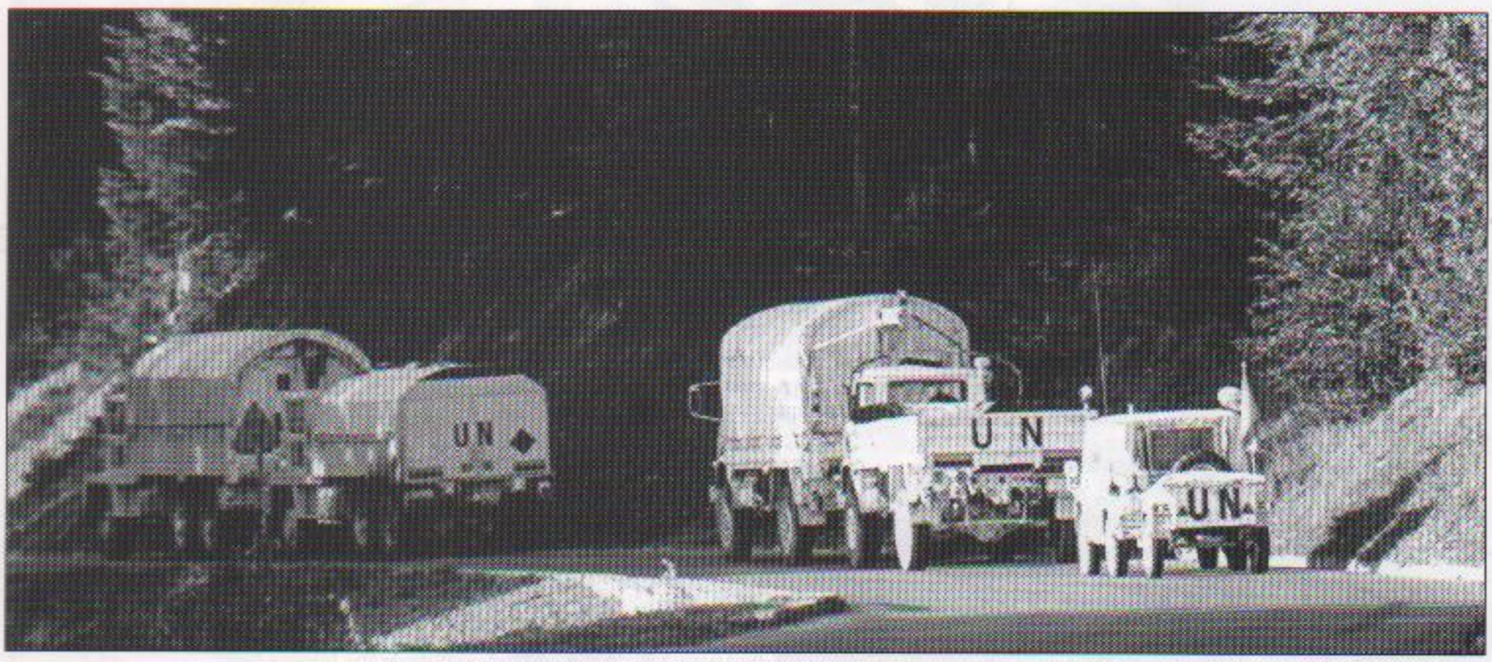
The Western powers' more open manipulation of the United Nations has produced fresh tensions and public rows with UN chief Boutros-Ghali. When the UN security council chose him to head the organisation in November 1991 it was because he had done everything possible to ingratiate himself. A former deputy premier of Egypt, educated at the Sorbonne in Paris and married to the Jewish daughter of a wealthy Alexandria capitalist, Boutros-Ghali had played a part in ensuring the success of the US-sponsored Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1978. He had all the necessary credentials required to be the West's poodle.

'Eurocentric' UN

Once in office, however, Boutros-Ghali was confronted by the increasing tension between the number of world problems he was expected to solve and the West's ideas on what role the UN should play. Last July Boutros-Ghali lambasted his 'Eurocentric' paymasters on the security council for concentrating on a 'war of the rich' in Yugoslavia and ignoring the plight of African countries like Somalia. When he was chastised in the British press, Boutros-Ghali accused Britain's UN delegates of treating him like 'a wog' and 'poisoning' opinion against him. The result was another decline in the UN's prestige.

The relationship between the UN secretary-general and Washington is particularly fraught. The USA has found the UN's 'humanitarian' credentials a useful cover for foreign interventions which are really designed to demonstrate American world leadership. But far from bringing stability, Washington is increasingly behaving like a Rambo. Its unilateral conduct and reckless actions are undermining Boutros-Ghali's promotion of the UN as the instrument that can regulate a New World Order. The UN secretary-general is now reduced to scurrying from one troublespot to another, from Sarajevo to Mogadishu to Addis Ababa, only to be denounced and demonstrated against by the people there, since every intervention he has organised has failed to satisfy their expectations.

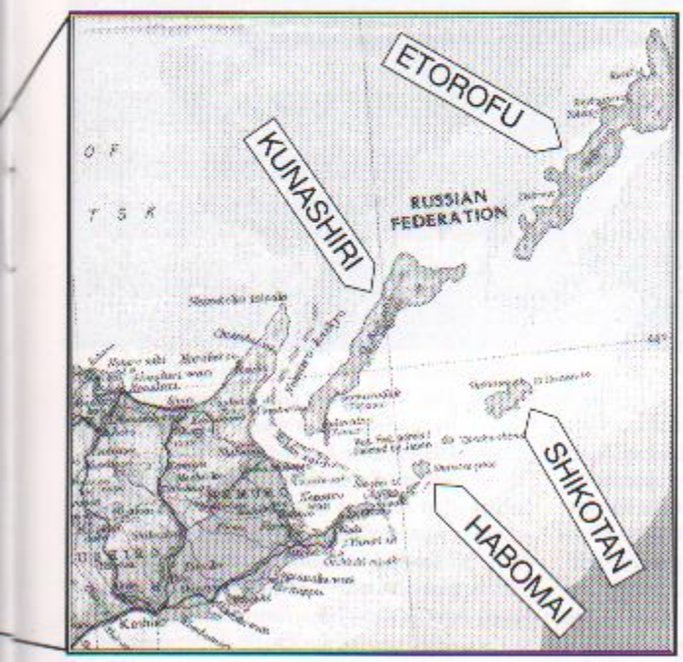
The United Nations cannot be the builder of a New World Order because it is a creature of the old one. It was a product of American power at a time when the USA bestrode the Earth unchallenged, and is now beset by worsening tensions as US world leadership is called into question. It is not certain how long the UN will last in its current form. But it is certain enough that, in the meantime, the peoples of places like Iraq, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia can expect to receive more of the UN's military attentions as the Western powers go 'beyond peace-keeping'. ●



Peace on the

The row between Japan and Russia over ownership of the tiny Kuril Islands obscures the first direct conflict between great powers in the post-Cold War world, argues Daniel Nassim

rocks



The squabble between Japan and Russia over the fate of four tiny islands appears bizarre. Both countries would seem to have every interest in defrosting their relationship in the aftermath of the Cold War. Yet the fate of the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and Habomai seems to keep relations deep frozen.

Despite high-level negotiations and several attempts to make peace, neither side seems willing to accept a compromise. Japan claims that its 'Northern Territories', seized by the Soviet Union in the closing days of the Second World War, should all be returned. Russia is reluctant to hand back the islands.

The dispute seems incredibly petty when you look at the islands themselves. The Russians do earn some foreign exchange from salmon fishing in the surrounding seas. And the Japanese might like to get hold of the kelp, a seaweed popular in the Japanese diet, that grows in abundance around the islands. But fish and seaweed hardly make for an intractable international dispute.

The conflict only makes sense in the context of the more fluid international relations that have emerged with the end of the Cold War. The Kuril Islands serve as a focus for broader rivalries that are emerging between Japan, Russia and the USA. It is the first example of a type of conflict we are likely to see far more of in the future.

At first sight the dispute between Tokyo and Moscow appears to be part of a long-running feud. Japan and the Soviet Union never signed a peace treaty in 1945. Nearly 50 years after the fighting stopped, the Second World War has still not officially ended for Japan and Russia.

But it would be a mistake to see the wrangling over the Kuril Islands as the legacy of an age-old dispute. During the Cold War the islands were a focal point for Japanese anti–communism. Even Japanese school children were taught how the communists stole them. Today, however, with the demise of the Soviet Union, it is impossible for such anti-communism to retain credibility.

Japan's shackles

The contemporary dispute over the islands is different. It only makes sense in relation to Japan's drive to normalise its relationship with the rest of the world. For Japan this means throwing off some of the shackles it accepted during the Cold War.

After 1945 Japan's rulers accepted a junior position in the US-run world order. By playing the role of world policeman the USA provided a relatively stable framework in which Japan could prosper as an economic power. In return, Japan accepted limits on its sovereignty. It would follow American diplomacy, relinquish all rights to nuclear weapons and even— at least according to its constitution—not maintain any armed forces.

For decades the arrangement suited both sides. The Japanese economy grew so fast that it moved from being one of the smaller capitalist powers to the second largest. The USA in turn knew it could rely on Japan as an ally rather than a rival.

Souring relations

But today the basis for the stable relationship between Japan and the USA has been undermined. Japan is now a first-rank power while the USA no longer commands unquestioned world leadership. At the same time, the demise of the Soviet Union has deprived the two powers of the ideological basis for their Cold War alliance.

Japan is struggling to forge a new identity in the new international environment. Many of the elements of this emergent identity are unclear. But it is certain that Japan wants to be recognised as a respectable member of the 'international community'.

The problem for Japan is that it is still tainted by its defeat in the Second World War. The charter of the United Nations, for example, still defines Japan, along with Germany and Italy, as 'enemy nations'. Despite Japan's economic might, it does not have a permanent seat on the UN security council. Yet countries with far smaller economies—such as Britain, France and Russia—have seats simply by virtue of having been on the winning side in the war.

Rewriting history

Until now Japan has, at least implicitly, accepted its responsibility for the war. The pacifist constitution is a symbol of this acceptance. And Japan has frequently apologised to its Asian neighbours for the suffering it caused.

But to forge a new, more assertive national identity the Japanese authorities will have to rewrite the history of the Second World War. Japan can no longer accept that it was primarily responsible for the conflict. Japan wants the rest of the world to accept that it, too, was ultimately a victim of the war.

The rewriting of history is no dry academic process. It is at the centre of Japan's attempt to define its role in the world. And this is where the Kuril Islands dispute fits in, as part of Japan's attempt to portray itself as a victim of the Second World War. For Japan the islands have come to symbolise its unfair treatment at the hands of not only Russia, but also the USA.

Honour bound

This is what Masataka Kosaka, an influential political scientist, is getting at when he says that 'we should see the dispute as involving not real estate but Japan's honour' ('The Post-Cold War Diplomatic Agenda', *Japan Echo*, Spring 1992). When Kosaka talks about honour he is not, as many Western pundits would have it, talking about some ancient Samurai code. He is saying that the disagreement over the islands symbolises Japan's abnormal international status, its enforced inferiority in the world.

Japanese commentators also frequently make the point that the loss of the Kuril Islands in 1945 was not just the fault of the Soviet Union. They point out that at the Yalta conference, at the end of the war, the other Allied powers—including the United States—colluded with the Soviet invasion.

According to Masamichi Hanabusa, a spokesman for the Japanese foreign ministry: 'The Yalta agreement was reached in secret by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. Japan did not even know of its existence at the time it surrendered in August 1945. How can Japan, which was not a party to ▶

the agreement, possibly be legally or politically bound by it?' (*International Herald Tribune*, 21 August 1992) Or to put it another way, why should Japan be constrained by the post-1945 world order which was imposed on it by the USA?

The silent actor in the Kuril dispute is the USA

Japan's angst about the Kuril Islands is intensified further by the place of the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War in its history. As well as symbolising the defeat of the Second World War, the conflict with Russia over the Kuril Islands also reminds Japan of the war it regards as a great victory. For Japan, the 1905 defeat of Tsarist Russia remains a symbol of national success, just as the Second World War does for Britain. Today Japan's rulers are keen to rewrite 1945 and play-up 1905, to popularise a history which shows Japan with the great power status it deserves. Rewriting the past is a mechanism through which Japan can express its aspirations for the present.

Normalising Japan

The firm stance on the Kuril Islands fits in with the new thrust of Japan's foreign policy. The overriding aim has been to make Japan act as a 'normal' world power, as an important report by a study group from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party noted:

'Japan's approach to being a peaceable state has so far been the passive and negative one of refraining from becoming involved in the security and peace of other countries. Missing from this approach has been an active and positive stance towards living together in peace with other countries in a world where all nations are free from fear and want.' ('Japan's Role in the International Community: Draft Report', translated in *Japan Echo*, Summer 1992)

In other words, Japan, just like any other great power, should be free to do as it wants in the world.

It is in this context that Japan finally made the ground-breaking decision to send troops abroad, on a 'peace-keeping' mission to Cambodia, in September. This move settled a debate, that has raged on and off since the 1950s, about the meaning of Japan's pacifist constitution. The conclusion is, in effect, that it has no meaning. In a complementary move, also in September, the foreign minister, Michio Watanabe, called on the United Nations to remove the clauses from its charter which define Japan as an enemy nation, and demanded a permanent seat on the UN security council.

In a different way, Russia's continuing reluctance to relinquish the Kuril Islands is also a consequence of post-Cold War changes in the world. The Russian government of Boris Yeltsin is deeply fearful of the forces of fragmentation unleashed by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Not long ago Russia was at the centre of what was widely seen as 'the Soviet empire'. Today the other ex-Soviet republics have drifted away. Russia itself is threatened by separatist movements, and all of the former Soviet Union is wracked by ethnic and national conflicts.

Domino effect

If Russia relinquishes control over the Kuril Islands it could further accelerate the forces of disintegration. Other republics will be less willing to accept leadership from a Russian regime which bows to Japan. And regionalist movements could also interpret such a territorial retreat as a sign of Russian weakness. There are already many regional disputes within the Russian Federation and on its borders including Moldova, Crimea, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Tartarstan and Tadzhikistan. As the failures of the market economy in Russia further undermine the authority of his government, taking a firm nationalist line on issues like the Kuril Islands has become more important for Yeltsin.

Russia must be particularly worried about Japanese influence accelerating the break-up of the former Soviet Union. Japan's interest in the mineral resources of Siberia is well known. Resource-poor Japan covets Siberia's oil, natural gas, coal, timber, fisheries and diamonds. By extending its economic tentacles into Siberia, Tokyo would pull the former Soviet Far East further away from Moscow's control.

Japan is also extending its influence in the five former central Asian republics of the old Soviet Union. Japan has sent high-level diplomatic delegations and financial aid to Kazakhstan, Turkmenia, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia and Tadzhikistan. It is leading a drive to admit the republics to the Asian Development Bank, and is even opening embassies in the region.

The Russian government's fear for its territorial integrity is far more important than the influence of a few recalcitrant 'hardliners' in explaining Yeltsin's exceptionally tough stance towards Japan. The abrupt cancellation of his visit to Tokyo on 9 September was a calculated snub to the Japanese. A few days later Japan officially protested to Russia after it granted a Hong Kong company a 50-year lease to part of the island of Shikotan.

Pearl Harbor revisited

The silent actor in the Kuril dispute is the USA. Although America was not directly involved in the row over Yeltsin's cancelled visit, it played an important role behind the scenes. Typically, much of the American press took a hostile view towards Japan. The *Wall Street Journal* reminded its readers that it was from the Kuril Islands that Admiral Yamamoto set sail for Pearl Harbor in 1941 and that Japan is 'the country that half a century ago raped and pillaged its way from China to Indonesia' (15 September 1992). According to the *New York Times*, Yeltsin deserved 'sympathetic understanding for his decision not to visit Japan' (11 September 1992). Both agreed that the fault over the Kuril Islands lay primarily with Japan rather than Russia.

The USA is no impartial observer in the dispute—it has its own clear strategic interests in the region. Washington is fearful that the collapse of the former Soviet Union could further destabilise the world order. It does not want any power—whether Japan in the east or Germany in the west—to dominate the Eurasian land mass.

Checks and balances

It is for this reason that the USA seems to be tilting towards an informal alliance with Russia at present. Such a partnership could be a good way for Washington to stall the development of Japanese influence. As a CIA-backed report stated last year: 'For the United States, France and the United Kingdom a democratic Russia could play an important role as a counterbalance to Germany's and Japan's increasing influence in a system of global stability in East Europe and the Pacific region.' (*Report on Russia*, 29 May 1992)

The dispute over the Kuril Islands demonstrates the reality behind all the rhetoric about a New World Order. There is no new age of peace and prosperity. Instead the world is entering an era of great power rivalries, in which the fate of a few rocks can provoke a major international dispute. ●

Appeasement and white power

The controversy about whether Winston Churchill should have made peace with Hitler reawakens the British establishment's old concerns about race, says Frank Füredi

A new row has broken out about whether Britain's interests would have been best served by seeking peace with Nazi Germany. The latest controversy began with the publication of Dr John Charmley's *Churchill: The End of Glory*, which argues that by not responding to German peace overtures in 1940-41, Churchill won the war but lost the empire. The debate took off in earnest when former Tory minister Alan Clark wrote a supportive review of Charmley's book in the *Times* (2 January 1993), in which he said that Churchill should have saved the empire by making peace with Hitler after defeating the Italians in North Africa in 1941. The argument is testimony to the growing credibility of such revisionist currents in British historiography.

It is not surprising that this retrospective vindication of the policy of appeasing Nazi Germany often focuses on the defence of the British Empire. Appeasement had a key racial dimension. It claimed to represent not only the interests of Britain, but also those of the white race.

'Yellow peril'

Alan Clark's concern with the loss of Malaya and the Far Eastern Empire to Japan is not surprising either. At the time, and in later years, Britain's defeat in Malaya was seen as an irreversible blow to white prestige. Japan's military triumph confirmed the worst fears of the appeasers, the most profound of which was that war among the Western nations would assist the rise of the 'coloured races'. In this vein, the case for the appeasement of Germany was often expressed in the language of race.

During the first four decades of this century sections of the British establishment were self-consciously concerned with maintaining the hegemony of the white race. The rise of Japan, especially after it defeated Russia in 1905, was interpreted as a formidable threat to the future of the white race. Many foresaw the future in terms of a war between white and coloured races. From this perspective Britain's alliance with Japan was an act of racial treachery. In June 1910 one British author, Bertram Lenox Simpson, wrote angrily from China that this alliance destroyed an 'absolute agreement among the white powers' once and for all.

Concern about white disunity in the face of 'the rising tide of colour' was not restricted to the right wing of the political spectrum. On the eve of the First World War, leading Labour Party thinker Beatrice Webb saw the 'impending catastrophe' in racial terms. She feared a racial invasion 'by outcasts from Southern Europe, mongrels from Algeria, and coolies from China'. Such a threat, wrote Webb, 'seems to me a bigger tragedy than any hypothetical defeat by an army of Germans'.

This sentiment survived well into the thirties. A wide cross section of British opinion was prepared to allow Hitler's Germany access to overseas colonies in exchange for a peace treaty. For some, appeasement meant white solidarity. For others, appeasement represented the expedient of defending British interests at the expense of the 'coloured' people of the colonies. It was in this spirit that in January 1938 the foreign policy committee of the British cabinet considered offering Germany territory in Africa.

Colonial appeasement enjoyed support from within the British establishment. As the *Times* noted in August 1935, 'in England there are thoughtful people who think that revision of the distribution of colonies is inevitable sooner or later, and that the sooner the fact is frankly faced the easier and less costly revision will be'. Church and trade union leaders echoed this approach. The rights of the people who lived in the colonies were not considered an issue in these deliberations.

In the end the proposal to appease the Nazis with colonies was not pursued. The leaders of the Conservative and Labour parties realised that Hitler could not be appeased. It was also evident that the credibility of Britain and of the empire could not withstand the sordid spectacle of colonial appeasement.

Today's revisionist accounts of the war are attempting to minimise the moral crisis of British imperialism, by suggesting that a different approach to Germany could have maintained the empire. In fact, and contrary to Alan Clark's claim, the policy of appeasement could not have saved the empire. The series of spectacular Japanese victories in Asia exposed the shallow foundation of European colonialism. Peace with Nazi Germany could not have prevented the anti-colonial upheavals.

It is worth noting that even when the policy of appeasement had been shelved, race remained a key concern of the British establishment. The Second World War consolidated racial fears. Correspondence from throughout the empire emphasised the theme of the decline of white prestige. In turn British ministry of information experts were worried that anti-German propaganda in the colonies might encourage anti-European sentiments in general.

The 'colour question'

A memorandum drawn up for the attention of colonial governments in November 1941 warned that strong anti-German propaganda might have dangerous consequences for British rule. It noted that 'when the excuse for hating the Germans has been removed, the sentiment may be transferred to what is uppermost in the minds of all Africans', namely the 'colour question'. The memorandum warned that 'having been encouraged to hate one branch of the white race, they may extend the feeling to others'.

After the experience of Nazi Germany, the racial aspect of international conflicts could not be discussed openly. The promotion of white solidarity was discredited along with the policy of appeasement. But racial concerns have not disappeared. And the racial silence of the postwar years is now giving way to the rehabilitation of Western imperialism. The tendency to contrast a stable and prosperous colonial Africa with the chaos of that continent today is but one symptom of the new thinking. The revision of history and the renewed promotion of appeasement provides the necessary intellectual support for rehabilitating the racial culture of Empire. ●

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Women's

Sara Hardy disputes the idea that changes like the ordination of female vicars are 'victories' for all women

The sisters seem to have done it for themselves. Popular culture is full of stroppy, assertive women and feisty heroines. These days it takes a woman to tackle Aliens and a woman to snare Batman. Thelma, Louise and Shirley Valentine were cheered by audiences in Huddersfield as well as Hampstead. Even Barry Norman has had to remark that there is hardly a passive woman on screen.

The changes in women's status are said to have gone way beyond the cinema screen. Everybody from the Democratic Party in America to the *Independent* newspaper in Britain dubbed 1992 'The Year of the Woman'. Women are finally supposed to have won equality—and in some ways it seems that a lot really has changed.

A couple of years ago, notorious anti-feminist Neil Lyndon wrote that women no longer had any cause to claim they were oppressed:

'Apart from the monstrously insulting discrimination they suffer in the established churches and the fact that they cannot receive hereditary peerages in their own right, it is hard to think of one example of systemic and institutionalised discrimination against women in Britain today. When I telephoned the Equal Opportunities Commission, an official there agreed that it was hard to think of any glaring examples.' (*Sunday Times Magazine*, 9 December 1990)

Now even the churches, the armed forces, and the crusty old ranks of the peerage are changing.

Last year, the Church of England was thrown into turmoil when women won the right to be ordained. Supporters of women priests, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, argued that if Christ walked the earth today he would include women among his disciples. The old guard was defeated, and women will now be allowed to take holy orders.

Feminist campaigners rejoiced in what was claimed as one of the biggest ever victories for women's rights. Schisms and splits have ensued. Top Tory John Selwyn Gummer has left the General Synod; junior minister Ann Widdecombe has left the church, and the closer relationship between the Church of England and Rome has been torn asunder once more. All of this is supposed to be an indication of how women's issues now matter.

The House of Lords is shuffling towards gender equality too. It has been announced that a bill will shortly be introduced to allow hereditary peerages to pass down through the female line. Outraged members of the establishment such as the Duke of Devonshire have denounced such plans to undermine the male right of succession. The Labour Party, and in particular its women peers, have backed the campaign as another nail in the coffin for male supremacy.

Even the British armed forces are now reconsidering their policy of throwing out pregnant women. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is making a major campaign out of the lack of maternity leave for members of the forces, representing several women plaintiffs in the European courts.

Last redoubts

There seem to be few remaining redoubts of male chauvinism. Some London gentlemen's clubs still hold out against women, but otherwise feminism appears to be the order of the day among everybody who matters in British society. So is Lyndon right, have women made it? Do they still suffer 'systemic and institutionalised discrimination'? Or is women's oppression a thing of the past?

The reality is that, despite the sort of changes described above, the vast majority of women are having a tougher and tougher time of it these days. To restate some bald facts: women still take home 68 per cent of the wages of men—even after nearly 20 years of equal pay legislation.

Women continue to occupy the lowest-paid, lowest-status jobs, with surveys of the NHS workforce indicating that women account for 100 per cent of the lowest-graded clerical assistants, and 96 per cent of the second lowest (despite the fact that the NHS is committed to equal opportunities).

Even if women in the army get the right to maternity leave, you can bet they will find there's a huge gap between their 'rights' and reality. The Policy Studies Institute estimates that 4000 women workers are sacked annually for being pregnant—despite the fact that they are entitled to continued employment by law.

Despite the images of women on the cinema screen or in advertisements, women still take most responsibility for domestic chores. Full-time working women have 10 hours a week less leisure time than men in the same position. And still, overwhelmingly, it's women who take responsibility for childcare, with a tiny percentage of under-fives being cared for by nurseries. The largest provider of childcare for under fives is still the maternal grandmother rather than the 'nanny state'.

Very curious

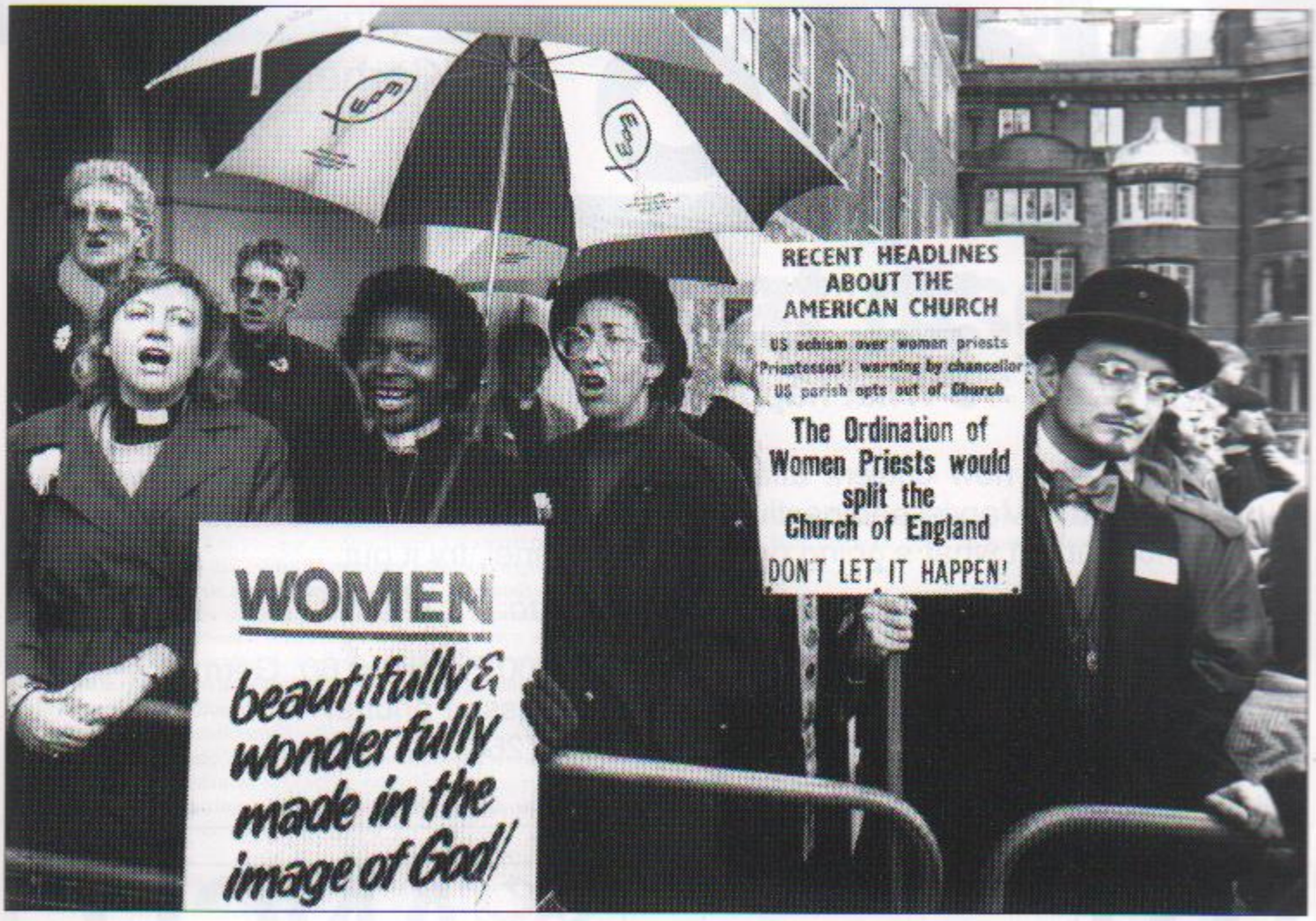
If the EOC has a somewhat rose-tinted view of women's advances, it is not alone. Last November, *Cosmopolitan* magazine's Woman of Achievement Award for Politics and Public Service went to Jane Kershaw, director of the government's Opportunity 2000 programme. Opportunity 2000 was set up to encourage women to break through 'the glass ceiling' preventing them becoming top executives. Ms Kershaw's achievement is to have built the Opportunity 2000 programme up to become 'a major influence in British industry' representing 'some 110 companies, including some of Britain's biggest employers and containing one fifth of Britain's workforce'. Curiously, the NHS—yes, that same NHS where women occupy all the low grades—is a leading member of Opportunity 2000.

So how is that there can be such a wide consensus around the notion that women have made it?

Part of the answer is that the issue of women's equality is no longer considered to be about the systematic denial of equal rights and equal treatment in society. Instead, it is now broadly accepted that, whether you're a woman or a man, if you don't make it, you have only yourself to blame.

For instance, it is often assumed that most employers now grant women equal status because they have an equal opportunities policy. Equal opportunities posits the idea of ridding society of 'unfair' discrimination, by refusing to treat men and women any differently. Once an equal opportunities policy is in place, it is assumed that the old chauvinist attitudes have been tamed and that women will be able to enjoy equal rights.

PHOTO: THE GUARDIAN



rights wronged

The problem is that you cannot abolish discrimination with a paper policy, because men and women are different; society dictates that they play different roles. Women, despite openings in the church, provision for maternity leave in the armed forces, and new-found inheritance rights, are still expected to be mothers and carers first and foremost. And that is the big barrier holding them back.

Despite all of the equal opportunities legislation women are still not able to participate in society on an equal basis to men. An employer may not say to a woman worker in her twenties, 'I am not going to promote you because I think you are likely to get pregnant and take time out to bring up your children'. But that is the assumption which informs his company's treatment of her. And it's not just blind prejudice; it is based on the reality of what most young women will have to do in our society.

Women will only be socially and economically equal when they can rely on adequate childcare, care for the sick and elderly, and a way of living that does not demand that they balance responsibilities at work with heavy responsibilities in the home.

The recent 'victories' will not affect the position of most women in society. Nobody can remember the last effective campaign we had for proper nursery provision, or for equal pay and employment rights. We can remember big debates about women and theology, and women's right to succeed within the aristocracy, and women's images in films. But so what?

These things don't matter one jot to most women, and the fact that many feminist writers have tried to make out that they are important can only reinforce the view that feminism is irrelevant to the lives of most ordinary women. It is easier to change the things that don't matter. It is difficult to win important battles for facilities to free women from the onerous responsibilities of home and housework.

The establishment can afford to 'go feminist' on formal issues, so long as the real social inequalities continue and women continue to carry the burden of caring for the young, the old, the sick and the plain hungry. What's needed is an end to the euphoria about things that don't matter, and some proper campaigning on the issues that could make a difference to the majority of women in society—such as equal pay, socially provided childcare, free abortion on demand and so on.

After the past year's successes for feminism in Britain, a woman may soon have the same right as a man to spout superstitious nonsense from the pulpit on a Sunday, to lord it over the manor on a hereditary basis, and to kill foreigners for Queen and country. I can hardly contain my excitement. ●

TOBY BANKS

A hibernational disgrace

Did you take part in the 'longest-ever' winter shutdown? For the benefit of younger readers, this is a seasonal parlour game which died out in the 1980s. Newspaper editors compete with one another to exaggerate a given number of days. Weekends are added to bank holidays, so the minimum total is nine days. A seasoned pro will turn this into two weeks. A champion will track down unnamed car factories which have shut down for a month and sent notices to their Japanese rivals (two days annual holiday), inviting them to help themselves to another slice of the market.

This ritual is traditionally accompanied by a call for a 'national recovery programme'. This year's solutions have a reassuringly familiar ring. For instance, depending on which paper you read, the appropriate conclusion to the sentence 'Thousands of people are homeless...' is:

a) 'yet we remain a soft touch for illegal immigrants';
b) 'while thousands of building workers are out of work';
c) 'so we are astonished to learn that Britain's largest cardboard box manufacturer faces closure. The cost to the taxpayer of keeping this factory's workforce on the dole for a year would be higher than the company's annual losses. A government order for, say, 10 000 large heavy-duty boxes, would give the firm a 12-month respite in which to find its feet, while providing serviceable short-term public housing at a realistic cost. To say nothing of the knock-on effect on local business confidence.'

All three options are based closely on the policies of national newspapers. Just for fun (no letters, please), can you identify them? Clue: only one is a 'Green Shoot'.

For many people, holidays will be the first thing to go this year. Things are so bad that a community access programme recently tried to talk up car boot sales as a 'great day out for the whole family'. If this is beyond your means, a day in a warm hospital waiting room reading *Chat* magazine is a sensible alternative. Readers' tips include: lining Wellington boots with carpet scraps, filling honey jars with hot water for a 'refreshing healthy drink', and unwinding old pan scourers to give 'long lengths of strong cord'. Any other tips gratefully received.

All this must please the angry middle classes, who were once able to escape domestic oiks by holidaying abroad. By the eighties, however, the spectre of the 'lager lout' loomed large, not just on the Spanish coast, but across the globe. The *Daily Mail* was forced to run a 'Yob-free guide', seeking out ever-more obscure holiday locations. Now the recession has succeeded where international police operations failed, effectively curtailing the marauding hordes, who have been restricted to rampaging around Silverstone waving Nigel Mansell flags.

Travel agents now anticipate a better class of English tourist on the Continent. Europe's cafe owners know better and are bracing themselves for the return of the ugly refrain they had hoped was distant history. 'Here one goes, here one goes, here one goes....'

The case of the man who fed himself to the lions at London Zoo has focused debate on cutbacks in psychiatric services. However, it has overlooked the fact that he had no pipe in his possession. In the past it was common for pipe tobacco to be prescribed to mental patients, and doctors in Wharfdale are on record as saying that if a patient merely forgot to carry his pipe, his mental state would be considered alarming. Now, of course, spending cuts have put an end to that, with the help of the anti-smoking lobby.

Today the anti-smokers can count even policemen among their ranks. While a Thames Valley patrol car recently performed a routine roadside breath test, a second patrol car raced to the scene to arrest the driver for dropping a spent match into the gutter. And rare indeed is the sight of a Scotland Yard detective drawing on the stem of his pipe as he contemplates another grisly Nintendo crime. Could abandonment of this symbol of common sense explain the increasingly bizarre statements emanating from the Met's HQ?

According to a Yard spokesman, the IRA (you know, the Marxist Catholics who plotted with American Nazis to kill George VI and the Queen Mum) were responsible for dozens of deaths and serious injuries over the Christmas holiday. In case you hadn't heard, the police were so busy 'flushing out IRA bombers' that they didn't have time to carry out their usual festive breathalyser campaign. A reign of terror ensued, and the capital became a paradise for drunken drivers, who could hit and run with impunity. Which makes it all the more impressive that the number of accidents fell by 12 per cent compared to last Christmas...no thanks to the terrorists and litter-droppers who are laughing at the law even as I write.

Before the general election, cruel Liberal Democrat canvassers in Cheltenham promised pensioner Hazel Andrews that they would tidy up the dangerous nettles in her front garden. Needless to say, they have done no such thing. Mrs Andrews is 72. She is disabled, diabetic and partially blind and deaf. She says 'I only voted for them because they said they would organise someone to do my garden. Why do they promise you these things when it seems they have no intention of carrying them through?'.

It would be interesting to hear the views of Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown, but he has disappeared. For reasons best known to himself, he decided to take off around the country, changing address every week or so, and taking a series of casual jobs along the way. He claims that this is a political exercise to put him in touch with the lives of ordinary people. He plans to stay with local families, sharing their humble repast at the end of each day and no doubt entertaining them with his mouth organ. I hope that while he is playing Marie Antoinette he sleeps soundly, untroubled by the thought of Mrs Andrews' nettle-scarred legs.

Apache Indian is a reggae star with a difference. Mary McCaughey spoke to the Asian welder who is making sparks fly in the music world

An Apache from Handsworth

When Apache Indian's first single, 'Move over India', went to Number One in both the Asian and the reggae charts in 1990, it shocked the Asian community, the reggae world and Apache himself. Asians threw tomatoes at him—many considered it offensive for an Asian man to speak in patois and dress up like a homeboy. There was vexation in the Afro-Caribbean community that an Indian could make it on the reggae scene. As for the music press, the hacks dismissed him as a one-hit wonder.

Three years on and Apache has signed a contract worth £250 000 with Island Records for his first album, 'No Reservations'—one of the largest sums paid for a debut album by a black performer. Over the past year, he has worked in Bob Marley's studio in Kingston, Jamaica with Sly Dunbar, reggae's top producer. He has collaborated too with such top reggae performers as Frankie Paul, Maxi Priest and Shabba Ranks. When a DJ on Spectrum Radio promised recently to play Apache's new single, 'Arranged Marriage', only if a thousand people rang the show, the switchboard was jammed for the next hour and a half.

Apache has come a long way from the days when he cut his first single in a cousin's bedroom. When I spoke to him, he was ensconced in one of London's plushest hotels near Marble Arch. And the music press were knocking on his door for an interview. I asked Apache how an Indian lad from Birmingham had become interested in reggae.

'I grew up in Handsworth', he said, 'a very multicultural place. While I came from a very traditional Asian family, I had reggae music around me all the time and it appealed to me very much. I was from a new generation of Asian kids who were brought up alongside black kids, but we had no street culture or heroes to relate to—all we had were videos from India. We were discouraged from talking about things like sex or contraception or arranged marriages.

'The new generation of Asian kids wanted to talk about these things and we wanted a street culture of our own. I believe that 'Move over India' started the ball rolling—now more and more Asian kids are getting into DJing, rapping and reggae music. One of my new songs, 'Time has Come', is about talking about these things. It introduces these subjects to young people on the streets in a simple, humorous and not too political manner.'

Apache has taken the credit for creating an Asian 'street culture'. But surely, I asked him, there must have been a streetwise culture around already for 'Move over India' to be so successful?

'Yes, I believe that the street thing was around then, but there was no popular expression of it before 'Move over India'. Asian kids had already brought the street fashion clothes they had seen their black pals wearing at school—but because of all the prejudices our parents' generation had about black people the clothes stayed in their wardrobes. It took 'Move over India' before the kids had the confidence to wear it.

'The new generation of Asian kids are not as isolated as our parents' generation and not as accepting of what they hear in the media about black people. Our parents had a very negative view about black people, because all they knew about them came from the TV or the newspapers—and it was all about crime and violence. Anything wrong a black person did was on the front page, anything right was on the back page.

'But we grew up with black kids, went to school with them, had black friends. The new generation of Asian kids have a new culture that consists of a lot of different things—an Asian thing, a white thing and a black thing. The Asian thing is still very important to them, but I want to put all these things together to take our culture forward.

'What it needed was somebody to start it off. What it needed was some way of Asians getting recognised, Asians making a noise in some other world other than their own. It didn't have to be reggae—I could have mixed Asian culture with pop culture. I could have made a track with Jason Donovan rather than Maxi Priest. But to set the ball rolling we needed to mix our culture with other cultures.'

Apache's success lies in his ability to mix two styles—bhangra and ragga. Bhangra is the music traditionally played at Punjabi harvest festivals. Given a Westernised drum beat, it became a popular sound with Asian teenagers in the eighties. Ragga is an amalgam of hip hop and reggae; Jamaican ragga performers such as Shabba Ranks and Buju Banton have taken the reggae world by storm over the past few years.

'I mixed reggae and Asian music together', Apache said, 'and it filled a gap for people. Now 90 per cent of bhangra tunes have a ragga element and reggae musicians have started to use traditional Asian instruments such as the tabla. The music industry can see that what I'm doing is new and will be big. International stars such as Frankie Paul do not need to work with me, but they see that I can push reggae

to a whole new world—the Asian market—which can only be good for the artists and the industry.

'There are 2.2m Asians in England. If an Asian kid goes into a record shop to buy my record he is likely to buy a Shabba Ranks or a Gregory Isaacs tune also. When I played in Trinidad more than 15 000 turned up to the show, including the largest number of Asians ever seen at a reggae gathering. I do not perform just reggae shows, but white shows and Asian shows.'

Ragga artists such as Shabba Ranks and Buju Banton have been widely criticised for slack (sexist or anti-gay) lyrics. In December, Womad (World Organisation of Music, Arts and Dance) banned Shabba Ranks and Buju Banton from playing at its world music festival in Brighton. On Channel 4's *The Word*, a row broke out when the presenters took umorage at Shabba Ranks's apparent endorsement of Banton's anti-gay lyrics. What did Apache make of the controversy?

'Buju Banton said when he was interviewed on *The Word* that he was sorry if he offended people in different worlds, but he was talking about what was going on in his country—Jamaica. Jamaica is a very, very poor country. And anything they can do to make some money they will do. And if it means making a song with slack lyrics rather than killing someone for a meal or some dollars, what's better to do? You make money there through music or crime. Buju Banton and Shabba Ranks are making a very successful living from music. In Jamaica young people like to listen to slack lyrics. Therefore these lyrics make money.

'It's a shame that *The Word* disrespected these artists who are the biggest thing in reggae at the moment. However it's good to see the media taking an interest in reggae at last—ragga has been around for a long time but ignored by the media. So even if it is controversy that sells, any publicity can only be good for reggae.' ●

● 'No Reservation' is released on Island Records on 25 January

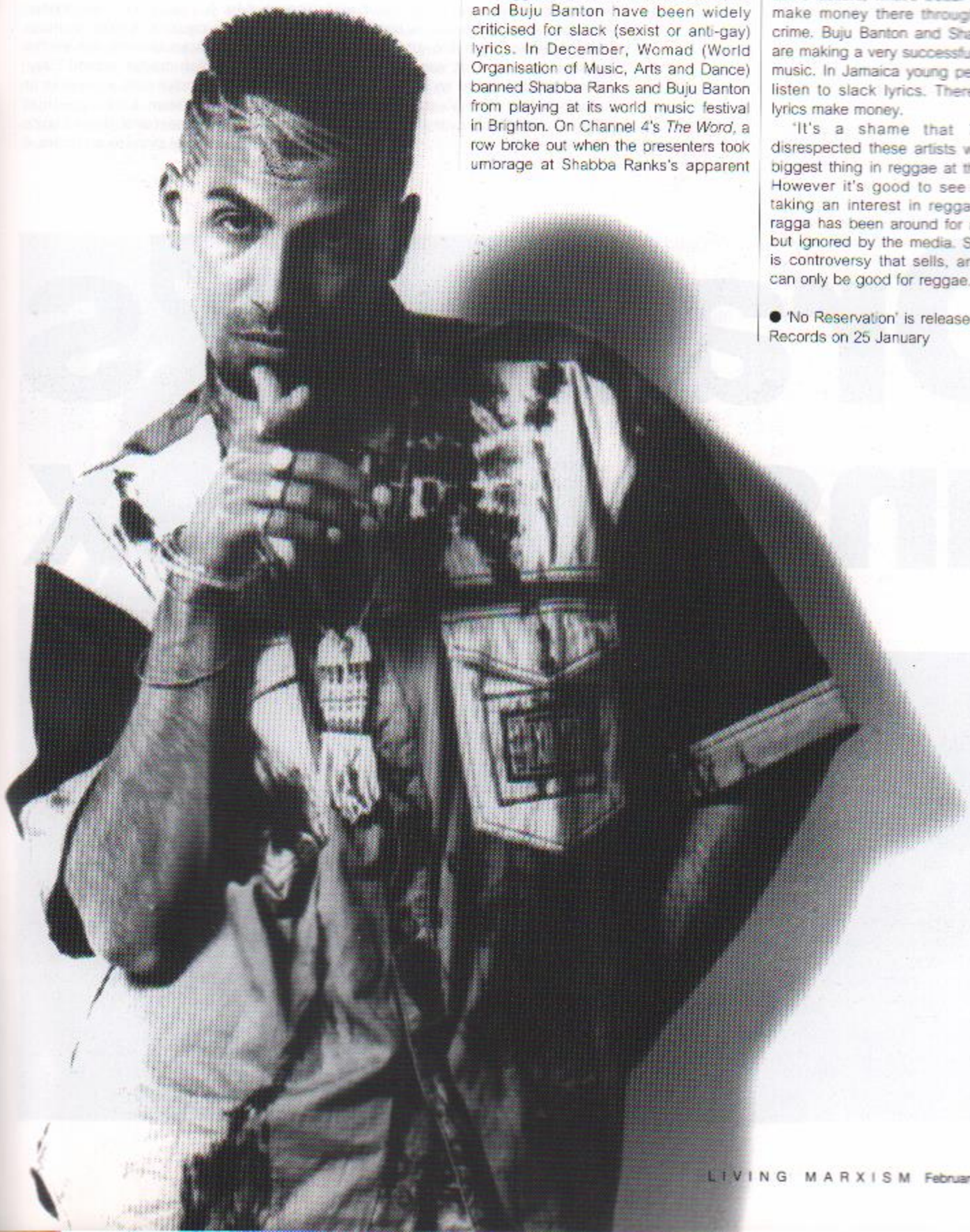


PHOTO: EDDIE MONSOON

The new wave of vampire films has been used as a metaphor for the age of Aids. But Andrew Tate thinks vampirism and moralism don't mix

Dracula's unsafe sex

Nineteen ninety-three has been acclaimed as the year of the vampire. Some 10 vampire films are due to be released this year, most notably Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, just out in Britain. We are also promised a lesbian vampire, a hip-hop vampire, as well as Adam Ant donning the fangs. And it isn't only Hollywood that is seemingly obsessed by Dracula. In the same week that *Bram Stoker's Dracula* was the highest grossing film in the USA, Anne Rice's vampire novel *The Body Thief* was Number One in the fiction bestsellers list. In Britain Faber has just published a new collection of vampire stories. Even the BBC got in on the act with its much-hyped *The Vampyr—a Soap Opera* mini-series over the Christmas holiday period.

For many critics the new fascination with vampires is the product of the age of Aids. Frank Rich, the *New York Times* drama critic, has dubbed it 'the new blood culture'. America, he has written 'has awakened to the fact that the most insidious post-Cold War enemy is a virus'. He adds that 'Aids, after all, actually does to the bloodstream what communists and other radicals were once only rumoured to do the nation's water supply'.

Coppola himself has made the link between Dracula and Aids, and the script of his film plays up to this theme. 'Blood is too precious a thing in these times', says Dracula, who leaves his victim, an English maiden named Lucy, with what her doctor calls a 'disease of the blood unknown to all medical theory'. A blood specialist likens Lucy's ailment to venereal disease and calls it

a threat to the 'ethics and ideals' of humanity.

The Aids panic may have given new meaning to the vampire myth (though it is worth remembering that vampires never really went away—there were nine vampire films in 1970, and the works of Anne Rice and Stephen King have been popular for two decades and more). But the vampire is too ambiguous a creature to play a straightforward morality role in the 1990s.

For a start, the vampire myth is not really part of the horror genre. From Frankenstein's creation to the Alien, cinematic monsters have invoked terror by the horrors they have visited upon their victims. Vampires on the other hand seduce rather than destroy. The images of vampirism are implicitly those of sexual seduction. The victims (male and female) swoon when bitten.

The vampire prefers to operate at night and is weakened (or killed) by daylight. And, as every child knows, vampires can be kept at bay with garlic or crucifixes. Strong light, bad breath and Jesus are clearly bad for the sex drive. Vampires are largely portrayed as part monster, part lover—in some films it is the victim that seduces the vampire. Dracula is just too charming to be simply a plague carrier.

If the vampire is an ambiguous figure, this ambiguity is accentuated by today's sexual mores. Coppola's scriptwriter, James V Hart, has likened the film to *'Gone with the Wind* with sex and violence'. Yet the film contains nothing like the excess of Bram Stoker's Victorian novel on which it is based, nor does it have the shock value of the original.

What gave Bram Stoker's vampire its impact was the sense of good and evil which existed in his society. By transgressing the line between the two, Stoker's Dracula became a dark, demonic figure. Today we have a far more flexible notion of good and evil. And however hard the Aids moralists may try, they cannot impart the same moral shock to the act of sexual seduction in the 1990s as Stoker was able to in the 1890s.

The modern version of the vampire is much more sympathetic than Stoker's monster: most modern vampires appear either as lovers, as in films such as *Near Dark*, or as figures of fun (think of the *Addams Family* or *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*). In Stoker's original book, Lucy, after being bitten by Dracula, is finally saved by the forces of Victorian propriety, who restore 'the Thing' to 'sweetness and purity': literally from vamp to virgin. The same scene in Coppola's film is more problematic. Not only is Lucy more fun as a vamp, but her nemesis, Van Helsing, is played by Anthony 'Hannibal Lecter' Hopkins. As a result, Lucy's pursuers appear as darker figures than she does, and far more malicious than Stoker ever intended.

The problem for modern vampire-slayers is that they appear more as parental party-poopers than as the guardians of society's morals and well-being. In the end, in Coppola's film, Mina (Winona Ryder) still prefers the aged Count (Gary Oldman) for 'unsafe vampire sex' to Harker, her legal clerk of a husband, even if Harker is played by Keanu Reeves—and most of us would probably make the same choice too. ●

Bela Lugosi's Dracula (far left); Gary Oldman in *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (left); Anne Rice's *The Vampire Lestat* (below)

PHOTOS: PIONEER/COLUMBIA ILLUSTRATION: JOHN BOLTON

The working class is now getting the Arthur Negus treatment, reckons Andrew Calcutt

Miners and museum pieces

PHOTO: GRANADA TELEVISION

I hadn't watched *Coronation Street* for years, until I had the flu a few weeks ago. Flicking the channels, I heard the familiar theme tune and stayed to watch what turned out to be a comedy programme.

'Corrie is a joke' may not be news to you. But it took me by surprise. When Tony Warren's pilot episodes topped the ratings more than 30 years ago, the whole point was that the characters in *Coronation Street* were there to be taken seriously.

In the early days, Len Fairclough was a hard man's hard man. Elsie Tanner was better looking than Princess Margaret, and her affairs were just as traumatic. Of course there were touches of humour: miser Tatlock and dragon Sharples spring to mind. But what was new about *Coronation Street* was its straightforward dramatisation of Northern working class characters, without sneering at or patronising them. The novel assumption behind the programme was that the life of the working class was no longer a laughing matter.

Until the *Coronation Street* era, working class characters had appeared in British films and television as Dickensian villains and lackeys, Cockney cameos or music hall turns from 'oop North'. Today, these old images seem to be making a comeback—even on Corrie. In the recent episode I saw, most of the roles seemed like latter-day versions of the crude personae adopted by George Formby, Gracie Fields and Barbara Windsor (Bet Lynch is a sophisticated exception: she knows she's a caricature and revels in it).

I don't want to sound as sanctimonious as Lord Rees-Mogg, the chair of the Broadcasting Standards Council who criticised Corrie for being out of date and having an unrepresentative ethnic mix. Granada's riposte to Rees-Mogg was to the effect that *Coronation Street* provides entertainment, not *actualité*. Fair comment. *Coronation Street* is indeed entertaining, and it is not the cause of any kind of stereotyping: class, racial or otherwise.

But *Coronation Street* is not immune from the wider trend towards caricaturing the working class. In the new wave of sitcoms, beginning with *Birds of a Feather*, the working class only seems to exist on the criminal fringes of society. Although Corrie still carries its original theme tune, of the same sixties vintage as kitchen-sink drama and campaigning documentaries such as *Cathy Come Home*, its characterisation has inevitably been influenced by the revival of the notion that the working class is either laughable, or criminal, or both.

This revival has been facilitated by the declining social influence of the working class in recent years. A class without influence invites parody—and worse.

Worse came with last October's miners' dispute. You might have thought the dispute was about pit closures and the future of the working class. For the media it was about the preservation of Britain's cultural heritage.

Stubble and coal dust; dejected expression; white skin against the grime; white teeth and the whites of his eyes; a hard hat and stooping shoulders: these were some of the elements which made up the image of The Miner 1992—an image largely based on archive photographs from the forties or fifties. In their mind's eye, various sections of British society arranged the component parts in different ways.

Dissident Tory backbenchers viewed The Miner as the embodiment of sturdy British stock, a worthy recipient of their patronage. The last remaining liberal commentators saw in the face of The Miner the memory of their high hopes for social engineering in the postwar period. The Labour front bench associated The Miner with the nationalisation of the pits and Labour's high watermark in 1945. Bishops looked at The Miner, and thought of the feeding of the five thousand. Union leaders saw The Miner as the bedrock of the power they have lost. For left-wing activists, The Miner meant flying pickets, now grounded.

The middle classes connected the days of coal with the age of steam: boys in caps and short trousers, *Dixon of Dock Green* and 'you've never had it so good'. Many working class people shared their affection for the days when life seemed less precarious. All interpretations of The Miner evoked the past; and they all assumed that the working class is a victim—a largely passive object which stoically withstands the pressures brought to bear upon it.

Commentators on the miners' dispute used the same tone of voice as David Attenborough talking about an endangered species. A crocodile of journalists went on safari in pit villages. They waited until closing time before filming in miners' clubs, so as to capture the beery animal in full flow. Dirty realist reporters wrote about brass band concerts as an example of local exotica. And, as if to confirm the historical authenticity of their subject, photographers took most of their shots in black and white. The miners were treated like exhibits on the *Antiques Roadshow*.

Nowadays the chattering classes openly laugh at the working class, or they cover it with sentiment. And when neither of these seems appropriate, they simply vent their spleen—as, for example, in *The Tattooed Jungle*, the recent video-nasty on Channel 4. Writer Tony Parsons repeated some old fairy tales about the great unwashed, except that his bogeymen were dressed in shell suits and his witches in high heels and lycra. Poor Tony! He thinks he's hip, but he's more like hip replacement.

Tory backbenchers described the miners as the salt of the earth. Tony Parsons called the working class the scum of the earth. The common theme among the new definitions is that today's working class lacks the power to stop other people describing it however they like. ●

Cartoon times

Future generations will look back on the twentieth century as the age of the cartoon. Just as we use the illuminated manuscript as a synecdoche for the medieval world, so scholars of the twenty-fifth century will look back at our culture through the lens of the animated short. If there is any justice they will see Warner Brothers' *Loony Toons* series as an achievement to rank alongside the pyramids and the Book of Kells.

Like all great art forms, it flourished away from the ray of critical attention. Like the theatre of Shakespeare or Ibo sculpture it was not regarded as Art at all at the time by either its creators or its consumers. The very fact that the masterpieces of the form were addressed to children meant it did not have to justify itself in aesthetic or moral terms. While literature, art, and music became pallidly self-regarding and nervously self-justifying, the cartoon developed a visceral self-confidence, a heedless, expressive energy that is best summed up in the character of the Wile E Coyote, perched on a cliff top, haemorrhaging creativity in the vain, pointless pursuit of an unstoppable, probably inedible bird.

The Coyote, like the art of the animated short itself, never stopped to ask himself if it was all worth it, if it really meant anything. Questions like 'why don't you save some of the money you spend down at the Acme Store and buy yourself a frozen roadrunner?' simply do not arise. The impossibility of catching the Roadrunner is the source of the Coyote's creativity. The fact that he will never eat the Roadrunner is in a sense his great source of nourishment.

Between the look of hope on the Coyote's face as he launches himself into the air and the look of resignation as he craters the canyon floor (on one occasion right next to the crater he made last time) is the whole of the vanity of human wishes. In the senseless extravagance of the Coyote's inventions is all the hope of humanity. There is a mythical final episode of the series in which it turns out the Roadrunner owns the Acme Store and has been itself responsible for the Coyote buying all the backfiring dynamite, catapults that stick, and jet packs that turn upside down and pile-drive you into the canyon floor. If it was really made, it was never shown because the whole point is the innocent ignorance of the Roadrunner. Cartoon deals in manias, obsessions, wild, undeserved hatreds and unassailable illusions.

For a while it looked to me as if *The Simpsons* represented some kind of climax to the Great Tradition. Here was a cartoon series addressed to all age groups. Both vulgar and literate, it was clever without being smart. Here were characters finally reduced to the simple, explosive gesture: a spikey yellow boy with 'Low achiever and proud of it' blazed across his T-shirt, forever yelling, 'I'm Bart Simpson, who the hell are you?'. The series itself, on the other hand, was always torn between the mesmerising, amoral energy of Bart and a tendency towards moralising in the storylines. When Bart saws the head off the statue of Springfield's founder, he lives to regret it; when Bart cheats his way into genius school, he is quickly exposed as a fraud (even though the school seems full of frauds). The stories—like Homer and Marge themselves—sought to contain the boy, either through punishment or by providing an alternative such as Bart's sister, Liza—jazz saxophonist, poet, moralist and artist in dry macaroni.

In the new series, this attempt to contain Bart has been taken to its limit. Moralising has been replaced with self-criticism. The most vitriolic satire in the new series is directed not against the feckless Homer or the fried brain of Bart, but against TV, and in particular, kids' TV.

Bart has always been devoted to two things: Krusty the Klown—a TV entertainer who appears (as Bart does) on breakfast cereals and lunchboxes; and Itchy and Scratchy—a cartoon cat and mouse. Krusty's career as an endorser of products has always been used as a wry comment on the success of *The Simpsons* own merchandising. Now the comment has become less wry. Krusty appears on every advert on the Simpsons own TV, endlessly repeating the phrase, 'I heartily endorse this event or product'.

In the episode, 'Escape from Camp Krusty', the children are sent to a summer camp endorsed by Krusty. It turns out to be a kind of Mid-western gulag. Bart leads a rebellion and the state troopers are sent in. 'Kids in TV-land, you are being duped!' is his message. Krusty is a seedy, wheezing, cynical character but he is St Francis of Assisi compared to Itchy and Scratchy, who are a kind of post-Nintendo Tom and Jerry. Itchy is tooled up like Rambo and does not hesitate to torch and kneecap his opponent who—unlike Tom—bleeds with exhilarating generosity from every wound.

The attack on kid's TV is particularly violent here. We are told that the new Itchy and Scratchy movie 'contains 30 per cent new footage'. We are given a behind-the-scenes peep at the making of the movie—in a drawing-room full of sad-looking Koreans being supervised by Americans in full combat gear. Interestingly enough, Itchy and Scratchy are identified more or less explicitly with Micky Mouse. The first Itchy and Scratchy movie was called *Steamboat Scratchy* (first Micky movie was called *Steamboat Willie*). Now, while I am only too happy to see the verminous Micky vilified, the sheer intensity (and irrelevance) of the hatred in these scenes suggests self-loathing as much as it does Micky Malice.

In one episode, a teacher warns Marge that if Bart is not disciplined, he will end up as a male stripper; if he is disciplined, he could end up as chief justice. Homer disciplines Bart by refusing to let him see the latest Itchy and Scratchy movie. In the end, Bart does become chief justice. His future is assured because he is not allowed to watch cartoons. In case there is any doubt about whether or not the Simpsons themselves are implicated in this, the baby Maggie is shown in one episode sucking a Bart doll.

Because of Homer's incredible torpor (he has a nervous breakdown when the couch collapses), *The Simpsons* has to some extent always been about TV. But now the self-reflection has turned into self-flagellation. The art of cartoon is having its first crisis of confidence. The irony is that this crisis has been brought about by the phenomenal success of *The Simpsons*. This is the first time a channel has built its primetime scheduling around a cartoon series. Indeed, until they bought the football, Sky made the show its main pull. The makers seem to have been terrified by the size and power of their own show. Their reactions are instructive.

In 20-odd episodes they have mimicked the whole story of Western art. They began by trying to tame their monster by tying it to the wagon of trite morality (don't steal cable TV; don't deface public property), then moved on to satiric recycling of old material (episodes parodying Edgar Allan Poe, Tennessee Williams and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*); and finally atrophied into tedious self-examination.

The final collapse of *The Simpsons* dream leaves *Rolf's Cartoon Club* (ITV) as positively the only programme on TV still worth watching (except for *Knot's Landing*, of course). Rolf showcases the best of the old, while keeping an eye on the new, demystifying the production process and encouraging young film-makers. Where there is Rolf, there's hope. Apart from that, kids in TV-land, you are being duped.●

THE MARXIST REVIEW OF BOOKS

Rob Knight on the financial links between fascism and capitalism in Germany and Britain

Banking on Hitler

The Bundesbank: The Bank that Rules Europe, David Marsh, Heinemann £18.99 hbk

The British establishment has an obsession with Germany—one which says as much about British problems as it does about German ones. There is a fast-growing disparity between Britain as a declining power and Germany as an ascendent one, and the British establishment's feelings are very definitely mixed.

On the one hand, the British authorities will take every opportunity to mention the war, as they attempt to cover up their present decline by reviving past Kraut-bashing victories. But, at the same time, Germany is now the most powerful nation in Europe, and as such must be treated with respect. Add to this the international power of the Deutschmark and the German central bank, the Bundesbank, and the British dilemma starts to shape up. Typically, in recent months the British have blamed the Germans for everything from the decline of the British economy to a supposed resurgence of fascism in Europe.

As a *Financial Times* correspondent, David Marsh is a seasoned observer of Germany. His previous book, *The New Germany: At the Crossroads,* was an entertaining and measured introduction to Germany for the outsider. His latest book, *The Bundesbank: The Bank that Rules Europe,* communicates a more open fear of German power by connecting the present and the past in a not very subtle way. Marsh himself neatly sums up the revised argument in his introduction: 'The Bundesbank has replaced the Wehrmacht [German army] as Germany's best known and best feared institution.' (p10) The difference in tone between the two books can perhaps be accounted for by the fact that they were written, respectively, before and after German reunification.

The Bundesbank is very much part of the anti-German literary diet so beloved of the British establishment. But it also has an extra dimension of interest. In the act of affirming the British belief that 'they are all Nazis under the skin', Marsh stumbles across some of the problems that resurrecting the past raises for the British establishment. As any serious examination of the Nazi experience must do, his study reveals two truths that are unpalatable to the powers that be in both Germany and Britain. One is the integral relationship between German capitalism and Nazism; the other is the cordial relations which key figures in the British establishment had with the Nazis and their backers both before and after the war.

Although Marsh's latest book is nominally about the modern role of the Bundesbank in Europe, a very large section of it is really about the Bundesbank's predecessor, the Reichsbank. This, Marsh reveals, was the bank that liked to say yes to Hitler. From the Nazis' accession to power in 1933 to their downfall in 1945, the Reichsbank played a central role in Hitler's regime. Not only did it organise the financing of the Nazi economy and German rearmament, it also carried out the seizure of Jewish financial assets. The Reichsbank's vice-president, Emil Puhl, liaised with Himmler in the depositing of gold teeth and spectacles from the concentration camps in the bank's vaults.

Marsh also points out how easily the bankers who served Hitler so faithfully were able to resurrect their careers in the 'new' Bundesbank after the war. He reveals the striking statistic that as late as 1968, nearly 25 years after the war's end, 50 per cent of the Bundesbank's top personnel were ex-Nazis. The president of the bank in the 1960s, Karl Blessing, had been the main organiser of the appropriation of Jewish money in 1938.

The book makes clear that there was a continuity between the Reichsbank and the Bundesbank which went further than its personnel. In fact Germany's central bank

has been a source of continuity throughout the country's modern history. While governments, from Bismarck through the Weimar Republic to Hitler, came and went, the central bank carried on, sanctioning whatever political arrangement best suited capitalist interests at the time.

The Reichsbank came into existence as one of the central institutions of the new German state in the 1870s. It rapidly became a central part of the world financial system then in operation, the gold standard, largely on the basis of gold reparations extracted from France after the war of 1870-71. From then on the Reichsbank, and after the Second World War, the Bundesbank, were at the centre of the German economy.

From the start the relationship between German industry, banking capital and the state was even more integrated than in other leading capitalist nations. German capitalism developed relatively late, and by the time it formed a unified national economy the first 'free market' period of capitalism was already drawing to a close. Since the late nineteenth century, developed capitalist countries have relied increasingly on state intervention to combat economic decay. From the creation of the German state in the 1870s the German economy has been characterised by a high level of state intervention. Consequently there has always been a very close relationship between the state, the banks and industry.

Marsh's survey of the German central banks reveals just how close this relationship has been. Irrespective of what kind of government has been in power, democratic or dictatorial, as the needs of German capitalism have evolved so have the interventionist policies of the state and the central bankers. For example, in the period of relative stability at the end of the nineteenth century the Reichsbank pursued a policy of sound money, very much as the Bundesbank is doing today. But when it was necessary to finance the war effort in 1914 sound money was abandoned, paving the way for the currency instability in the interwar years.

Ex-Nazis were the human material out of which America and Britain rebuilt the German ruling class after the war

The transfer of power from the Weimar democracy to the Hitler regime similarly created few difficulties for Germany's top bankers, except for those who had Jewish wives. Indeed the German financial establishment, like other big capitalists, backed the Nazis as a desperate last throw to revive the economy. The German economy in the twenties and thirties was stagnant and beset by inflation. German business needed to force through a massive attack upon working class living standards, and break a powerful socialist and trade union movement, if it was to get capitalism back on its feet. After other options failed, big business turned to fascism as the political movement that could act as a razor gang against the German working class.

The conversion of capitalist interests to the Nazi cause can be seen in the career of one man, Hjalmar Schacht. Schacht was appointed president of the Reichsbank in 1923 under the Weimar regime. In the late twenties, as German society experienced deep shocks, he became convinced that only the Nazis could save Germany from communism. Schacht then became the key link between the Nazi Party and German capitalism. He was head of the Reichsbank under Hitler and played a central role in German militarisation in the thirties until he was sacked for opposing rearmament—on financial rather than political grounds.

Schacht served at the Reichsbank under governments of all hues, from Social Democrat to Nazi. No doubt he would have been quite prepared to serve under the post-war Adenauer government had he not been too old. He typifies the way in which Germany's top capitalists shifted their political allegiances according to what they saw as being necessary for the survival of their system. Or as one later German economics minister put it, 'stability is not everything, but without stability everything is nothing'.

Marsh's book shows how the German establishment was complicit in Nazism. But it also lets slip how little the British establishment was concerned about the character of the Nazi regime. The governor of the bank of England in the thirties, Montagu Norman, had no problem with dealing with Schacht, to the extent that he became the godfather of Schacht's grandson. Norman's representative in Berlin, Charles Gunston, was an admirer of Hitler who spent his summer holidays at a German labour camp. This is symptomatic of the cordial relations that existed between the British and German ruling classes during the thirties, when 'appeasement' was the favoured policy of the British establishment.

The British and American authorities were also instrumental in enabling so many top Nazis to resurrect their careers after the war. Both Washington and Whitehall were far more concerned to bring stability to Germany than they were about bringing Nazis to justice. Today it might suit the British and American authorities to pursue a few ageing Nazis, as a way of reminding the public about Germany's past. But ex-Nazis were the human material out of which America and Britain rebuilt the German ruling class and economy after the war.

In the light of all this, and given the British preoccupation with Kraut-bashing today, how should we look at Germany and its history? I think we should remember that the horrors of Nazism were the product, not of some backward state, but of one of the most advanced capitalist societies in the world, with a long tradition of culture and learning. It should act as a constant reminder to us, not of some alleged flaw in the 'German character', but of the fact that capitalism *in extremis* is capable of anything.

I think we should also recall that the Nazis were not an alien excrescence on Western society. They were backed and bankrolled by the German ruling class, and enjoyed cordial relations with some of the pillars of British society among others. Currently, the media is focusing on a few German skinheads and claiming that they are the main link with the Nazi past. In fact, the real continuity comes from the polite and civilised men who glide into the Bundesbank offices every morning, and their counterparts in the Bank of England, who still believe that 'without stability, everything is nothing'.

Escape Attempts: The Theory and Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life (second edition), Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor, Routledge £10.99 pbk

While Malcolm McLaren was putting together the Sex Pistols, two young-ish academics were also taking pot-shots at 'the counterculture'. In *Escape Attempts* (1976), Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor wrote: 'the slogan of getting it together advanced by communes and the cultural revolution is illusory.' These were escapees from traditional left-wing politics, who went on to question the kaleidoscopic mish-mash of Herbert Marcuse, Timothy Leary and Norman O Brown. Somewhat unwillingly, they retreated towards 'the search for identity', the Self and its 'struggle to rise above social destiny'.

Escape Attempts (first edition) was written on the cusp between the revolutionary fervour of 1968 and the disaffection of 1977. Cohen and Taylor were painfully aware of their diminishing aspirations, but felt that this shrinking world 'is the only world we seem to know'. In the 16 years since their book originally appeared, many have first followed and then overtaken them on the way to tunnel vision. In writing a new, lengthy introduction to the 1992 edition of *Escape Attempts*, Cohen and Taylor are trying to pull the postmodernists back towards some notion of intervening in 'paramount reality'. They are advocates of the Self, with a social conscience but without 'the pointlessness of metanarratives'. Instead of pomo apathy, they want a kind of minimalist re-enchantment. Where 20 years ago they were precursors of postmodernism, now they come across as post-postmodernists.

But our authors have conceded the 'pointlessness' of any attempt to understand 'paramount reality' as a whole. This means there can be no sustainable logic behind their argument against apathy. Indeed Cohen and Taylor can only offer their (understandable) moral objection to Baudrillard's notion of the couch potato as hero, together with their own nostalgia for the Get-It-On days of seventies campus-life.

Criticising the postmodernists, Cohen and Taylor point out that the pomo notion of 'hyperreality' is a reworking of the Situationists' 'spectacle', minus the attempt at subversion. Agreeing with the postmodernists, they recognise that 'paramount reality' has absorbed and neutralised devices such as irony and parody which 20 years ago were held up as oppositional. But if 'to dissolve meta-theory is to open rather than close the discourse of resistance', where will such resistance come from? Cohen and Taylor can only hope that 'the imaginative purchase upon the world provided by Utopian visions' will re-energise the Self and its capacity for 'identity work'.

They want world-visions, but deny the possibility of a rational worldview. Aware of the narrowness of identity politics, nevertheless they end by arguing for 'more recognition of folk wisdom'. In taking up Baudrillard for his praise of apathy, they share his celebration of irrationalism and backwardness.

In some parts of their new introduction, it's hard to tell whether Cohen and Taylor are agreeing or disagreeing with the postmodernists. They hop between systems of thought, trying to pick'n'mix the best of each. But this is an imitation of postmodernism, not a challenge to it.

Cohen and Taylor would argue that their work shows a healthy ambivalence. I call it two-faced. If I feel the need for a mixture of insight and idiocy on the subject of 'everyday life', I'll stick to Baudrillard. At least he has faith in his own cynicism.

Andrew Calcutt

The Porcupine, Julian Barnes, Jonathan Cape, £9.99 hbk

Julian Barnes' latest novel, *The Porcupine* is set after the overthrow of the Stalinist regime of an anonymous East European state. The trial of Stoyo Petkanov, former 'helmsman' of his country, is the occasion for the new government to set its seal on the process of reform. The tale's cynical laughs betray a pessimistic and insular reaction to the failure of both Stalinism and capitalism in the East that is all too characteristic of Western intellectuals today.

In the ensuing court drama, relayed on TV to an expectant population, issues of justice and revenge are secondary. This modern breed of show-trial deals instead with questions of self-definition, setting the new order off against the old and proclaiming the right of the new authorities to judge the past. But it is another show-trial nonetheless: 'the President of the Court, the Prosecutor General, the defence counsel and the accused—most of all the accused—knew that anything other than a verdict of guilty was unacceptable to higher authority.' (p58)

The more that Prosecutor General Solinsky seeks to expose the old government, the more he echoes its past excuses. His own justifications about the 'difficulties', 'readjustments' and 'realities' involved in the transition to a market economy are hard to distinguish from the old dictator's talk about inevitable hardships and sacrifices along the road to socialism.

For Barnes' characters, the idea that history has a human purpose is hard to sustain, so arbitrary are its upheavals.

'Look what happened throughout history: Reformation, Counter-Reformation, Revolution, Counter-Revolution, Fascism, Anti-Fascism, Communism, Anti-Communism. Great movements, as by some law of physics, seem to provoke an equal and opposite force. So people talk cautiously of the Changes, and this slight evasion made them feel a little safer: it was difficult to imagine something called the Counter-Changes or the Anti-Changes, and therefore such a reality might be avoidable too.' (p42)

Barnes work is imbued with scepticism about the possibility of his characters' engagement with society. Fiction is about preserving the solitary individual from the depersonalising currents of history. In his earlier book *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, he writes 'love won't change the history of the world...but it will do something much more important: teach us to stand up to history, to ignore its chin-out strut' (p240). Eastern Europe's impasse provides a ready backdrop for Barnes' introspection.

Alasdair Ward

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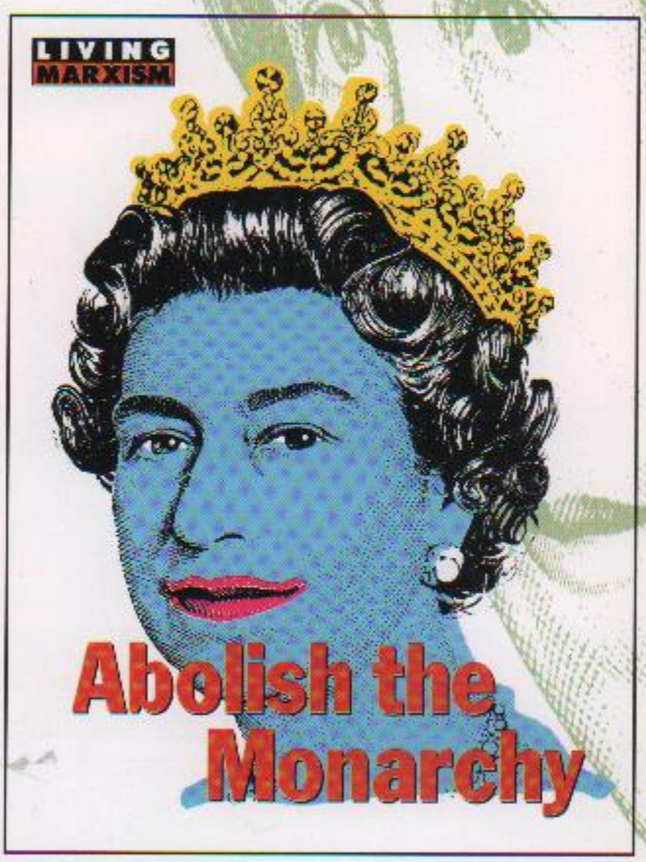

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