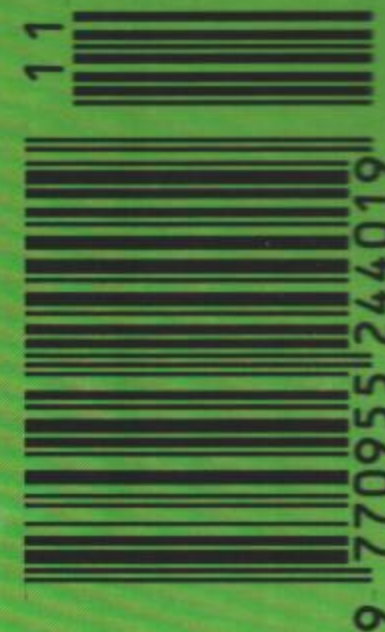
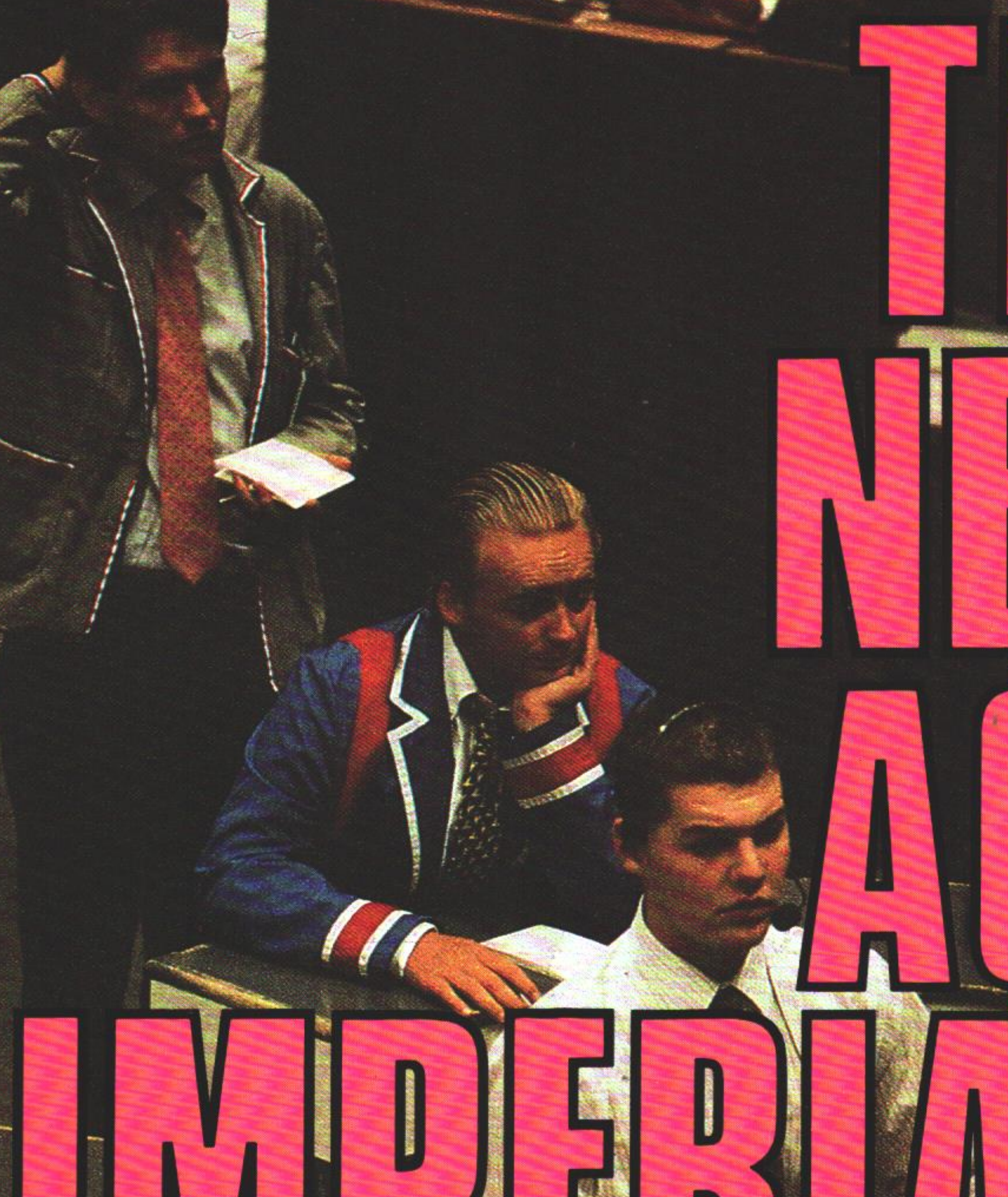


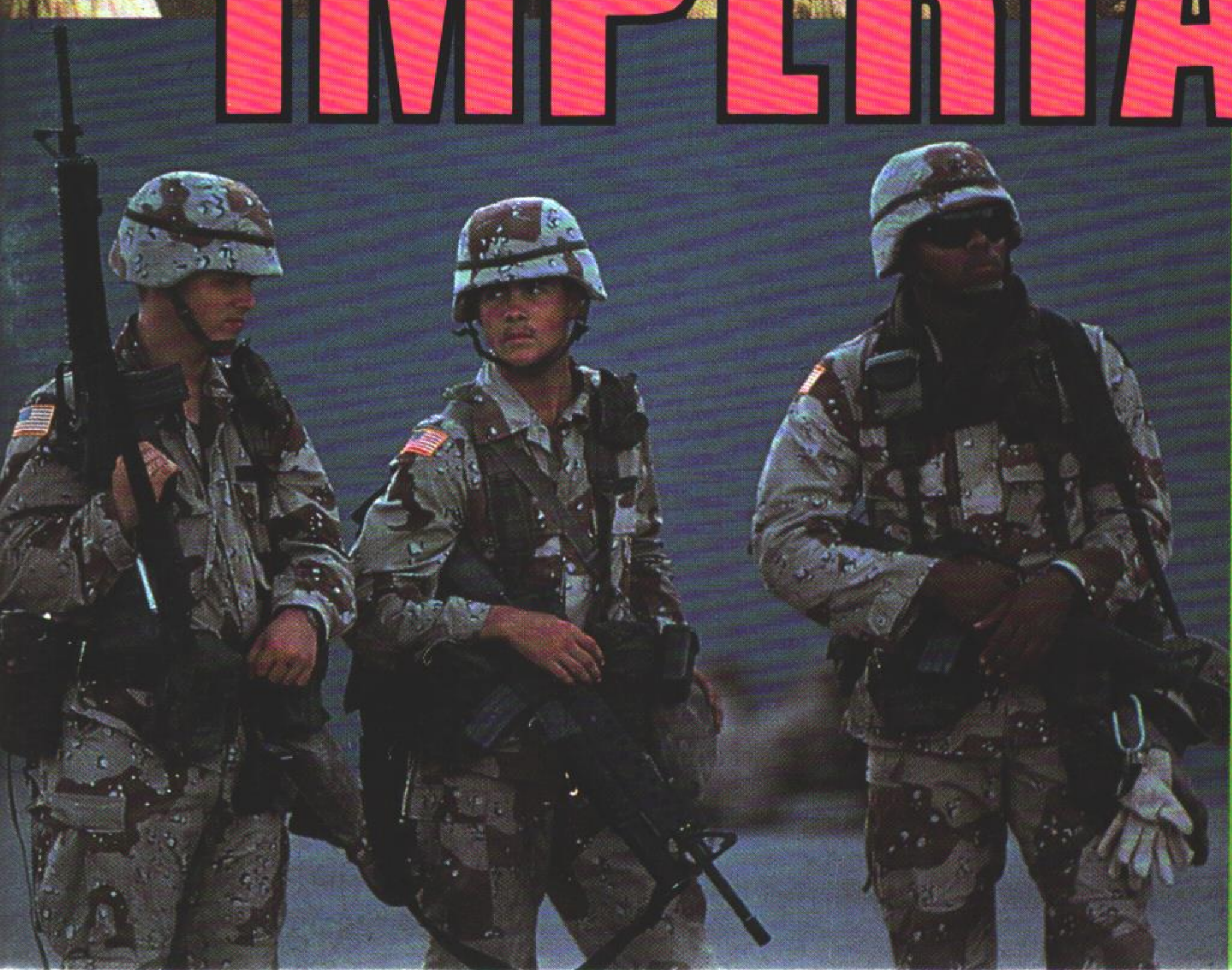
LIVING MARXISM



November 1990
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in the
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ERM...

Britain's entry into the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European Monetary System confirms two themes featured in this month's *Living Marxism*: that Britain is in for a deep economic recession; and that the world is in for a New Age of Imperialism.

Through ERM membership, the Thatcher government has gambled on hitching the pound and the weak British economy to the industrial strength of Germany and its deutschmark. That means British capitalists will be under more pressure to match the standards set by their German rivals—pressure which the employers will try to pass on to us through higher unemployment and lower pay. Forget any idea of ERM membership curing Britain's ills. It is far more likely to make the recession hit harder and faster.

The pull of the ERM on the British economy also shows up the UK's decline next to Germany's re-emergence as *the* European power. From the Gulf crisis to German unification, the world is changing and the balance of influence among the Western powers is shifting. The tensions between the USA, Europe and Japan will get worse as the recession bites. The New Age of Imperialism is about a battle between the big capitalist nations to redivide the world. The militarism now on display in the Middle East shows the shape of things to come. Remember where you heard it first.

Unfortunately, entry into the ERM has not prevented the price of *Living Marxism* rising to £1.80—the first price rise since *Living Marxism* was launched two years ago this month. The good news is that the subscription deal remains unchanged—see page 25.

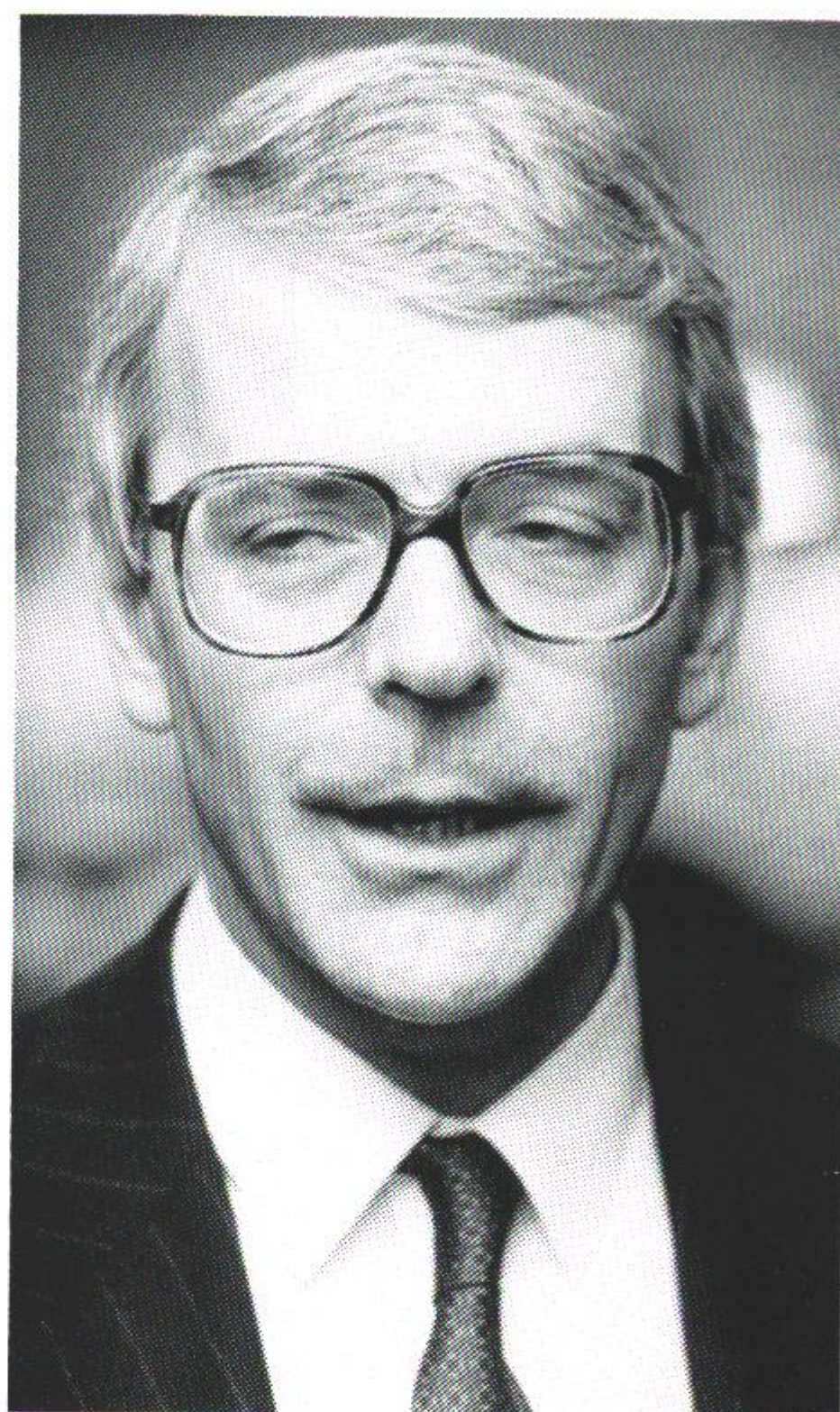


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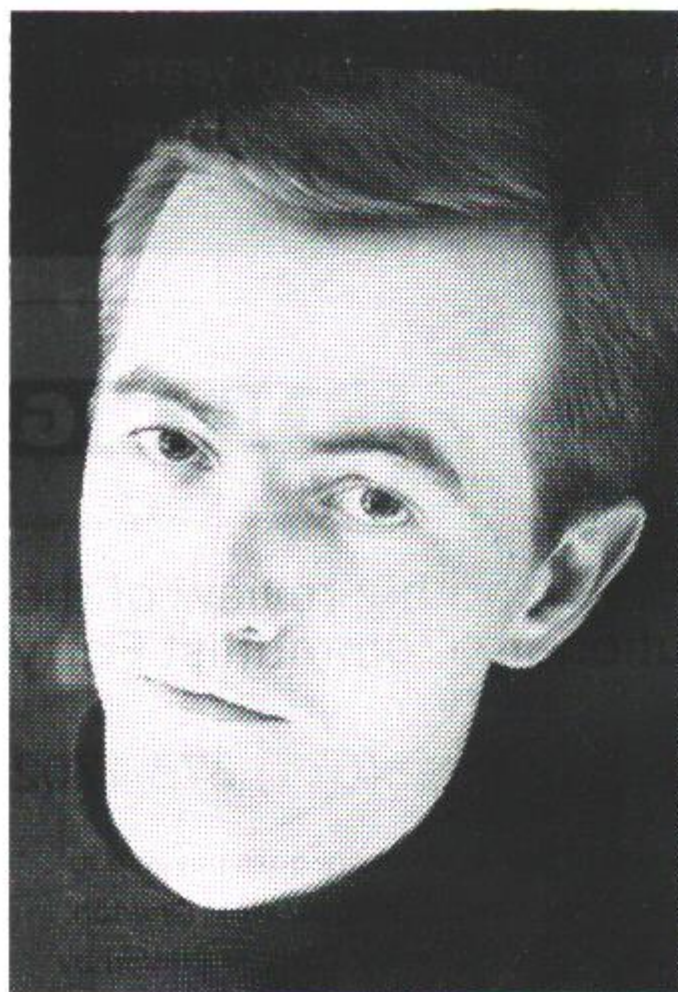
**LIVING
MARXISM**

November 1990

3

editorial

The New Age of Imperialism



editor
mick hume

There have been many attempts to blame the Gulf crisis for causing the latest economic recession in Britain and the USA. In fact the relationship between events in the West and in the Middle East works the other way around: it was the impact of their economic problems which helped push the Americans into escalating the Gulf confrontation back in August.

The current rounds of recession in the West and militarism in the Middle East are closely linked, not just by local factors like oil, but by the crisis of a global economic and political system. It is a system which can best be described by a word which many thought (and most hoped) had been consigned to the

Scrabble board of history: imperialism.

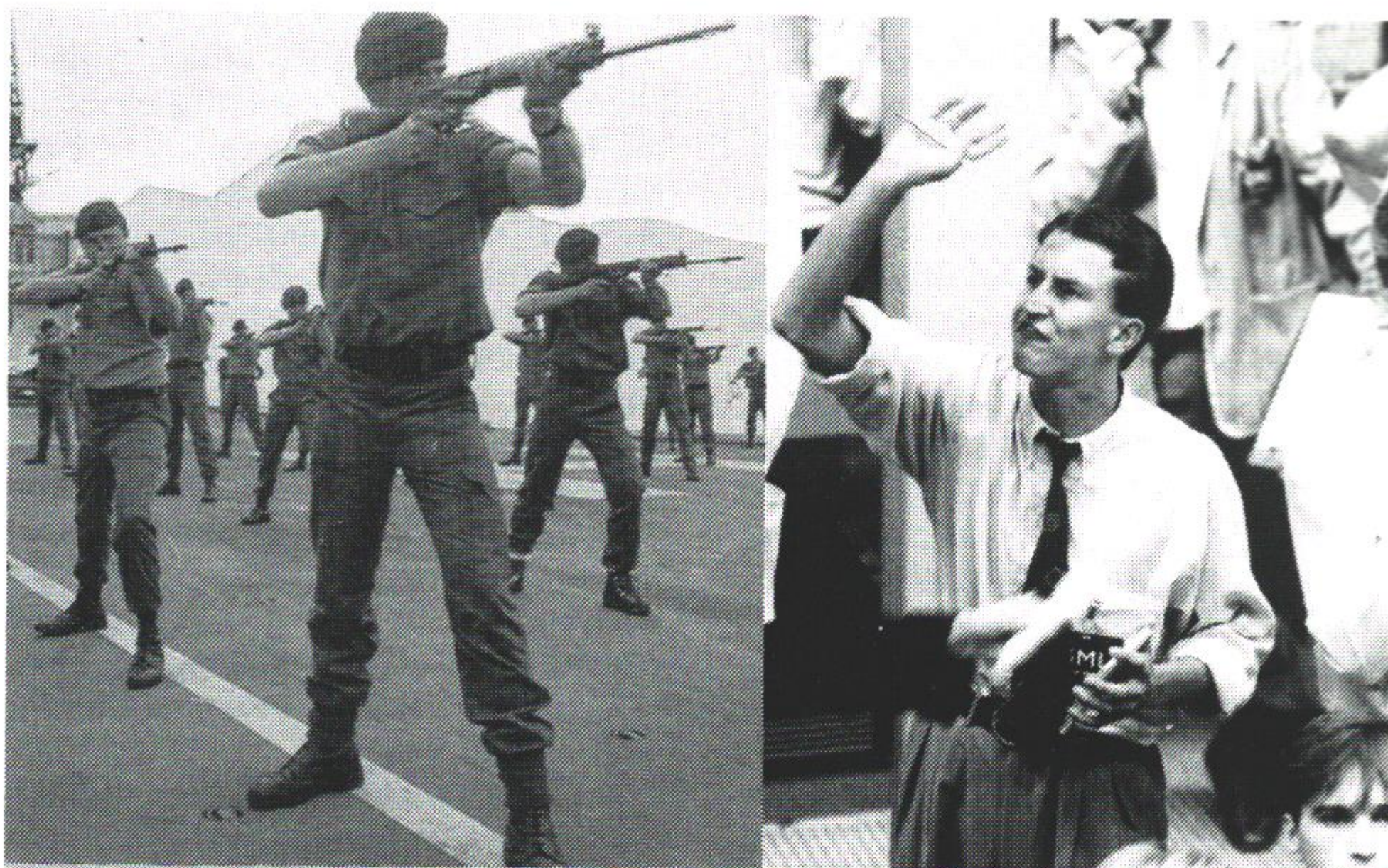
The Age of Imperialism is associated in the popular imagination with a past era of pith helmets and Zulu wars at the end of the nineteenth century. The world will soon have to wake up to the fact that the end of the twentieth century is becoming the New Age of Imperialism. As with many sequels, the main characters and backdrops have changed a little, but the basic storyline remains pretty similar. In the 1890s version, Britain led the other Great Powers in the colonial carve-up known as 'the scramble for Africa'. In the 1990s, America heads the military scramble to influence events in the Middle East.

The rulers of the Western world and their hired guns in the media will protest that their Gulf intervention is very different from old-fashioned imperialism. For one thing, they point out, it has been actively backed by the United Nations and by most Arab regimes in the region. But this only demonstrates how the imperialist wolves have had to learn to operate in sheep's clothing.

The Western powers' bloody history of colonial plunder and piracy has made imperialism, which British statesmen once spoke of with immense pride, a dirty word around the world. Governments in Whitehall and Washington are now keen to avoid the accusation of empire-building. It's not that they object to plunder and piracy themselves, but they fear that rumours of resurgent colonialism could discredit them at home and rekindle anti-Western fury among the downtrodden of the third world. So they seek to disguise imperialism as something else.

Until recently this was straightforward enough. Any crisis, anywhere in the world, could be blamed on the Soviet Union and its satellites, and Western aggression in the third world presented as a defence of freedom against communist tyranny. For more than 40 years after the Second World War, the imperialist powers of the West were thus able to pull off a remarkable trick: invading and occupying countries from Korea to Grenada, while at the same time maintaining the illusion of an age of 'post-imperialism'.

The end of the Cold War means that the anti-communist card has lost its effect; the USA can hardly blame the Soviet Union for the Gulf crisis when Gorbachev has given his full blessing to Washington's anti-Saddam crusade. Stripped of the usual disguises, the launch of a US-British Gulf invasion prompted worried observers to talk of the return of 'the old ghosts of imperialism'. The haunted Western leaders have since been searching for a way to exorcise those ghosts. Which is why they have laid so much emphasis on the need to win United Nations and Arab support for their actions in the Middle East, to present an imperialist invasion as a charitable act on behalf of humanity.



Imperialism breaks through into public notice only rarely, at times of crisis such as today, when the system starts to break down

But whatever the Western powers call it and whoever they get involved in it, imperialism it is. After all, what is the United Nations? A body set up by the USA after the Second World War to solve the problem of how Washington could rule the world without being accused of imperialism. From the first the UN was conceived as a vehicle for imperialist policies which would look like a humanitarian assembly of nations; a wolf in sheep's clothing, a tank disguised as an ambulance. That is the role it has played once more in the Gulf.

And who are the Arab regimes to claim that the Western intervention is supported by the peoples of the Middle East? Many of these unelected governments are the creations of imperialism. Most depend upon Western support for their survival. All are despised in the region, and none represents the anti-Western mood of the Middle Eastern masses. As Daniel Nassim explains elsewhere in this issue, whatever the sheikhs and emirs might say, people like the Palestinians have suffered at the sharp end of Western intrigues long enough to know an imperialist adventure when they see one.

Although the crisis in the Middle East has put the issue of imperialism centre-stage in world affairs once more, imperialism is not just about the invasions and occupations of the 1890s or 1990s. It is a global system which has operated throughout the past century, an historical epoch in which the major capitalist economies of Europe, the USA and Japan have been unable to sustain growth on the

basis of their home markets. They have thus been forced to seek international solutions to their problems, marauding around the world in search of new sources of raw materials and outlets for trade and investment. In so doing they have created a world economy, and divided the globe; between the few great capitalist powers on one hand, and the masses whom they dominate through political or economic means on the other. This division is the essence of imperialism.

The division of the world between the imperialists and the rest, and the relationship of domination which that involves, has remained in place throughout the century, during the years of colonialism and post-colonialism alike. In the Middle East, it has been sustained by a system of artificial states—including Kuwait, Iraq and Saudi Arabia—set up and manipulated by the Western powers to keep the Arab and Islamic world divided under imperialist control. In this month's *Living Marxism*, Kirsten Cale unearths confidential government documents which illustrate how British imperialism never left the Gulf, and how British governments took an even closer interest in running Kuwait's affairs during the post-war era of decolonisation.

So what's new about the New Age of Imperialism? The imperialists aren't returning after a long absence, like the living dead. They have been burrowing away beneath the surface all along, through the UN, Nato, International Monetary Fund, etc. But for much of the time, imperialism goes

about its dirty work in the third world disguised from view in the Western world. It breaks through into public notice only rarely, at particular moments of crisis such as today, when the system starts to break down. When the pressures of economic recession push the capitalist powers into increasingly intense competition with each other over markets and spheres of influence, the established world order can soon fracture. Then, alongside the ongoing division of the world between the imperialists and the oppressed, we are faced with a new struggle to redivide the world among the imperialists themselves. These are the moments when imperialism reveals itself, and creates dangerous situations like the Gulf crisis.

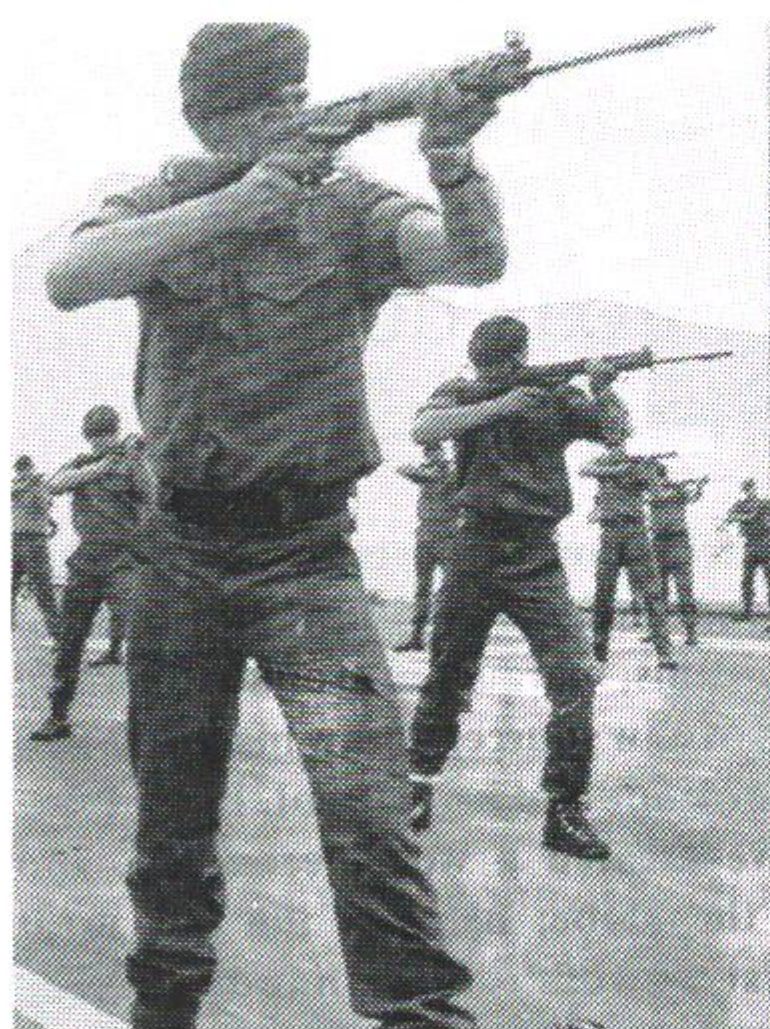
Many people make the mistake of trying to explain the sudden emergence of the Gulf as the biggest international issue by reference to local factors, be it the personality of Saddam

The speed and the huge scale of the US response to Iraq's invasion is entirely out of proportion to Washington's concern about the local situation in Kuwait. The Bush administration chose to steam in and escalate the crisis for international purposes, as a demonstration of America's continued world leadership over its Japanese and German rivals. This is why it is right to see the Gulf crisis as the opening chapter in the New Age of Imperialism. It's not just that the USA has intervened militarily against a third world state—after all, the imperialists have done that on and off throughout the century. What's new is the way in which the third world is systematically being turned into a battlefield for a struggle among the Western powers themselves.

The pressures which have pushed the USA into taking such a drastic step have little to do with Saddam Hussein, and much to do with

profitable manufacturing base, such as Japan and Germany, are better equipped to ride out the storm. Over the past 20 years, the balance of economic power within the imperialist bloc has thus begun to shift. For the last few years the USA, which paid the bills for having the world rebuilt after the Second World War, has itself been dependent upon credit from the Japanese and Germans. This shift has created friction within the Western Alliance. The underlying tensions are now being intensified by the arrival of recession, and brought out into the open by the ending of the Cold War.

The anti-communist consensus of the Cold War acted as a shield behind which the USA could hide the decline of its economic power. The Japanese and Germans may have become able to beat the Americans in the marketplace, but Washington could still force its Nato allies to salute its leadership of



The USA may soon regret encouraging the Japanese and Germans to send forces to the Gulf, as both make plans to play a more militaristic role around the world



Hussein or the price of oil. But the launch of such a major Western invasion always involves wider considerations of imperialist affairs.

Go back to the 'scramble for Africa', and you will find that Britain colonised several unpromising areas, not to grab mineral wealth, but primarily as a strategic move against its imperialist rivals. Britain never much wanted to occupy the area which became known as Uganda, for example. But it did so, as a pre-emptive strike to prevent any other European power getting control of the head of the Nile and the route to Egypt. Then, Britain was the leading world power, desperately trying to maintain its authority against rising challengers, primarily Germany and the USA. Today American imperialism is in a similar position with the resurgence of Japan and Germany. And its invasion of the Gulf probably has even less to do with the local situation than Britain's occupation of Uganda. Indeed, shortly before Saddam invaded Kuwait, the US ambassador to Iraq assured him that Washington had no interest in the border dispute between the two Gulf states.

the recession which is now arriving just as the old world order of the Cold War years departs.

The re-emergence of the crisis tendencies within the capitalist system is exposing the useless, parasitical character of the economics of imperialism. In recent times, declining powers like the USA and especially Britain have relied less and less upon industry and more and more upon unproductive ways of making money: buying and selling shares in other people's enterprises, raking off interest and dividends from overseas investments, etc. The eighties took this sponging system to its extreme, as an explosion of credit brought a transatlantic boom in multi-billion dollar takeovers, buy-outs and junk bond dealings, creating a mountain of paper money underpinned by very little in the way of real material wealth. It was only a matter of time before such a shaky set-up collapsed and recession returned.

But the recessionary tendencies in the world economy have an uneven impact on the imperialist powers. The least dynamic, like the USA and Britain, are the most exposed. Those with a more competitive and

the 'Free World' by raising the spectre of the Soviet military threat—a threat which only Uncle Sam could deal with. The collapse of the Stalinist bloc and disintegration of the Warsaw Pact have now removed America's shield. Since military matters are the only area in which US leadership is still unquestioned in the West, Washington has searched desperately for a new focus through which it could militarise international relations. The Gulf conflict gave Bush his opportunity.

The decision to elevate a little local difficulty in the Gulf into the major global crisis of the age represents the start of America's last stand. At a time when none of the other imperialist powers is yet ready to challenge US leadership directly, the Americans have sought to force their allies back into line one more time by demanding unity against Iraq. As ever, when the imperialists embark upon their Great Power games, it is the masses of a region like the Middle East who end up looking the wrong way down countless thousands of gun barrels.

Set the Gulf situation in the context of the crisis of imperialism, and we can see that the

US-led offensive has been launched for essentially *defensive* reasons—to try to hold the old order together a little longer. This is of more than semantic importance. It indicates that, behind all the rhetorical bluster and military hardware of the Western powers, the New Age of Imperialism is a symptom of their weakness, a sign that their system is spinning out of control.

As the USA militarises international relations and the old world order continues to crack up, nobody can be sure what will happen next. Washington may have succeeded in pulling the other reluctant powers behind its Gulf adventure, but the tensions among them soon re-emerged within the region. The French were the first to try to upstage the Americans by formulating their own Middle Eastern 'peace' proposals; no doubt others will follow. And the USA may soon regret encouraging the Japanese and Germans to send forces to the Gulf, as both of them make plans to rewrite their post-war constitutions so that they can play a more militaristic role around the world. The New Age of Imperialism is only just beginning to warm up.

Where does Britain fit into this picture? As the weakest of the leading imperialist powers, whose place at the top table has been

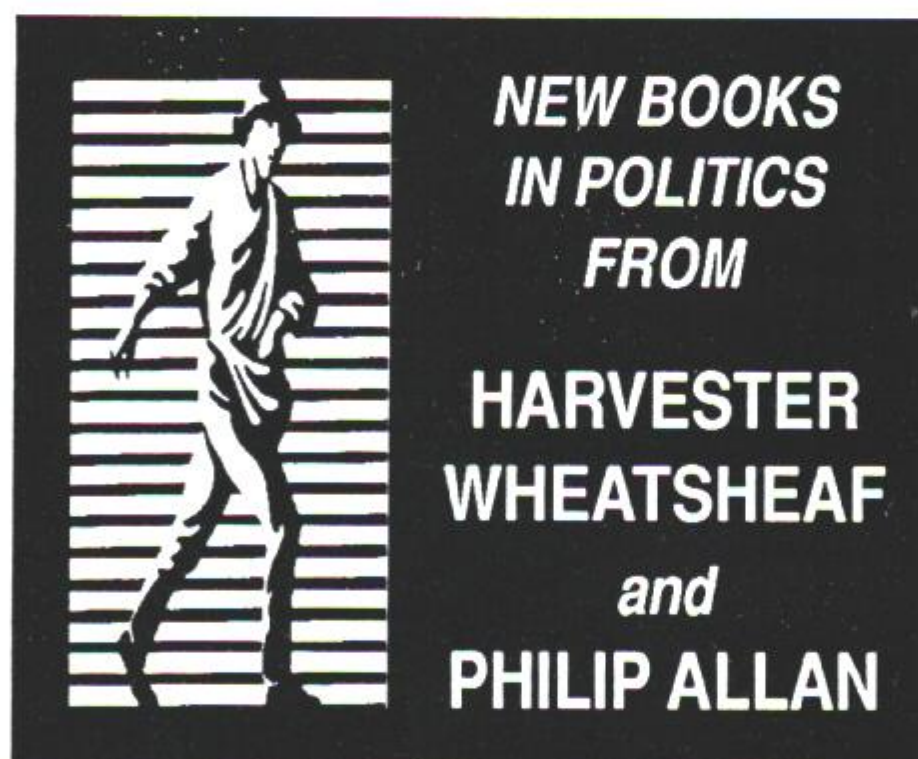
artificially prolonged by its relationship with the USA in the Cold War, Britain has most to lose from the ending of the old order. But the British authorities are not about to go quietly into the night. Even more than with America, Britain's military power far outweighs its economic strength. A bellicose stance offers the British imperialists their best chance of slowing their slide down the world pecking order. That is why, while secretly fearing the consequences of military conflict in the Gulf, the Thatcher government has talked so tough over the past three months.

The New Age of Imperialism is bringing with it a resurgence of chauvinist sentiments within Britain, as the political climate comes further under the influence of the militarists. Elsewhere in this issue of *Living Marxism*, Andrew Calcutt reports on how official outbursts against Europeans and Muslims are encouraging fresh outbreaks of violence and abuse against foreigners and immigrant communities in Britain. Here, too, in the rise of jingoistic passions at home, we find echoes of an earlier age of imperialism. The anthem of English patriots, 'Land of hope and glory', was written during the colonial wars at the end of the nineteenth century; as we near the end of the twentieth, a top conductor can be

sacked for questioning whether the song should be sung at the last night of the proms in the middle of a war drive in the Middle East.

For the first time in many years, there are prominent voices in Britain speaking of imperialism in glowing terms. Peregrine Worsthorne, editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, led this band out of the shadows in his leader column on 16 September. He argued that the Gulf crisis proved the need for global policemen, and that Britain was well-qualified for the post. While other nations had learnt to produce wealth, they had lost 'the habit and taste for the exercise of power'. 'Britain', declared Worsthorne, 'has lost that taste less than most....Possibly Britain was in danger of clinging too long to outmoded imperial values. Thank God she did. For the civilised world will soon need them again as never before'.

'Thank God for imperialism' cry the spokesmen of British conservatism today. As the global order fractures further under the pressures of recession, what Worsthorne & Co quaintly call 'the civilised world' looks set to demonstrate its barbarism on a scale which could make the scramble for Africa look like a diplomatic disagreement.



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Letters

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

The West and the Middle East

In the series of articles 'The West and the Middle East' (October), you seem to over-estimate the West's responsibility for all the ills of the Middle East. Western oil companies have certainly made phenomenal sums from the region, but their development of the oil wealth has undeniably raised living standards and created sophisticated economies too.

You also attribute the lack of democracy in the Arab world to the West. But there have never been democratic traditions in the Arab world; and I'm sure America would much prefer the Saudis to hold elections, rather than string up dissidents, as a way of defusing rebellious sentiment.

One last point: you say that because Kuwait is a British-made entity there is no legitimate Kuwaiti sovereignty. Yet you call for the defence of Iraqi sovereignty against Western invasion. But Iraq is just as much an artificial creation as Kuwait, as the author of your article 'How Britain created the Gulf crisis' points out.

Fiona Healy
Oxford

Hands off Kuwaitis!

Your editorial, 'Hands off the Gulf' (September), is the most cruel and unfair article ever written about the Gulf crisis. The article had no respect for Kuwait as a country. The editor used the invasion of Kuwait to display his hatred for America and other nations which are there for the sake of gaining freedom for Kuwait again. The editor should have read carefully instead of appearing like a fool. The emir is most loved by his people and was shot by the Iranians, not Kuwaitians. The article was disgusting and most cruel.

A Kuwaitian

Don't Kirsten Cale's interviews with wealthy Kuwaitis bemoaning the end of their privileges

convey completely the wrong message? As Marxists we aren't against affluence—we simply want it spread across the whole of society.

Living Marxism is correct that the oil sheikhs creamed off the goodies at the expense of the Arab masses, but also at the expense of the Western powers who for the first time were being dictated to by the third world, if only in a small way. A sustained campaign of racist smears and innuendoes through the seventies and eighties attacked over-wealthy Arabs, their kitsch tastes, their colonisation of Knightsbridge, their mosques in Regents Park, the list goes on. This is the background against which your article appears, and hence has utterly reactionary consequences.

Len Scap
London

Suez; Nye, not Ernie

Most of Charles Longford's article 'What the Western powers taught Saddam' (October), was spot on. Except when he claims that Ernest Bevin was the Labour Party spokesman who compared Egypt's president Nasser to Ali Baba after the nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1956. Bevin had been dead and buried for five years at the time of the Suez crisis. That disgraceful remark was actually made by Aneurin Bevan. It is important to point this out because, whereas Bevin was a notorious right-wing chauvinist, Nye Bevan was (and still is) the hero of the Labour left. Yet he was willing to take a leading role in the Tory government's racist propaganda war against an Arab nationalist leader—just like some on the left today.

Terry MacMahon
London

No racism in Marseilles?

In a journal that claims Marxist epistemology, I was surprised to read your article on Euro-racism in Marseilles ('The FN connection',

August), which to my understanding is advocating Le Penist politics.

Marseilles has always received waves of different cultural and ethnic peoples looking for opportunities. Most of them end up as a source of cheap labour, forming part of the already existing working class of our own capitalist system. It so happens that today the majority of immigrants and a lot of the working class have their origins in North Africa—mainly Algeria—due to 'the old colonial days' and the Francophone politics that the French government is so proud of. Therefore, I would have expected from your journal an analysis of class to be at the root of the problem of Euroracism.

Another error in your argument: this notion of 'black'. In Marseilles there is class conflict, as in most Western capitalist systems. But there is no notion of 'black' v white conflict. Most of the people in the South of France and especially Marseilles have a multi-cultural background—we all look like Mediterraneans: North Africans, south Europeans, Middle Eastern...and not all North Africans are black or Muslim, not all blacks are Muslim and not all Muslims are black or Moorish. Perhaps you should have also questioned Mr Saad, the Lebanese millionaire living in Marseilles, about his living conditions, or perhaps considered the problem of unemployment Marseilles faces today.

Emilie Borel
Brighton

Marxism and science

SG Scott argues 'Workers will reject the rationality of pure science, which is mainly funded by multinationals for profit and governments for weapons, and adopt their own rationality' (letters, October). Should we reject Charles Darwin's theory of evolution or Copernicus' placing of the sun at the centre of the universe?

Scott says that it is not possible to present science as a pure activity outside of its social context; it is only possible to consider science

independently of the profit motive that governs its application in an ideal sense. That much is true. But this intellectual separation is the precondition of a practical liberation of science from the capitalist prison. I agree that the capitalist class only develops new technology where it facilitates exploitation. In the process and without intending to they contribute to society's understanding of nature. Thomas Edison appropriated his employees' invention of the lightbulb by virtue of his ownership of the workshop. But the bulb in my kitchen shines no less brightly for that and I write by it now.

Marxists have always criticised capitalism for its inability to develop consistently society's productive capacities. But this criticism is all the more poignant during a recession that brings the regressive side of capitalism to the surface. In these circumstances the call for a halt to growth is little more than an apology for stagnation. The ideologues of the capitalist class become hostile to progress because it can only be an unfulfilled promise while their system holds sway. This is not the time to join the attacks on 'irresponsible' science.

James Heartfield
London

Byron Gaist (letters, September) seems to be missing the point that it is not scientific progress that is the cause of environmental destruction, but the way in which science and

technology has been used (and abused) by capitalism and Stalinism. Contrary to the deep-seated prejudices held by many Greens about Marxists' attitudes to the environment, we have no desire to preside over environmental destruction. However, we do wish to see continuing scientific progress that yields benefits for the human race.

Would Byron seriously like to live without electrical power with the drudgery and lack of human freedom that would entail? If a technological breakthrough has the potential to benefit the human race and allow more time for people to realise their full potential as human beings rather than simply struggling to survive, then it should be given a whole-hearted welcome. However, under capitalism in its present state of decline, there is scant chance of this happening. Such progress will not come about until the existing capitalist system has been overthrown and replaced with a classless society based on production for human need as opposed to production purely for profit.

Dave Amis
Essex

Violence in the ring

Joe Watson's defence of boxing (Personal Column, September) was fair enough up to a point. But its self-righteous and slightly defensive tone made me wonder who he was defending boxing from. I don't really think the

ruling class has ever been against boxing as such. Boxing was part of the 'Christian manliness' ethos of the boys' clubs which were set up, like the Scouts, in working class areas. The East End's Repton Boys Club (famous for training several champions and the Kray twins) is still funded by the public school that gave it its name. Today, despite brief panics after ring deaths, there is no concerted movement to ban boxing.

Boxing is 90 per cent skill, but a bit of nastiness is needed too; it is a question of combining this with discipline. Motor-racing is more dangerous and a football match can be just as violent. The difference in boxing is that you are *supposed* to hurt the opponent. And this is its appeal—boxing is fighting. Sure, it's great to watch Ali skipping about but it's the grudge fights people love. When I was a kid they had illegal bare-knuckle fights at the local pub. No-rules fighting, and now even men against dogs...it's still going strong. And it's not so different from the boxing scene, just fewer bow-ties and cigars.

I ask you, Joe, would you follow helmet-wearing amateur flyweight boxing with the same passion you show for the heavyweight greats? Of course you wouldn't, so don't join the ranks of the bullshitting 'students of the ring' with their philosophising and moralising. Just admit that like most things boxing has a nasty side, and that's all part of the appeal.

Tony Jaroudy
London



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Secret foreign office documents, released only last year, reveal that you don't have to be Saddam Hussein to occupy Kuwait; the Tory government of Harold Macmillan laid plans to do so—with or without Kuwaiti consent—in 1958. Here, Kirsten Cate unearths the evidence of that forgotten Anglo-American plot; over the page, she uses other official documents to fill in the background on British imperialism in Kuwait

'Ruthlessly to intervene'

When Britain planned to colonise Kuwait

The British authorities would rather we forgot that, as recently as 1958, they planned their own occupation of Kuwait and discussed with the Americans the possibility of turning the Gulf state into a Crown colony. On 22 July 1958 AR Walmsley, a top eastern department foreign office official, wrote a secret memo outlining British plans to invade Kuwait:

'Today...the ministry of defence has told the planning staff to prepare plans immediately for three contingencies:

- (a) immediate entry by invitation, unopposed;
 - (b) entry as soon as possible (minimum is five days from now) against Kuwaiti opposition;
 - (c) operation to secure Kuwait after the Kuwait government had joined the UAR [United Arab Republic].'
- (Foreign office minute from AR Walmsley, 22 July 1958)

Whether they were to invade Kuwait 'by invitation' or 'against Kuwaiti opposition' made little difference to the ministry of defence; so much for the principle of Kuwait's independence. Three days later, Tory foreign secretary Selwyn Lloyd sent prime minister Harold Macmillan a secret telegram from Washington, outlining the proposed military carve-

up which he had discussed with American secretary of state John Foster Dulles, and assuring Macmillan of 'complete United States solidarity with us over the Gulf':

'[The Americans] are assuming that we will take firm action to maintain our position in Kuwait. They themselves are disposed to act with similar resolution in relations to the Aramco oilfields in the area of Dahrhan [in Saudi Arabia]....They assume we will also hold Bahrain and Qatar, come what may. They agree that at all costs these oilfields must be kept in Western hands.

'The immediate problem is whether it is good tactics to occupy Kuwait against the wishes of the ruling family....To produce tolerable conditions for a long-term operation, we should have to take control of the whole of Kuwait and run it as a Crown colony....The effect upon international opinion and the rest of the Arab world would not be good. The advantage of this action would be that we would get our hands firmly on the Kuwait oil....

'On balance I feel that it is very much to our advantage to have a kind of Kuwaiti Switzerland where the British do not exercise physical control....If this alternative is accepted, we must also accept the need, if things go wrong, ruthlessly to

intervene, whoever it is has caused the trouble.' (Telegram from Washington to foreign office, 19 July 1958)

Macmillan's administration had little compunction about initiating a scheme to invade and possibly colonise Kuwait, even in the post-war era of decolonisation. If possible, the foreign office expressed a preference for avoiding direct occupation (because of the anti-British backlash it would cause in the Middle East), and securing the Kuwaiti ruler's agreement to any military intervention. But, if all else failed, Britain was determined 'ruthlessly to intervene' to maintain control over Kuwait. Why?

Kuwait 'the key'

In the fifties, British capitalism was reliant on Kuwaiti oil, and desperate to get its hands on some of the huge sterling and dollar surpluses which the Kuwaiti royal family had accumulated from oil sales to the West. Harold Macmillan went so far as to describe Kuwait as 'the key to economic life in Britain—and of Europe' at the time. However, the rise of militant Arab nationalism under the leadership of Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser, an ally of the Soviet Union, threatened to undermine Western influence in the Gulf. In February 1958 Nasser

merged Egypt with Syria to form the United Arab Republic, and rumours were soon rife about the impending absorption of Kuwait into the UAR—a prospect which filled British statesmen with dread.

A document written by Selwyn Lloyd to the British representative in Bahrain shows foreign office priorities in dealing with Kuwait and other oil-rich states at the time:

'The major British and indeed Western interests in the Persian Gulf may be summarised as:

- (a) to ensure free access for Britain and other Western countries to oil produced in states bordering the Gulf;
- (b) to ensure the continued availability of that oil on favourable terms and for sterling; and to maintain suitable arrangements for the investment of the surplus revenues of Kuwait;

British military action difficult to avoid. It stressed the dangers of Nasserism, arguing that 'it is necessary to envisage a situation in which, not content with leading the Afro-Asian group against the United Kingdom in the United Nations, the Egyptians and the Syrians, or the United Arab Republic would take more positive action, such as the blocking of the Suez Canal or the Syrian pipelines in the context of conflicts in the Arabian peninsula' (Draft memo from Lord S Hood, Washington, to the foreign office, 12 February 1958).

The scenario presented by the memo was designed 'to make the Americans wince...to teach them the facts of life' (internal foreign office minute from Mr Lucas, 5 March 1958). The most important fact of life for the British imperialists was that the spread of Arab nationalism must be halted, if necessary by firepower.

The British and Americans moved fast to protect their interests. On 15 July 1958, US marines landed at Beirut to keep Lebanon under control. Two days later, with American sanction, British paratroops were flown to Amman to defend Western interests in Jordan, and plans were laid for the Anglo-American invasion of the oilfields of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

'The worst case'

The correspondence on the proposed invasion shows the complete contempt British and American officials had for the sovereignty of the Gulf states—the same sovereignty which they now uphold as a pretext for the Gulf invasion. A letter from a foreign office official outlined a battle-plan for the proposed invasion of Kuwait which assumed that the British forces would have to fight their way in:

'The military proposals involve the seizure and holding of the oilfields around Ahmedi...and the political agency in Kuwait town by a force of approximately three battalions. This operation includes both a parachute drop and a seaborne assault and it assumes the worst case, ie, there will be opposition from the Kuwaiti armed forces.' (Draft letter from DMH Riches, foreign office, to W Morris, Washington, 24 July 1958)

However, the British were sensitive to the need to present their aggression in a more positive light. They pointed out that it was 'immeasurably preferable to intervene at the request of the Kuwait ruling family and in cooperation with the Kuwait armed forces if this is at all possible', because Kuwaiti support would make British activity 'very much more presentable internationally'. Similar considerations of public relations explain why the Western powers are so keen to involve Arab states in their Gulf operation today.

Plans for the invasion of Kuwait were shelved in late July 1958. But the fact that the British and Americans had even discussed turning the sheikhdom into a Crown colony demonstrates how, in the decade when imperialism was declared dead, the imperialists were still hard at their dirty work in the Gulf. The little-noticed British documents which have recently been released show the cynicism and ruthless self-interest of the Tory government and its officials back in the fifties. There is nothing to suggest that they have changed since then.

PHOTO: Hulton



1958: US marines invade Lebanon (left), British paras go into Jordan, Whitehall and Washington plan Gulf carve-up

(c) to bar the spread of communism and pseudo-communism in the area and subsequently beyond; and as a precondition of this, to defend the area against the brand of Arab nationalism under cover of which the Soviet government at present prefers to advance.' (Draft document, 'Future policy in the Persian Gulf', S Lloyd to Sir B Burrows, 15 January 1958)

Thus the British government was determined to prevent Kuwait from joining the United Arab Republic, regardless of Kuwaiti opinion on the subject. However, Britain was no longer powerful enough to act alone in the Middle East. It needed US support, and set out to win it.

In February 1958 the foreign office prepared a draft of a secret memo for the US state department, which argued that the protection of Western interests in the region would make

As a foreign office aide notes in a letter to Lord Hood: 'While we all agree that force is to be deprecated this is not a helpful consideration when the mob is battering at the gates.' (Draft letter from H Beeley to Lord S Hood, 27 February 1958)

The political temperature rose in the Middle East throughout 1958. The formation of the United Arab Republic on 1 February fuelled popular anti-Western sentiment across the Arab world. Washington and Whitehall were particularly worried by two events. Civil war broke out in Lebanon. And in Iraq, the hated regime of British hatchetman Nuri as Said and the regent, Prince Abdal-Ilah, was overthrown. The king and regent were killed and Nuri as Said, who tried to escape disguised as an old woman, was uncovered and lynched by an angry crowd. On 14 July 1958, the Iraqis declared a republic.

How Britain built Kuwait

The sheikhdom just south of the palm tree

In the 1930s, a British official wrote that if it were not for Britain 'there would be no Kuwait—and no sheikh'

In January 1899, an India office official paid Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah, a minor Kuwaiti potentate in the Ottoman Empire, 15 000 rupees to sign a secret treaty. Although the British had little use for a patch of desert on the Gulf coast, they were worried that Russia and Germany were seeking to increase their influence in the region. 'We don't want Kuwait', a foreign office official wrote to the Viceroy of India, 'but we don't want anyone else to have it' (A de L Rush (ed), *Records of Kuwait 1899-1961*, Vol 6, 1989, pxxii). Mubarak's motive for the alliance was even more prosaic: he sought British protection because he was afraid the Turks would raid his date gardens if he fell out of favour with Constantinople. Both parties kept quiet about the deal.

Mubarak haggled over annuities from his new British overlord, asking for 'some title or decoration', and indicating that the Turks had paid him an annual grant of 160 tons of dates (the British subsequently paid him in rupees). A report on Lord Curzon's visit to the Kuwait region in 1903 notes with approval that the sheikh had decorated his reception room with 'coloured pictures of HM the King Emperor, HM Queen Alexandra and HM the late Queen Victoria' and received Curzon with '200 horsemen and 20 riding camels and perhaps 4000 men, many of whom had Martini Henry rifles or carbines' (*Records*, Vol 7, pp477-78).

The British privately treated the 20-camel al-Sabah family with contempt. Lord Lansdowne called Mubarak 'an untrustworthy savage' (*Records*, Vol 6, pxxii); and the India office compiled unflattering character profiles of his relatives. A 1927 note on Kuwait describes one of Mubarak's successors as 'a

lamentably weak ruler' who was 'obstinate' and 'mean'. Other family members were described as being 'of no great intelligence', 'nothing in him...and he drinks' and a 'fat cheery man...who wears ringlets' (R Schofield and G Blake (eds), *Arabian Boundaries: Primary Documents 1853-1957*, Vol 7, 1988, pp234-35).

Nevertheless, the British were careful to cultivate the al-Sabah family's political loyalty through regular state visits. A report describing 'our simple-minded star-at-home', Sheikh Ahmad, and his travels to London in 1918, noted that he displayed the talent for shopping which later generations of the al-Sabah family turned into a way of life: 'Selfridges, that huge Anglo-American department store in Oxford Street, was a popular haunt of Ahmad's, and he was much amused by the sales-girls to whom he refers as "madams".' (*Records*, Vol 7, p512)

With Turkey's defeat in the First World War and the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, Britain took direct control of much of the Gulf region. In 1922-23 the British high commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, backed by RAF bombers, carved out the modern states of Kuwait and Iraq by imposing a border between them. Even the nominal ruler of Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmad, was unclear about Cox's maplines. 'I still do not know', Ahmad wrote to the British political agent in 1923, 'what the frontier between Iraq and Kuwait is, and I shall be glad if you will kindly give me this information' (*Arabian Boundaries*, Vol 7, p229). There has been confusion and bitterness over the Kuwait/Iraq border ever since, reflecting the artificiality of the states which Britain created.

Before the formal partition of those two areas in 1923, Kuwait had been part of the region now called Iraq. The British divided the two as a device to keep the region under imperial control, then spent the decades which followed trying to sustain the division and prevent the emergence of a united Arab opposition.

The Kuwaiti border's lack of political or geographical legitimacy caused a lot of problems for the British authorities. In 1935, officials suggested that, while a new map of the region might show the boundaries as 'undemarcated frontiers', 'a note should be added stating that the boundaries had been defined, so as to remove any erroneous impression that the boundaries were merely approximate' (*Arabian Boundaries*, Vol 7, p257). Yet their border markers illustrated how approximate the frontier was; part of it was described as 'just south' of the most southerly palm tree at Safwan. The Iraqis tried to increase their territory in the forties by the simple expedient of laying out more palm groves in the vicinity.

The British were highly sensitive to the emergence of pro-Iraqi sentiment in Kuwait. The artificial al-Sabah statelet was so unstable that, in the thirties, one British agent even considered a visit by Iraqi boy scouts to be a security threat: 'I don't feel particularly happy about the arrival of these people as, from my experience, the Iraq government frequently uses their boy scouts and educational staff to forward their own propaganda....I suggest you watch...[them] at your end closely.' (*Records*, Vol 6, pp392-93)

Oil and empire

Britain's original concern with Kuwait was strategic, to keep other Western powers out of the Gulf region and keep the Arab world divided. After the discovery of Kuwaiti oil in the thirties, however, the British became increasingly concerned to control the sheikhdom's internal affairs as well. In their drive to keep a tight grip on Kuwait, the British authorities endorsed the al-Sabahs' near-feudal, repressive policies.

In 1939, the acting Iraqi premier complained to the British ambassador that it was wrong that the Kuwaiti sheikh 'should deny his people any effective share in the government of the principality and that he should spend nothing from his considerable public revenues on education, health or public services of any kind'. The ambassador's reply was lame to say the least: 'I had not been [to Kuwait] myself but many

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people who had had spoken with enthusiasm of the general happiness of the people. There might not be any modern schools but there were good religious schools, the mosques were well attended and public morality stood high.'

The Iraqi minister responded that it was 'distressing to think that there were people so ignorant and backward that they could be satisfied with a merely religious education' (*Records*, Vol 6, pp440-41). The discussion throws some ironic light on the way in which the British have always presented themselves as civilised progressives battling against the forces of religious fundamentalism and political conservatism in the Middle East.

The British became closely involved in running Kuwait. They were particularly concerned about the regulation of Kuwait's financial affairs. A 1948 foreign office minute argued that the priority in Kuwait and other Gulf states was 'to ensure that the primitive administration of these sheikhdoms is not overwhelmed by the sudden access of wealth due to the exploitation of their oil resources' (*Records*, Vol 7, p576). British representatives pressured the sheikhs to employ British financial advisers, administrators, customs personnel, policemen and even town planners. A

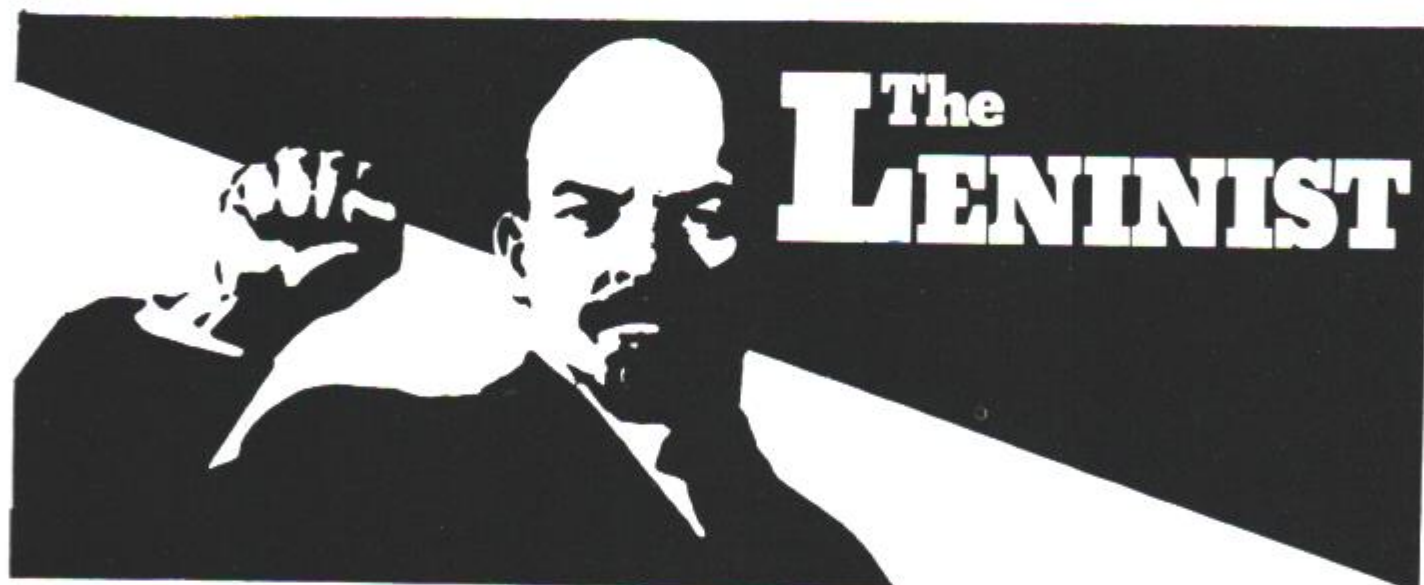
letter to the foreign office in 1948 noted with satisfaction that the sheikh had 'engaged two British-trained police officers from Palestine' (*Records*, Vol 7, p584).

By the fifties the sheikhdom's oil production and revenues had increased astronomically, while Britain teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. In 1953, Woodrow Wyatt, then a Labour MP, wrote to foreign secretary Anthony Eden to suggest that the sheikhs in Kuwait be 'advised' to spend their oil royalties in the sterling area. He added that he had not raised this proposal in the house of commons 'because I did not wish to start hares about the exploitation of backward areas' (*Records*, Vol 7, p604). As if a British government would ever consider such a thing! In fact, a plan to use Kuwait to prop up the parlous British economy was already being discussed.

In a paper produced in July 1958, the foreign office argued that, because of Kuwait's importance to the British economy, 'HMG can no longer afford to confine themselves to the role authorised by the treaties [of 1899]...but must also interest themselves in all matters which affect the political and economic stability of Kuwait or which may affect the interests of the United Kingdom in

the widest sense'. In short, Britain wanted the tightest possible control over Kuwait short of direct colonisation. As the paper put it, 'the policy of the ruler both in internal and external matters should at all times be in harmony with the interests of HMG' (*Records*, Vol 7, p611). So it was that, in the supposed era of decolonisation, the nature of the British-Kuwaiti relationship made Whitehall increasingly concerned to control the sheikhdom. This was the attitude which led, in 1958, to the plan to occupy Kuwait and the proposal to turn it into a Crown colony.

Kuwait was the artificial creation of British imperialism. The official records show how it was constructed, consolidated, protected and very nearly recolonised by policy-makers in London. It has been exploited for its oil wealth and used to create divisions in the Arab world. No doubt if more government papers become available under the 30-year rule they will provide further insights into incidents such as the intervention of British troops in newly independent Kuwait in 1961. But it already seems certain that, for a mere 15 000 rupees, Britain got itself a bargain.



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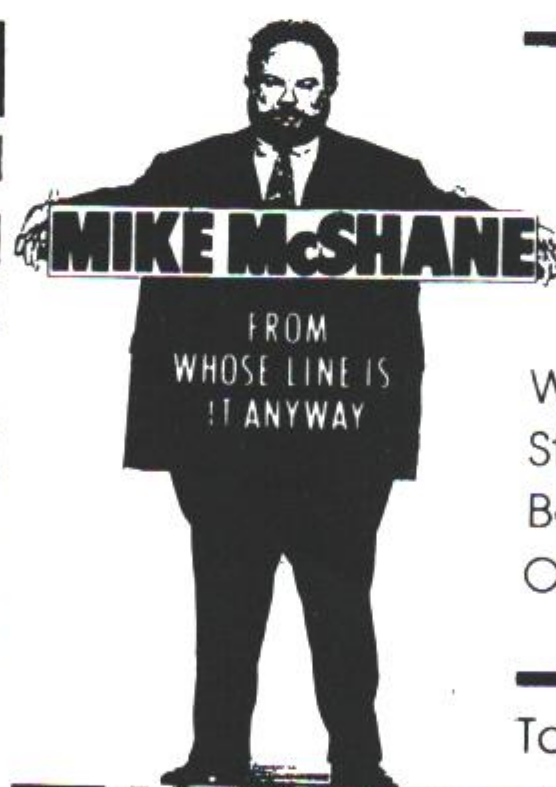
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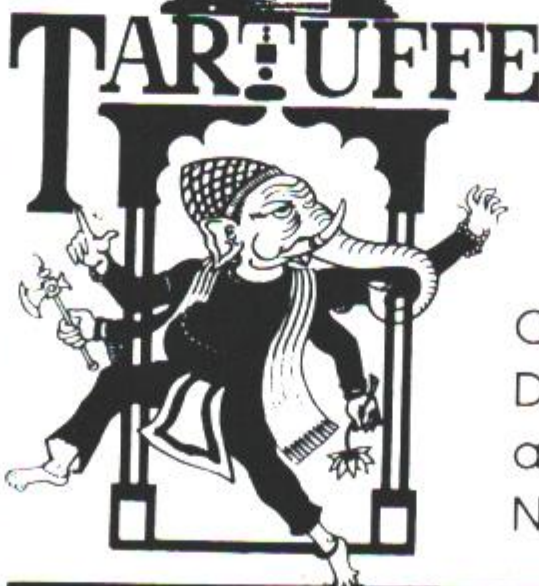
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The Palestinians and the Gulf crisis

Why they hate the West

The Palestinians' experience of imperialism has made them the most fervent opponents of Western intervention in the Middle East, explains Daniel Nassim

Even before Israeli police massacred 21 Palestinians in east Jerusalem on 8 October, the majority of Palestinians had taken sides with Iraq against the Western intervention in the Gulf. After the killings, the contrast between the Western powers' sanctions and military action against the Iraqis, and their half-hearted paper condemnations of the Israelis, confirmed the Palestinian view that the West values Arab blood cheaply. Little wonder that anti-Western sentiment is so strong in the Middle East; or that of all the peoples in the region, and perhaps the world, the Palestinians are the most militant anti-imperialists.

The Palestinians living within the 'green line' of pre-1967 Israel, who are granted Israeli citizenship, are meant to be the most moderate. Yet, according to a survey cited in the conservative *Jerusalem Post* in August, two thirds of them supported the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; and many of the other third would defend Iraq against the West. Palestinians have organised demonstrations in support of Iraq in Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and inside the green line.

The militancy of Palestinians often shocks Western liberals. Writing in the *Guardian* soon after the Iraqi invasion, Martin Woollacott described the solid support for Iraq among Palestinian intellectuals, reporting how he 'emerges into the midday heat of Jerusalem bemused by the unqualified nature of the Palestinian argument', which exhibits 'the same mixture of excessive rhetoric, flexible morality and genuine passion that has been seen so often before' (13 August 1990).

If Woollacott had a nodding acquaintance with Palestinian history

and society he should be able to rise above such platitudes. Perhaps he was suffering from too much sun. 'The unqualified nature of the Palestinian argument' is a reaction to their unqualified experience of manipulation and oppression at the hands of Western imperialism and its Israeli proxy.

Imperialism is at the centre of the story of modern Palestine. The Palestinian national identity was first forged in opposition to British imperialism in the twenties and thirties. Until the break-up of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, there were no distinct nationalities in the modern sense among the Arabs. Britain and France changed that by dividing up the Middle East and carving out new, artificial states under their control. At the San Remo conference of 1920, five League of Nations 'mandates' (another word for colonies) were split between the French, who took Syria and Lebanon, and the British, who got Iraq, Jordan and Palestine. By 1944 all of these states had been granted formal independence—with the exception of Palestine.

Made in Britain

The Arab people of the area designated as Palestine suffered the familiar hardships and brutality of colonial occupation. In addition, however, the British created the framework for the establishment of a Jewish state on Arab soil. In the Balfour declaration of 1917, the British prime minister had promised to create a 'homeland for the Jewish nation' in Palestine. As Jews emigrated to British-occupied Palestine in the Zionist settlements of the twenties and thirties, the indigenous inhabitants of the land were dispossessed. The Zionists' aim

was not just for Jews to emigrate to Palestine, but to establish an exclusive Jewish state there. This meant creating a political system and society at the expense of the Arab population—which is why the existence of the Zionist state of Israel and freedom for the Palestinians have always been irreconcilable aims.



The Arab inhabitants of Palestine developed a sense of national identity in opposition to British colonialism and the Zionist settlements which it had allowed to take their land. The Palestinians' fierce pride and hostility to Western interference, the sentiment which still bemuses British journalists today, was created in this period as a reaction against their oppression by British imperialism. In 1936, the Palestinians staged their first armed uprising, which was brutally suppressed by the British.

Britain's Palestinian mandate ended after the Second World War. It was replaced, not by an independent Palestinian nation, but by the Israeli state, the foundation of which in 1948 was soon followed by the expulsion of 750 000 Arabs. The Palestinians were robbed of their homeland and dispersed around the Middle East. Today they are at best second class citizens in Israel or the surrounding Arab states. More often they are denied citizenship of the countries where they live, often within refugee camps.

The Western powers have been responsible for the suffering of the Palestinians. Initially Britain backed the Zionist movement because it

wanted to create what Ronald Storrs, first British military governor of Jerusalem, called a 'little loyal Jewish Ulster' in a hostile Arab world. In more modern terms American officials describe Israel as a 'strategic asset' in the Middle East. Although US leaders have become increasingly embarrassed by actions such as the Jerusalem massacre, and increasingly interested in finding other allies in the Middle East (like Saudi Arabia and, until recently, Iraq), their policy in the region remains closely tied to Israel today. Because the Israeli state depends upon Western support for its survival, they can rely upon it to act as a pro-imperialist bulwark in the region.

A death a day

In the West Bank and Gaza every aspect of Palestinian life is regulated by the Israeli army. Since Israel occupied these territories in the Six Day War of 1967 it has taken control over water supplies (vital in such an arid area), town planning, road construction and electricity. It issues licences for all economic projects, unions, charities, hospitals and schools. Israel has confiscated much of the land on the West Bank and forbids Palestinians from building on two thirds of it.

Israel does not hesitate to hammer Palestinian resistance. Over 50 000 Palestinians from the occupied territories were arrested in the first two years of the *intifada* (uprising) which started in December 1987. Many were interned without trial. More than a thousand Palestinians have been killed during the *intifada*, an average of about one a day. Thousands more have been wounded.

While the eyes of the world have been trained on the preparations for war in the Gulf, the Israelis have continued making war on the Palestinians. After the October massacre on the holy mount in occupied east Jerusalem, Israel imposed curfews across the West Bank and Gaza. In August, after an Israeli army reservist was killed by Palestinians in the Bureij refugee camp, the Israeli army shot and wounded 180 Palestinians, arrested 800, put the camp under a curfew for a fortnight, and bulldozed Palestinian homes. The scale and indiscriminate character of Israeli crackdowns demonstrates that all Palestinians are treated as criminals who, by their very existence, are a threat to the Zionist state.

Even the minority of Palestinians who are Israeli citizens, the 750 000 who live inside the green line, are second class citizens. In Israel everyone carries an identity card

which states whether you are a Jew, Muslim or Christian, and rights are determined by whether you are Jewish rather than whether you are an Israeli citizen. Over 90 per cent of land and many jobs are designated for Jews only. Palestinians inside the green line are completely cut off from Israeli society. They go to different schools and live in separate Palestinian areas, where their local authorities are given far less funding than Jewish ones.

The oppression of the Palestinians does not stop at the borders of the Israeli state. Indeed the existence of the Israeli state ensures that they are scattered across the Arab world and beyond. In all Arab states the Palestinians have second class status. Arab rulers fear the Palestinians as a threat to the existing order in the Middle East. Both Israel and the Arab regimes have a stake in the stability of the region. The Palestinians, on the other hand, have every interest in overturning the status quo.

Igniting Arabia

The Palestinian question has the potential to ignite Arab nationalism and destabilise the entire Middle East. Thus, while Arab rulers will make token gestures of support for the Palestinian struggle, they crack down on expressions of militancy within their states. Both the Jordanian and Syrian armies have caused Palestinian bloodbaths in the recent past.

Since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait the panicky Gulf states have stepped up their repression of Palestinians. Tiny Qatar, home to 14 000 Palestinians, has ordered hundreds out of the country. Saudi Arabia has reportedly forced tens of thousands of Palestinians to leave. Outside the Gulf, Egypt has imposed new restrictions on Palestinians entering the country—even those with Egyptian travel documents—and Syrian troops are reported to have surrounded Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

Behind the armies of Israel, Jordan and Syria stand the Western powers, the designers and the beneficiaries of the existing order in the Middle East. The Palestinians are an extreme example of what the West has done to the whole of the region.

Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein has nothing to do with the particular policies of the Baathist regime in Iraq. Palestinians back the Iraqi leader as a symbol of opposition to the West. That is why he is hailed as the new Saladin. If Saddam was a camel they would still support him against Western guns and tanks.

Jerusalem: a mob of Palestinian rioters attack three innocent Israeli bystanders



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Attitudes towards Saddam also reflect the problems within the Palestinian camp. The *intifada* is three years old next month and, despite the renewed protests which followed the massacre, it has seemed stalemated for some time. For its part, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has appeared far more interested in pursuing the Western-sponsored diplomatic process than in encouraging a popular uprising. With their own struggle in a rut, ordinary Palestinians took Saddam's cause as a welcome outlet through which to express their anger against the West.

While the Palestinian masses have sided firmly with Iraq against imperialism, their leaders are more equivocal. PLO chief Yassir Arafat has opposed Western intervention, but also called for United Nations 'peacekeeping' forces to be sent in to police the Gulf—presumably the

only on condition it does not 'interfere' in their internal affairs. Oil-rich Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have swelled PLO coffers to win this concession. But it has meant that the Palestinians are prohibited from trying to win active solidarity from the Arab masses, thus giving up their most powerful ally in the struggle for liberation.

Instead of trying to mobilise the Arab masses, PLO leaders have attached the Palestinian cause to a succession of Arab rulers. These regimes have tried to manipulate the Palestinians and exacerbated divisions inside the PLO. Fatah, the mainstream nationalist group led by Arafat, has been close to the conservative Gulf states, while the more radical Palestinian groups tend to be allied to Syria. The PLO factions have been used as pawns as their respective patrons jockey for influence in the region.

Palestinians threatened the stability of Saddam's regime he would not hesitate to deal with them as harshly as any other Arab—or Israeli—leader.

The Arab regimes have put immense pressure on the PLO to give up armed struggle and rely on diplomacy. As a consequence, the PLO has become increasingly dependent on the Western-controlled diplomatic process to win concessions. Yet the Western powers are the major beneficiaries of the Middle Eastern system built upon the oppression of the Palestinians. Their diplomacy is an attempt to disarm and divert the anti-imperialist struggle.

In recent times, the Western powers have softened their diplomatic face towards the Palestinians. The USA has stopped giving uncritical support to whatever Israel does and, along with Britain, has proposed negotiations about the creation of a Palestinian homeland in what are now the occupied territories. These initiatives have been welcomed by the PLO. But such diplomacy is intended to refine the oppression of the Palestinians, not remove it. The Western powers would prefer to see an end to both embarrassing Israeli massacres and destabilising Palestinian resistance, with the conflict being confined to an endless round of talks. Meanwhile, Israel would continue to stand on the Palestinian nation. Even in the unlikely event of the West's proposals coming to fruition, a little Palestinian homeland in Israel's shadow could only be a prison camp, on the model of the black 'homelands' set up by the apartheid regime.

The dangers of the diplomatic trap are becoming clear today. British foreign secretary Douglas Hurd has criticised the PLO's expressions of sympathy for Iraq against the West as 'a serious mistake', and US president George Bush has said that a solution to the Palestinian question can only come after the Gulf crisis is settled on the West's terms. The Western powers' message to the Palestinians is that, in order to be accepted at the high tables of international diplomacy, they will have to abandon any notion of anti-imperialism.

The Palestinian people have once more shown their determination to stand up to imperialism and its Israeli allies. They deserve better than to be led yet again into the dead end of supporting untrustworthy Arab rulers and the trickery of Western diplomacy.

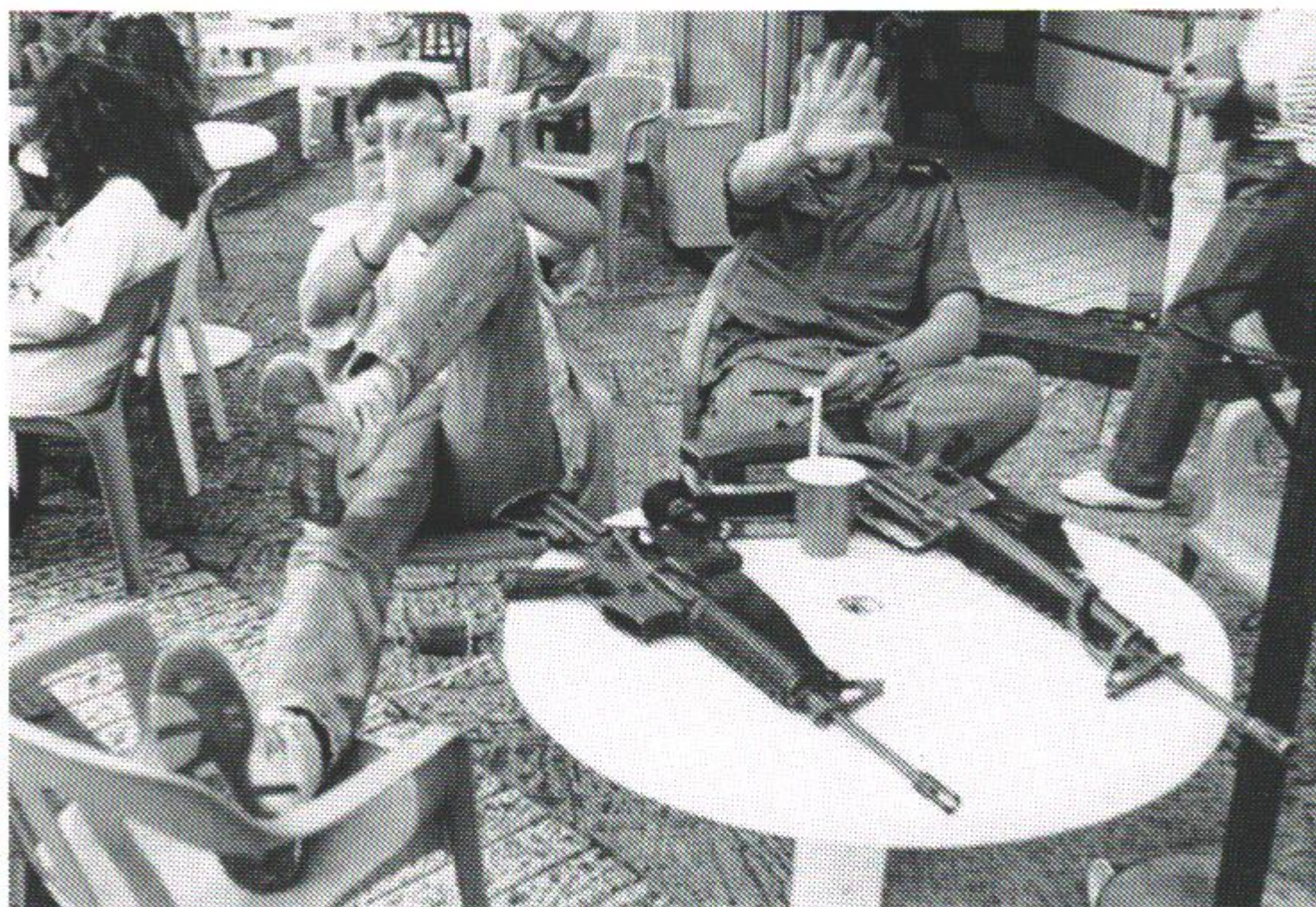


PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

The Israeli school of diplomacy: civilians with machine-guns

same sort of UN police force which has stood aside and allowed Israelis to massacre Palestinians on more than one occasion in the past. The PLO's radical wing has been just as schizophrenic. George Habash, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, has threatened retaliation if the West attacks Iraq, but also condemned the Iraqi invasion.

Price of diplomacy

The PLO leaders' rather equivocal attitude is largely due to their relationship with the Arab regimes—a factor which has continually held back the expression of Palestinian anti-imperialism. Since its foundation in the sixties the PLO has been hampered by its close links with the Arab regimes. The token support which the PLO has gained from them has been bought at enormous cost. The Arab states have always made it clear that they will back the PLO

As a consequence of this strategy, the leaders of the Palestinian left now find themselves in an invidious position. Their relationship with Syria has been badly compromised by that regime's support for Western intervention in the Gulf. So George Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Nayef Hawatmeh of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine have both been trying to build bridges with Jordan for the first time in 20 years. Yet it was Jordan, ruled then as now by King Hussein, which expelled the entire PLO leadership and killed 3000 Palestinians in 'Black September' 1970.

Neither can Saddam Hussein be relied upon to aid the Palestinians. He will use their cause to win popular support both at home and in the wider Arab world; thus he issued the loudest condemnations of Israel after the Jerusalem killings. But, as the Kurdish people can testify, if the

November 1920: the League of Nations

'A thieves kitchen'

Jill Gordon thinks that the fate of the League of Nations augurs ill for the United Nations

On the seventieth anniversary of the foundation of the League of Nations it is worth taking stock of why it failed, especially since today many people are investing their hopes for world peace in a very similar body: the United Nations.

On 15 November 1920, the assembly of the League of Nations convened for its first session in Geneva. After the carnage of the First World War, the league was promoted as the institution which would bring together the nations of the world in an alliance dedicated to preserving world peace. Just 19 years later, the failure of this enterprise was brought home forcefully by the outbreak of the Second World War. In between the first and second bouts of barbarism, the league had stumbled from one crisis to another, apparently incapable of halting the drift towards war.

There have been many explanations advanced for the failure of the league. The most common is that it lacked the authority to control errant members. This is often seen in technical terms: for instance, the toothlessness of the organisation has been put down to its lack of an army. But this is an inadequate account of why the project failed.

Mandatory colonialism

In fact, from the point of view of the imperialist powers, the league was not an absolute failure. After the First World War, it was given the job of redistributing the colonial possessions of the defeated powers. The former colonies were handed over to the victorious imperialist powers under a new system of 'mandates'. Of the 18 territories, Britain got six, France four, Belgium one, Japan three, South Africa one, Australia two, New Zealand one. As one authority on the league noted, the mandates system was simply colonialism under another name, but it solved a difficult problem: 'Namely, how could the Allied powers which had seized (or in the modern jargon, "liberated") German and Turkish dependencies be allowed to keep their gains without affronting people, especially in the United States, who wanted to break free from old-fashioned imperialism?' (FS Northedge, *The League of Nations: Its Life and Times*, 1952, p193)

The history of the league is littered with examples of its use as an imperialist front against the colonies. In 1923, the Bondelswart rebellion in South West Africa was brutally crushed by South Africa, its mandatory power. The league set up a commission of inquiry, found South Africa guilty, but did nothing. When Syria rebelled against French rule in 1936, the league merely chided the French for their 'mistakes'. When fighting broke out between Arabs and Jews in Palestine the same year, the league criticised the British for not using sufficient force to suppress it.

However, while the league was a useful policeman for imperialism in the colonies, it was incapable of laying down the law when it came to disputes within the imperialist camp. This was not because it did not have an army to act as an enforcer: the weakness of the league was a symptom of the fact that no single imperialist nation was powerful enough to call the shots in the

international arena. There was no hegemonic power capable of managing world affairs by virtue of its own economic, political and military pre-eminence.

The USA had already overtaken Britain as the leading economic power in this period, but its political leadership was established only after the Second World War. Britain was still in theory if not in fact the dominant power, but was grappling with the emergence of America and Germany as challengers. France was too weak to play any decisive role. In short, there was a power vacuum which the league was incapable of filling.

The league was rendered impotent from the start thanks to the non-participation of the USA. US president Woodrow Wilson played a leading role planning the league, regarding it as the institution through which America could establish itself as the foremost imperialist power. But the US ruling class was not ready to take on this global role; congress refused to join the league.

5, 10, 15, 20...

19 November 1980: JR shot in Dallas
10 November 1975: Portugal leaves Angola; civil war starts
29 November 1965: Mary Whitehouse sets up National Viewers and Listeners Association
2 November 1960: Lady Chatterley's Lover sells out in a day after obscenity prosecution fails
13 November 1925: Tutankhamun unswathed after 3000 years

Because there was no dominant imperialist power to sort things out, the inter-war years were a time of constant crisis management. All the unresolved tensions built into the post-1918 settlement were played out in the thirties as economic recession intensified rivalries among the imperialist powers. The league became the arena in which these enmities were fought out, bearing out everything that Lenin had said about it back in 1920. He called the league 'a pack of wolves that are all the time at each other's throats', 'an alliance of robbers, each trying to snatch something from the others', and 'a thieves' kitchen'.

The first major fall-out came in 1933, when Japan withdrew from the league. In 1931, Japan had invaded Manchuria to strengthen its hand against nationalist forces in China, and set up the puppet state of Manchukuo. The Western powers, concerned at growing Japanese influence in the region, ensured that the league sided with China and refused to recognise Manchukuo. Tokyo said *sayonara*.

Germany was next to leave in October 1933, after it had been refused permission to achieve arms parity with Britain and France at the disarmament conference. Germany had been excluded from the league until 1926 and had carried the burden of punitive reparations

payments, loss of territory and disarmament enshrined in the Versailles treaty. But by the time the Nazis came to power in January 1933, it was on the rise again as a world power. Its exit from the league indicated that the tensions among the major imperialist nations were intensifying.

However, Britain was overstretched and not yet ready to fight a war to defend its Empire. As the British played for time, the league became a lamer and lamer duck. In October 1935, Italy invaded Abyssinia. The league imposed sanctions the following month, but Britain and France were anxious to avert a showdown and come to some arrangement with Italy. Whitehall tried to create a special sphere of influence for Italian economic development and colonisation in Abyssinia under the supervision of the league.

German remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936 diverted attention from Abyssinia. Again the league failed to act. In July 1936, Britain terminated sanctions against Italy and persuaded the league to do likewise, recognising that it would have enough on its hands dealing with Germany without making more enemies for itself. France too made a deal with Italy. In 1937, Britain moved a league resolution to accept Italy's occupation of Abyssinia.

To stall for time, Britain and France tried without success to get Italy and Germany back into the league. In 1938, Germany's *Anschluss* with Austria brought about yet another breach of the Versailles treaty. Once again the league did nothing. It ignored the Czech and Polish crises of 1938 and 1939, concerning itself only with mundane technicalities. As war approached, Britain, France and others withdrew from the league's binding arbitration commitments. Its last act was to expel the Soviet Union for its attack on Finland in the winter of 1939-40, after which it lapsed into silence until its demise in 1946.

After the war the USA emerged as the undisputed leader of the world, dictating the terms of the new international order through the institutions it created—primarily Nato and the United Nations. For 40 years or so the status quo prevailed, facilitating a degree of international harmony unprecedented in the twentieth century. It is only now under the combined impact of the decline of US power, the rise of Germany and Japan and the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe that the balance of power established in 1945 is beginning to break down.

In this context, the prospects are not good for the United Nations. Ironically, the Gulf crisis has thrust this previously dormant body into the international limelight and raised hopes that it can play the role of preserving world peace which was once accorded to the League of Nations. On the surface it would appear that it has been successful so far in rallying the nations of the world behind its banner. Yet the underlying tensions among the imperialist powers are already making themselves felt in the Gulf. As America's grip on global affairs loosens further in the years ahead and the divisions open up in the imperialist camp, the United Nations looks set to go the same way as the league.

'Get back to Arabia'

British Muslims in the firing line

The Gulf crisis has created a new focus for racism

The British media didn't wait for a shooting war to start before launching a propaganda war against Iraqis and other Muslims in Britain. On 20 August the *Daily Star* attacked 'Iraqis in Britain claiming social security while their leader Saddam Hussein is threatening British babies with starvation'. The paper called for repatriation and reparation: 'Round up the Iraqi students and put them on a slowboat to Baghdad, with orders to work their passage home.' Tory MPs joined the deportation call. A month later, 23 Iraqi students from colleges as far afield as Cardiff, Manchester and Newcastle were thrown out of the country.

Independent columnist Janet Daley suggested that British Muslims opposed to the Gulf intervention were guilty of 'potential treason'. *Today* alluded to Norman Tebbit's cricket test of Asian loyalties, and declared 'now we have the real thing'. In the eyes of the British press and politicians, any Muslim who has not publicly proved himself 'the most loyal of loyalists' (Paul Barker, *Sunday Times*) should be treated as an enemy agent in an Islamic fifth column.

These sentiments are echoed and amplified in pubs, clubs and shopping centres across Britain. Everywhere they go, Muslims are being challenged to take the loyalty test in an atmosphere of simmering hostility which could explode if war breaks out in the Gulf. Whether they are Arab or Asian, a supporter of Saddam Hussein or a refugee fleeing his regime (as most Iraqis in Britain

are), it makes little difference to the racists.

Attacks on Asians and other Muslims in Britain are nothing new, and have increased in recent years, notably in the wake of the Rushdie affair. But the British intervention in the Gulf, and the anti-Arab propaganda accompanying it, is creating a new focus for chauvinist hostility. As one young Asian put it, 'All my life I've been called a "dirty Paki". Now I'm a "dirty Iraqi" as well'.

Reports from just a few places around Britain give a glimpse of what the Gulf crisis means on the home front.

Birmingham: In August the *Sunday Telegraph* ran an article on the Saddam Hussein mosque in Aston, Birmingham. In the following weeks the mosque was daubed with graffiti and set on fire.

In September, an Asian family were driven out of their home in King's Heath, Birmingham. A racist campaign against them had escalated from a residents' petition to a man firing blanks at an Asian woman on the doorstep and promising that 'Next time it will be for real'. A near neighbour explained their reasons for victimising the family: 'The Muslim nutters are trying to take over the world. Look at the fifth column they've got in Britain. They indoctrinate their children.' She thought 'Hitler' Hussein was responsible for the desecration of Jewish graves.

'You hear people saying things behind your back', said an activist in the Sparkhill Action Group, 'like "Bomb the Muslims, bomb Iraq" '.

He blames the media for preparing people for war. Fazlun Khalid, from the Muslim Education Forum, commented: 'Once the first salvoes are fired, there are people in this country who will consider that this Muslim community is part of Iraq.'

Rochdale, Greater Manchester: The Gulf crisis has coincided with an upsurge of racist violence in the town. On Sunday 26 August white youths invaded the Milkstone Road area and smashed the windows of Asian shops. Muslim youth attending the Rochdale festival next day were followed out of the town centre by racists, one of them carrying a handgun. Mounted police dispersed the racists, then sealed off Milkstone Road and arrested Asian youth at random. Five Asian youths were charged with making petrol bombs.

Community leader Aslam is convinced there's a connection between coverage of the Gulf and the increasingly hostile atmosphere in Rochdale: 'People watch the news and it's 80 per cent propaganda. Then English youth drive up here shouting "Get back to Arabia". We are suffering because of the Gulf crisis.' 'I was at the garage', reported 22-year old Shab, 'when four of them drove up, drunk, saying "Petrol's gone up because of your Saddam Hussein....Get back to your own country" '. His friend Yufi described how white youths whisper 'Go fight for Saddam Hussein's army' when they pass, and 'young Asians end up getting battered'.

Local racists keep up a barrage of anti-Muslim letters which the *Rochdale Observer* sees fit to publish anonymously. 'They must obey our



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

around Britain. Reports compiled by Andrew Calcutt

laws and respect our way of life. If they don't they know where they can go—signed Losing Patience'; 'The Asian population is bleeding this country dry—Hard Working Brit'. On 1 September, the paper published a letter from 'Fighter': 'Some British Muslims are sticking up for Saddam Hussein....England should tell Saddam Hussein we will do a swap—British Muslims for British hostages.'

Aslam says that racist violence in Rochdale is 'boiling up. I've been here 17 years and this is the worst. Only yesterday my son was attacked. My daughters used to go to school on their own—now we take them and fetch them. It is no longer safe for me to go out at night'. Asian taxi drivers are especially vulnerable. Aslam reported that, since the start of the Gulf crisis, three local drivers have sold their cars because they dare not work nights anymore. Like many of Rochdale's 20 000 Asians, Aslam is now unemployed, angry and 'stuck in no-man's land'.

Glasgow: Three Iraqi students were stabbed as they left the Tuxedo Princess nightclub. They have since fled the country. Strathclyde police wrote to Iraqi students at Glasgow's universities warning them not to take part in anti-Western demonstrations. Glasgow University expelled two Iraqi students who appeared briefly in a local news broadcast saying they did not agree with sending Western troops into the Gulf. They too have gone home. The number of patients referred to Arab students at the university's dental faculty suddenly dropped to almost zero. Racists chanted 'Bomb the bastards' around a street ornament in the

shape of an Asian prayer flag, installed in Buchanan Street as part of the 'city of culture' celebrations. Hours later it was vandalised.

Yorkshire: In Sheffield, a Muslim man was beaten up by a racist gang who accused him of being 'one of Saddam Hussein's boys'. The Yemeni community centre has received bomb threats.

In Dewsbury, Westtown mosque was attacked and a nearby house petrol-bombed. 'Racist views may have been dormant, but issues such as Rushdie and the Gulf bring it all out', says Khalid from the Asian Youth Movement. 'As an Asian you automatically sense when there's something in the air. There is a general atmosphere of uneasiness. Just walking down the town you can feel that we are not accepted as British citizens.'

In Bradford, Mohammed Saddique of Muslim Youth in Britain reports 'a lot of aggravation and resentment that Muslims are not supporting Britain and the United States. We are accused of being disloyal. This has been propped up by the media'. Bradford Muslims planning to demonstrate against the Western presence in the Gulf received what Saddique described as 'very strong advice not to do so' from West Yorkshire police. The Bradford *Telegraph and Argus* has featured letters stating that Muslims who oppose the Western troops shouldn't be in Britain. 'This is typical of the racist elements', says Mohammed Saddique. 'We have had cases before like halal meat and [racist headmaster] Ray Honeyford. Although this is not yet at that level,

it's simmering.' In nearby Leeds a landlord evicted a student for being Iraqi.

London: 'Racism has been strengthened by the impression given in the Gulf news coverage that white societies are the ones which come up with solutions', says Kumar Murshid of the Gulf Initiative, a London-based umbrella for Muslim community groups: 'If there is any kind of conflict, no doubt there will be a proportional rise in attacks on Muslims.'

In August the Iraqi cultural centre was vandalised. Worshippers at the London mosque in Regent's Park have been harassed by a van-load of men singing 'Rule Britannia'. An anonymous phone-caller told the Iraqi community centre in Dalston 'I think you are going to suffer as our families are suffering'. Workers at the centre took down the signboard at the front of the building.

Muslim minicab drivers from east London report that some of the worst abuse comes when they pick up fares from wine bars in the City of London. 'Yuppies start by asking, what do you think about Iraq? Then they say Muslims are terrorists.' 'If they start shooting, that's when the trouble will really start', says an apprehensive Asian stallholder on Whitechapel market. 'There are many who will look upon Muslims here as the enemy.'

Additional reporting by Penny Robson, Keith Jackson, Dave Chapman, Teresa Clarke, Mark Butler, Alex Campbell and Jenny Graham

On Thursday 6 September French trucker Eric Gunther (28) left Rousillon in southern France on his regular run to Manchester, his Renault rig packed with low-grade pharmaceuticals. At 3.30am on Friday 7 September, as Gunther was passing the Chatham turn-off on the M2 in Kent, a battered white Ford Fiesta twice swerved in front of him. Thinking the Fiesta driver needed help, Gunther pulled over on to the hard shoulder. Three men got out of the Fiesta and went for Gunther with a baseball bat and a wooden stave. They fractured his skull. An hour later a passing motorist found a dazed Gunther wandering along the hard shoulder. He spent three days in hospital in Gillingham under police guard. On Monday 10 September Gunther was discharged and taken back to France.

Chatham police would not be drawn on the motive for the incident, but Gunther's employer Stefan Giraud had no doubt that it was a reprisal for attacks by French farmers on lorries carrying imported British lamb. National and local newspapers reported a 'chilling' phone-call from a man claiming responsibility for the attack on Gunther on behalf of the far-right British National Party (BNP). The mysterious caller said that more assaults would follow 'for all the attacks on English drivers in France'.

It is unlikely that the tiny and inactive BNP was behind the attack on Gunther. But if the threatening phone-call was probably a hoax, virulent British nationalism is a fact of life in a town like Chatham. Who needs the BNP when the Chatham man-in-the-street is itching to have a go at the French over the lamb wars?

'Shoot them' said one Chatham youth wearing sneakers and a Manchester fringe. 'I hate the French and what they are doing is bang out of order. Blast them.' Two manual workers in their thirties thought the answer was to 'kick the life out of French drivers'. One young woman studying for her A-levels said she wouldn't eat lamb, but was far less squeamish about spilling French blood: 'I'm partly vegetarian but I still think, shoot the French. I've never liked them. In the EC it's always the French who go against Britain. They dislike us because we have to keep bailing them out of wars. This is not very objective from a sociology student, is it?' Objectivity seemed in short supply all over town. 'The French want it all their own way', said a local engineering firm manager, 'not just over food but all kinds of manufactured products'.

In Chatham shopping centre, garlic sausage was the only French food I saw on display. Butchers presided over trays of British meat, flagged with Union Jacks. 'Get your lamb here, ladies, it's twice as expensive in France.' 'I won't be buying anything French' said one lunchtime shopper. Her mother agreed: 'I never wanted anything to do with the Common Market, telling you what you can do and what you can't.' Another local had 'always thought the Common Market was a waste of time. What the French are doing, we don't do to them. We have not been looking after ourselves like all the other countries. Now we have some catching up to

do'. A woman in Churchill's pub dismissed the EC as 'no use to us. There could be a war any moment but France and Germany don't want to help, do they? And we should bomb Iraq. I've got a "Fuck Iraq" t-shirt'.

Shortly before the attack on Eric Gunther, a local spokesman for the National Farmers Union declared, 'I think it is about time we became more nationalistic'. It's hard to imagine how any of these people could oblige him. If press suggestions that you would have to be a fascist to want to attack Frenchmen were right, then Chatham must have been taken over by the BNP.

In fact the Chatham patriots take their lead, not from the far-right fringe, but from those at the centre of British political life. The major debate about European integration, and about Britain's relationship with the EC, has prompted a renewed outburst of chauvinism against Europeans in general and the Germans and French in particular. Margaret Thatcher has done much to create this mood, setting the tone with her anti-European Bruges speech in 1988. Her close ally, Nicholas Ridley, ranted against the Germans and their French 'poodles' in the infamous *Spectator* interview of July this year. And the *Sun*, published by Thatcher's confidant Rupert Murdoch, has spent a decade campaigning against Continental products and for British lamb and the English sausage, distributing hundreds of thousands of 'Hop off

**'I'm vegetarian but I still
think shoot the French'**

British bulldogs and lamb wars

What's the connection between Europe-bashing speeches by British politicians, and the skull-fracturing assault on a French lorry driver near Chatham in Kent? Andrew Calcutt reports

you Frogs' badges. This sort of chauvinism, sponsored at the highest levels of society, permeates every British town to some extent. However, the history of Chatham makes its inhabitants particularly amenable to such sentiments.

Chatham was built to serve the naval dockyard established in Tudor times. In 400 years the town turned out 400 warships, to train their guns on a succession of European enemies: the Spanish, the Dutch, the French, the Russians and the Germans. The *Victory*, Nelson's flagship against the French at Trafalgar, was built in Chatham. The dockyard was especially busy during the two world wars. From the 1960s it was used to service nuclear submarines. The Royal Navy left Chatham in 1984, but its warlike tradition is fondly recalled in the Historic Dockyard heritage centre.

The dockyard created a local community which was fiercely patriotic and remarkably insular. Even without the presence of the Royal Navy, Chatham is still imbued with a narrow-minded, militaristic, Britannia-rules-the-waves outlook.

With a statue of Lord Kitchener at the gate, Fort Amhurst looks down

on the town. Army jeeps are almost as common as taxis. The main street is Military Road. Instead of a Railway Hotel next to the station, Chatham has the Gibraltar House Hotel. Standing at the crossroads in the town centre, Churchill's pub features a Randolph's room and Winny's cocktail bar. Between Churchill's and Fort Amhurst is the Mountbatten, a former navy club still laid out like the deck of a ship. The newest, biggest office block in Chatham is Mountbatten House. The open space in the town centre is dotted with mementoes of the Royal Navy, such as the nineteenth-century cannon mounted on a new warship-grey gun-carriage—made under the auspices of the Community Programme.

Local politics are as rigidly Conservative as a brigadier's baton. The local MP for Medway is Peggy Fenner, Dame of the British Empire. But she is not a full member of Medway Conservative Club, because the committee still refuses to admit women to full membership. The borough council has refused to contribute to the local race equality council. The secretarial assistant at the race equality council seemed nervous about speaking to a journalist. She would only hint at 'the traditional English way of life which is slow to change'. Attacks on foreigners are part of that tradition. On the day that Eric Gunther was beaten up, the *Kent Evening Post* published a letter about an assault on a black American in Rochester High Street a week before.

Battle of Britain

I visited Chatham in the run-up to the anniversary of the Battle of Britain, fought in the skies over Kent in September 1940. Fifty years on, a flurry of patriotic parades helped to create a potent cocktail of militarism and nostalgia. Within a three-week period, the Kent Royal British Legion paraded through Maidstone; the band of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers performed in the grounds of the Chatham offices of Lloyd's of London; the band of the Royal Marines beat the retreat at Chatham Historic Dockyard; the Royal Air Forces Association held a 'grand ball and carvery' in Chatham; there was a 500-strong parade of honour through Maidstone; and the British Legion held a ceremony in Margate to dedicate its new banner.

If the marching and saluting didn't appeal, there was plenty of entertainment on offer locally. Chatham's central hall was advertising a concert by the New Squadronaires, followed by

Remember, Remember, 'a forties-style variety show recalling the Battle of Britain'. New films don't normally come to Chatham until weeks after their first London showing. But *Memphis Belle*, David Puttnam's film about wartime pilots, opened in Chatham and the West End on the same day. There was even a 'black-out' disco at the Red Lion in nearby Northfleet, where bouncers, in the spirit of ARP wardens, enforced a strict dress code of black clothes.

The theme of 'the few' featured in numerous local newspaper articles. These were printed alongside reports on the plight of the few British lorry drivers in France. Senior reporters were sent on missions across the Channel, to portray British truckers as the modern-day equivalent of Spitfire pilots.

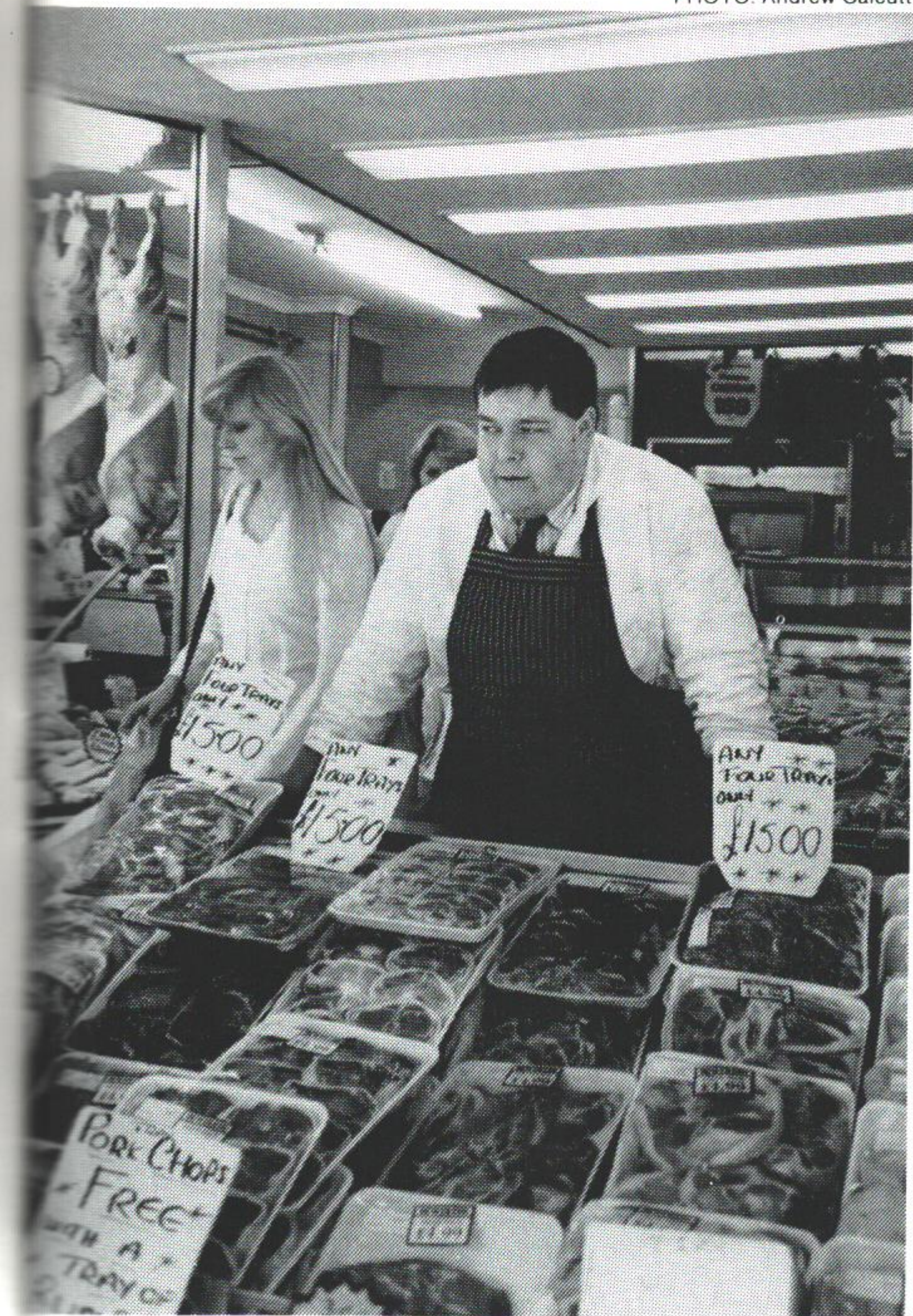
On the day Gunther was attacked, the *Kent Evening Post* devoted four front-page paragraphs to the assault and 16 front-page paragraphs to the story of an English trucker, Tim Sargent, who drove through France without being attacked. The edition of Monday 10 September carried a double-page feature on Sargent, one of 'the special breed' who 'run the gauntlet...of the savagery of pitchfork-wielding French farmers, some of them hooded'. The report also complained about 'the vast Rugis customs depot—a sort of drivers' concentration camp where surly little officials try to break the spirit of the men'.

British truckers were reported 'wearing t-shirts showing lambs gambolling under a Union Jack'. One provided a touch of British bravado, 'the French just vanished when they saw our jackhandles'. The feature ended by describing Sargent as a man who, even in the face of danger, was thinking more about his daughter spending her first day at secondary school. It could have been a B-movie script, with Kenneth More cast as Douglas Bader/Tim Sargent.

In an edition published shortly before the attack on Gunther, the editor of the *Kent Messenger* wrote: 'The appalling behaviour of many French farmers...prompts the question whether it will ever be possible to have an entente that is remotely cordial....Such continuing hostility...inevitably brings strenuous and understandable demands for retaliation.' Who needs fascist provocateurs when articles written in the vocabulary of wartime propaganda are available in every newsagent in Kent? There is something very rotten in 'the garden of England'.

In Chatham, they've been turning foreigners into dead meat for centuries

PHOTO: Andrew Calcutt



'Tribalism' in South Africa

From freedom struggle to civil war

With the media full of grisly tales of 'black-on-black violence' in South Africa, Charles Longford points out the danger facing the anti-apartheid forces, and looks back at an Irish lesson for today

South Africa is once more being torn apart by bloody violence; but this time, most of the fighting is between supporters of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress, and members of chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha movement. In the first two weeks of August alone, at least 515 people were killed.

Right-wing journalists like Paul Johnson of the *Mail* or Bruce Anderson of the *Sunday Telegraph*, and Tory MPs like John Carlisle, blame the carnage in the townships on the inherent 'tribalism' of blacks in South Africa. The idea that it is all about ancient tribal tensions, between the Zulus of Inkatha and other ethnic groups which support the ANC, is a convenient way of shifting responsibility for the violence on to the supposed ignorance and barbarity of the black masses. But it does not match the facts.

Zulu against Zulu

The violence in the townships around Johannesburg has been an extension of the violence of Natal province, where some 4000 people have died over the past five years. In Natal the killings have been *between* Zulus—Zulus who support the ANC against Zulus who support Inkatha. Within Soweto, one of the townships of the Transvaal, Zulus constitute close to 40 per cent of the population. These township-dwelling Zulus, like many Xhosas, Basothos and Shangaans of Soweto, have been on the receiving end of the Inkatha

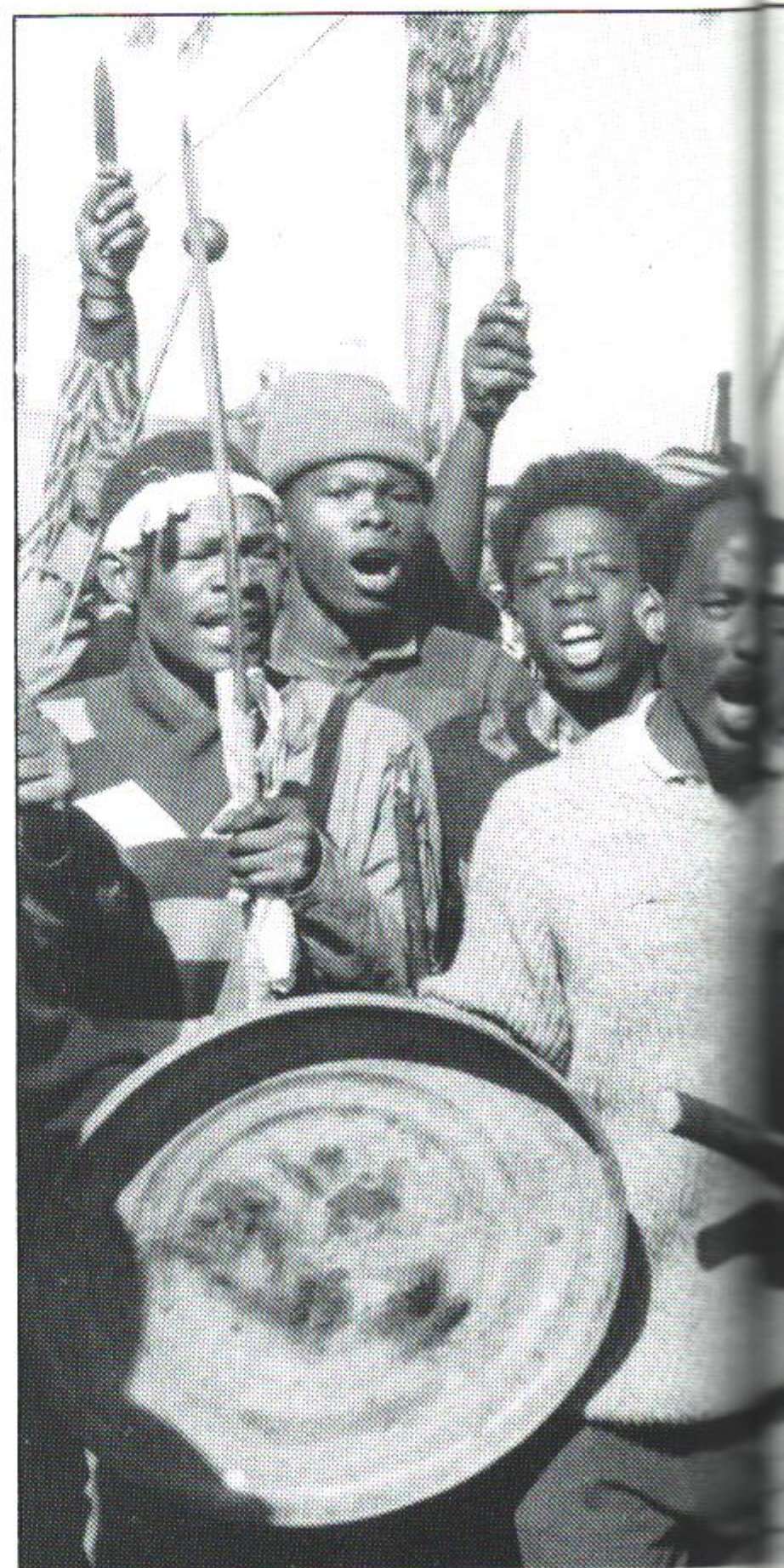
hostel-dwellers' sjamboks and pangas. The 26 blacks who died and the 100 left wounded, after six men indiscriminately opened fire and wielded pangas aboard a Jeppe-Soweto commuter train, were not asked for evidence of their ethnic origins before the slaughter began.

The underlying causes of the violence are political, not tribal. Buthelezi started the recent fighting because he feared that Inkatha was losing out in the reform process. The highly publicised talks between the ANC and the government have marginalised him and his movement. He has responded with vigilante terror, unleashing Inkatha thugs to terrorise ANC supporters firstly in Natal and then in the townships. But while Buthelezi struck the first blow, the apartheid regime is ultimately responsible for the violence. It has manipulated the divisions within black ranks and is benefiting from the consequent carnage.

If anybody is guilty of promoting 'tribalism' in South Africa, it is the apartheid regime. Inkatha itself is a product of Pretoria's 'homeland' policy, which divided the black masses along ethnic lines. It was formed by Buthelezi to consolidate Zulu support for KwaZulu, the homeland of which Buthelezi is chief minister. Inkatha has since been used by the apartheid regime as a conservative wedge with which to split the black opposition forces.

Today, Pretoria is going all-out to intensify the political divisions within the black population, to help it

impose a political settlement favourable to the white ruling class. The regime is not only encouraging conflict between the ANC and the traditionally more conservative Inkatha; it is also seeking to split the ANC along radical/moderate lines. The ultimate aim is to turn the



conflict between the apartheid state and the black opposition into a civil war within the black majority.

The role of the regime in the township strife has been widely misunderstood. There is now plenty of evidence that state agents have been instrumental in organising and provoking the violence. Mandela has accused elements within the security forces and secret service of sponsoring a 'third force' of hit squads and professional destabilisers to sow mayhem, as part of a right-wing plot to derail the negotiations. He has criticised president FW De Klerk for not doing enough to stop the violence, but absolved the government of any direct involvement in stirring it up. After Mandela demanded action, the government launched its 'Operation Iron Fist', giving the security forces draconian powers to deal with unrest. All sides agree that the conflict in the townships is a threat to the government-backed 'peace process'.

In fact, the provocations, the negotiations and the 'Iron Fist' are all complementary aspects of a single government policy. The De Klerk regime's strategy is to draw moderate leaders into a closer relationship with the authorities, while exposing more militant forces to violent repression by the official or unofficial agents of apartheid. Dividing an anti-imperialist movement in this way is

not a new idea. The strategy was pioneered by British imperialists. They used it throughout the Empire; but the place where it worked perhaps best of all was in Ireland.

It is worth briefly reviewing the experience of the Irish republican movement in the years before and after the partition of Ireland in 1921. It provides a classic example of how a liberation struggle can be twisted into a civil war among the oppressed—an example which may well contain some important lessons for the South African and British left today. Of course, County Cork in 1920 is a long way (in every respect) from Natal province in 1990, and the Irish experience does not provide an inevitable blueprint for the future of the South African struggle. However, with this rider in mind, there are some striking similarities.

The British establishment recognised at an early stage that the Irish nationalist movement was heterogeneous, and contained different strands of political opinion, representing conflicting class interests. Britain's colonial policy sought to strike the right balance of military repression and political intrigue that could best exploit the divisions within Irish republican ranks.

The British savagely suppressed the Easter Rising of 1916 and executed its leaders. This removed the most

militant wing of the Irish liberation movement—the working class revolutionaries of James Connolly's Irish Citizen Army. In the critical years after 1916, as support for the republican struggle spread, the British sought to strengthen the conservative constituents of the Irish alliance while weakening the radicals. For example, Irish republican prisoners were released selectively, according to political criteria; the more moderate your opposition to imperialism, the more chance you had of an early release. The prominent republican Maire Corneford later claimed that British policies succeeded in bringing about a counter-revolution within the republican movement from as early as October 1917. 'It could be argued', she said, 'that the British government moved with unerring instinct to benefit from a temporary confusion and help towards the most conservative sequence' (*The First Dail*, 1969, p42).

Choosing their man

The British cabinet's 'unerring instinct' led it first to identify Eamon de Valera as the key nationalist leader who had to be wooed to ensure 'the most conservative sequence'. Republicans representing a more militant line would be ruthlessly dealt with as part of the same strategy. By 1919 Walter Long, the cabinet's most self-confident expert on Ireland, was arguing that, in the words of one historian, 'if there was no party in Ireland prepared to work it, then those extremists who were preventing such a party from emerging must be destroyed' (C Townshend, 'British policy in Ireland 1906-21', in DG Boyce (ed), *The Revolution in Ireland 1879-1923*, 1988, p187). A moderate solution would thus be forcibly imposed, hopefully with the cooperation of de Valera as head of the Irish moderates.

De Valera did not quite fulfil the cabinet's high hopes for him; in 1921 he opposed Britain's partition Treaty, and took sides against the Free State government in the Civil War which followed. It was only years later, after de Valera had left Sinn Fein, founded Fianna Fail and been elected premier of the South of Ireland, that he took to jailing and hanging hardline republicans. In the same way, De Klerk and the South African cabinet may prove to have chosen the wrong man in identifying Mandela as the leader they want to groom. But this is beside the point. The important thing in Ireland was not the individuals concerned, but the process of identifying a moderate current in the nationalist movement

The people of townships like Kagiso (below) are organising to resist Inkatha thugs; meanwhile, ANC leaders look to the apartheid state to stop the violence



PHOTO: Afra Pix/Anna Zieminski

and drawing it into a relationship with the oppressor state. In South Africa, it is already clear that a similar process is under way. Mandela has admitted as much by talking of an alliance between the ANC and the government.

The Treaty negotiations between British imperialists and Irish republicans in 1921 showed how this process developed. Like the ANC today, the Irish republican leaders suspended armed actions and entered negotiations claiming that a direct struggle against imperialism could not succeed. As de Valera put it, they went into talks with the British government 'to secure through negotiations what we are totally unable to secure by force of arms' (M Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, 1988, p19). Britain seized upon the impetus this gave to moderation.

'A clear line'

In the negotiations, prime minister Lloyd George and his team concentrated on the politically more conservative Irish delegates, Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. A cabinet meeting on 5 December 1921 concluded that the political divisions manifested among the Irish delegates 'also existed within the Irish cabinet'. Thus Lloyd George made sure that, when the final Treaty was signed under pressure of British threats, the Irish delegates had no time to refer it back to Dublin. The British knew that the Treaty, which would partition Ireland and create a Free State under indirect British control in the South, made a split in the republican movement inevitable.

Westminster offered to support the Free State regime if it would act against those determined to fight on for Irish freedom. When the Dail (parliament) narrowly accepted the Treaty in January 1922, Winston Churchill warned Dublin that the only hope of friendly relations between Britain and the new Irish government lay in a 'clear line being drawn between the Treaty party and the republicans'. The line was drawn in the Civil War of 1922-23, a thoroughly British affair.

The British government pressurised the Free State regime into launching the Civil War. In parliament, Churchill warned that if the Dublin government did not act against the remaining IRA forces, Britain would 'regard the Treaty as having been formally violated' (TP Coogan, *Michael Collins: A Biography*, 1990, p330). This was effectively a threat to invade. In the cabinet Lloyd George spelled it out: 'A point might come when it would be necessary to tell Mr Collins that if he was unable to

deal with the situation the British government would have to do so.' (C Younger, *Ireland's Civil War*, 1985, p265) To speed things up Churchill despatched two British destroyers up the river towards Dublin. When Free State forces fired the first shot of the Civil War (with a British artillery piece), levelling the IRA's Dublin HQ in June 1922, the British harvested the fruits of the 'peace process'.

In a speech made to the house of lords, Lord Birkenhead spelt out the significance of the British strategy:

'You have in Southern Ireland men who have hitherto been against us now...honestly attempting to...put down this movement in the South of Ireland....I would far rather that they were undertaking the task than that we were.' (Quoted in R Wilson, 'Imperialism in crisis: the Irish dimension', in M Langan and B Schwarz (eds), *Crises in the British State, 1880-1930*, 1985, p173)

The crowning success of Britain's struggle against Irish nationalism was that it turned 'men who had hitherto been against' imperialism into its local policemen.

The British authorities had converted a colonial war into a Civil War in the South of Ireland, so extricating themselves from direct responsibility for the conflict. The victory of the Free State forces in that Civil War allowed British imperialism to create the appearance of Irish independence, while retaining a decisive influence over the Dublin regime. Britain did not simply corrupt individual Irish leaders. It exploited deep political divisions within the republican movement. Negotiations and military repression each played an important part in the success of this strategy—which is where there may be a lesson for South Africa today.

Turning to the state

The carnage in the townships has strengthened the hand of the apartheid regime, putting the ANC leadership on the defensive and opening up important differences within ANC ranks. When ANC militants demanded arms with which to defend themselves against Inkatha, Mandela and the leadership refused and instead called upon the state to intervene. De Klerk has thus been able to militarise the townships on a scale which would have been impossible a year ago. Meanwhile, ANC activists in the townships are being hunted down and killed.

While the activists on the ground have been put under the cosh by both the security forces and the Inkatha

thugs, De Klerk has been courting Mandela and other ANC leaders through a series of preliminary talks. The apartheid authorities have consistently attempted to drive a wedge between Mandela and the more radical wing of the movement. In July, they invented a 'red plot' against the government as an excuse for cracking down on the ANC's ally, the Communist Party of South Africa. In October, when Mandela and De Klerk agreed a plan for ANC exiles to return to South Africa, and for the release of more prisoners, the government made clear that 'only those who fall within the guidelines for so-called political offences' would qualify for indemnity. No doubt the apartheid regime is deciding who it will allow into the country and out of jail on the same basis as did the British in Ireland: moderates and conservatives first.

An African elite

The conflict in the townships has also succeeded in strengthening the hand of an open reactionary like Buthelezi and his Inkatha movement. The government will now be better placed to ensure that, when the ANC eventually sits down for full talks on a settlement in South Africa, it will be the politics of Buthelezi and De Klerk which set the agenda. The way in which the state-sponsored violence has been presented as 'tribalism' is already strengthening De Klerk's argument that South Africa needs a new constitution which will reflect the country's diverse ethnic complexity: another name for the protection of white privilege.

The government's provocations and armed interventions in the townships, and invitations to talks in Pretoria, are each components of a strategy to split and defeat the black resistance. The regime's ultimate aim is to create a moderate African political elite, whose status in a post-apartheid South Africa would depend upon its relationship with the state rather than any links with the rank and file of the liberation movement.

The experience of Ireland demonstrates that imperialism is capable of pulling off such a trick. But the precondition for its success is the defeat of the more militant and working class wings of the resistance movement. The violence looks set to continue, as the forces of racism and reaction seek to convert the struggle against apartheid into a civil war fought on terms dictated by the ruling class. It will take all the resilience of the black resistance to stop them getting away with it.



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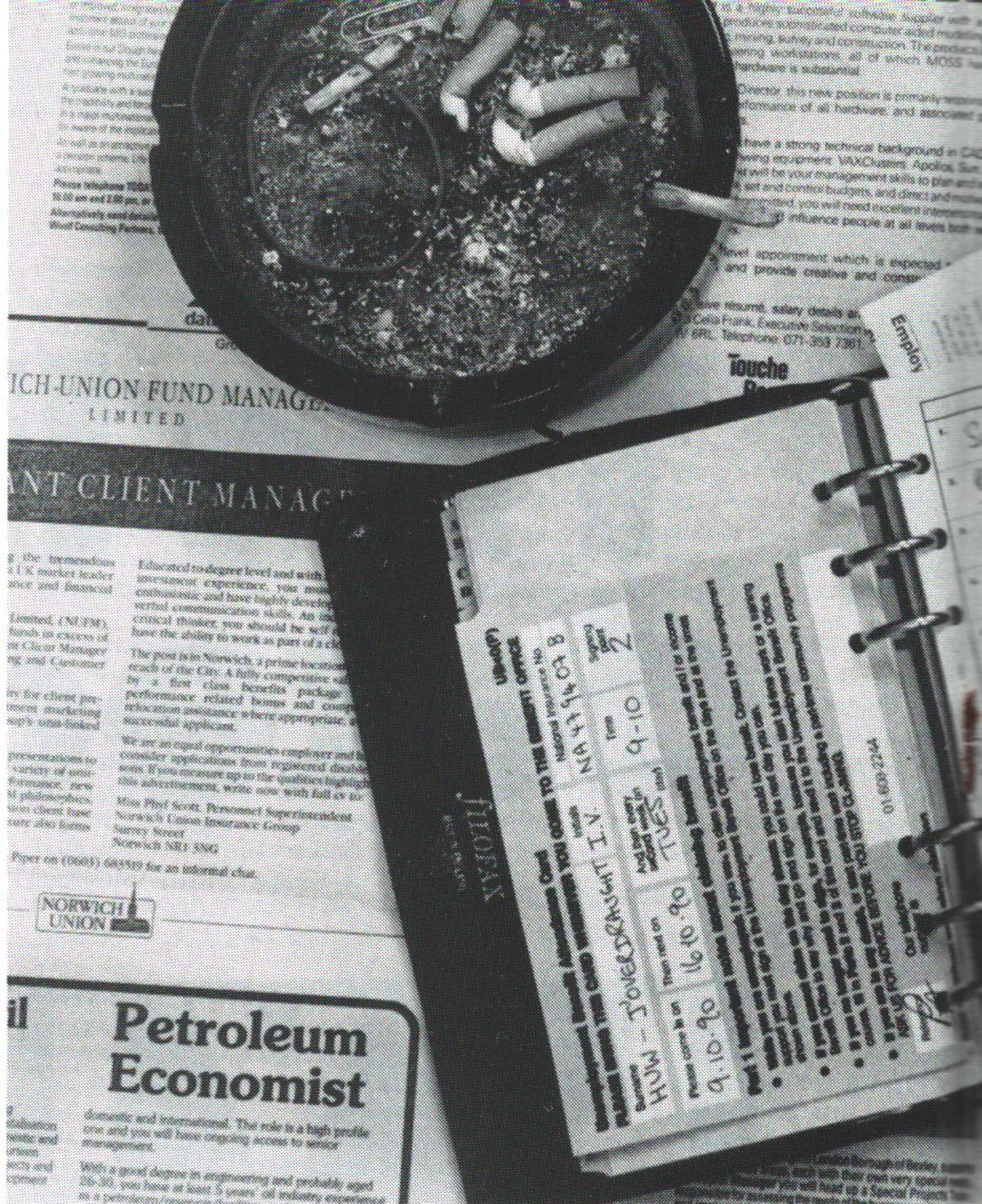
When even the Tory press admits that the recession has arrived in Britain, that it has probably been here since the early summer, and that it will be deeply felt, then it should be clear that we are in for a hard time. But the recession is not just about hard times ahead. It also calls into question every claim which the Thatcher government has made about its past achievements.

It was not so long ago that every expert seemed to agree that the Tory government had turned the economy around. Now the words 'popular capitalism' must stick in their throats. The term 'enterprise culture' sounds like a sick joke as business failures reach record levels. With inflation in double figures, Thatcher's October claim that 'the economy is working...in reducing inflationary pressures' fooled few when the Tories announced their latest gamble of joining the ERM.

Thatcher's favourite businessmen have turned out to be wide-boys, alright for the short burst but not up to dealing with serious foreign competition. The successful Thatcherite entrepreneur—a sort of cross between Laura Ashley and Sir Clive Sinclair—is likely to become as rare as the inspiring Labour politician.

Capitalists will look back on the eighties as the decade when you did not have to be very bright to make lots of money. It was a time when you could pick up a cemetery from Westminster council for 15 pence. You could buy state monopolies at knock-down prices—in return for appointing an ex-cabinet minister to your board of directors. Land sales alone would allow you to recoup the purchase price of privatised firms two or three times over. It was a time when even water became privatised, and when right-wing economists justified capitalist greed on the grounds that the environment should not be a free gift. In practice this meant that the cost of cleaning up the pollution caused by the big corporations should be met by the consumers of the companies concerned.

It was very easy to be a capitalist in the eighties because the government was so generous to the business class which it represented. Nigel Lawson, the ex-chancellor of the exchequer, personified this 'let's go for broke' attitude towards the Tories' friends. Lawson made sure that the rich had every opportunity to get richer by redistributing wealth from the poor to the wealthy. He encouraged the removal of the usual constraints on the expansion of credit and, as a result, orchestrated the most expensive buying spree in British history. By injecting more money into the economy, he gave the rich access to even more wealth, which they could increase still further by speculating on the spiralling share and property markets. It was a grand old time, until reality finally caught up with the roaring eighties.



Of course, the most loyal Tory ideologues are now busy working out a PR campaign to prove that a) there is no recession...yet, and b) if there is going to be one, then it is not the government's fault. Their present line of attack is to accuse their critics of talking the economy down—of 'grasping at gloom' as chancellor John Major puts it. They argue that criticism of government policy undermines business confidence, and if this happens then the country will talk itself into a recession. Thus the opponents of the government get the blame for the failures of Thatcher's policies; brilliant.

Other arguments designed to get the government off the hook include blaming high wage rises for pricing Britain out of the world market, and pointing the finger

at Saddam Hussein for disruption of oil supplies. None of these excuses works the way it is expected to declare that yes, there is an international phenomenon, but no responsibility.

Economists generally present the recession as a technical problem, which can be solved by a growth over two consecutive years. In fact a recession means that the economy falls below its previous level. A recession represents a system that is out of control.

The irony is that the policies of the Thatcher government in the eighties were

myths of modern capitalism

Recession explained 'the enterprise'

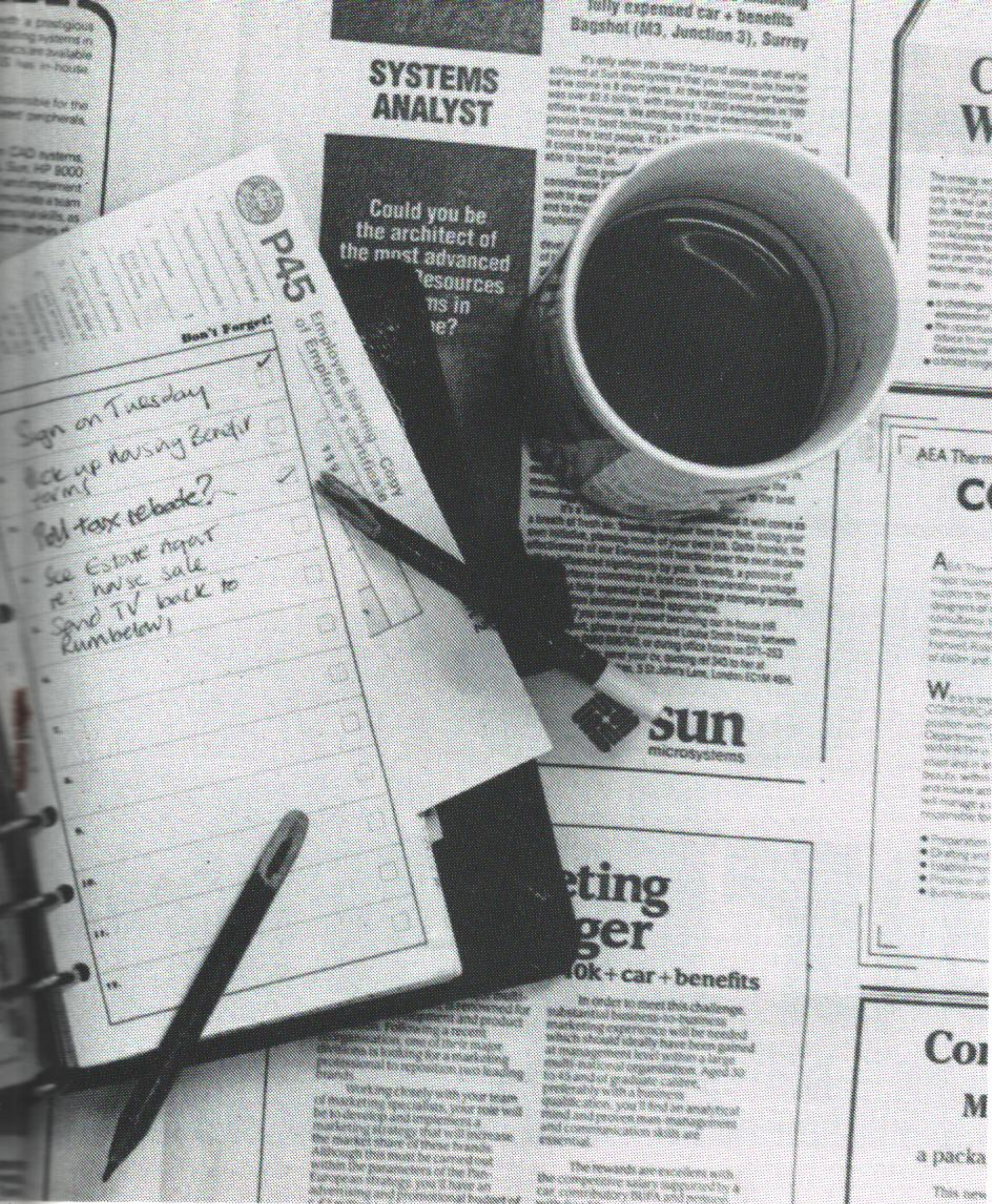


PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

ing economic life. If none
government can be
there is a recession, but it
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a recession as a
can be understood as lack of
quarters in the annual
recession does not simply
grow at the same rate as
presents the shake-out of a
trumpeted by the
responsible for the

collapse of the economy at the start of the nineties. The Thatcherite economic miracle was the product of a massive expansion of credit. Capitalist entrepreneurs were protected from the full impact of the market by enjoying the benefits of substantial tax cuts, state subsidies and easily available credit. Easy money allowed the entrepreneurs to make more money very easily. But the only thing they could make was money; productive industry had virtually come to a halt.

For uncompetitive British capitalists, making useful things was nowhere near as profitable as property speculation or financial wheeling and dealing. Successful Thatcherite capitalism was not about producing cars or computers; it was about buying and selling, speculating and inventing new financial transactions. The service and financial sectors grew while the rest of the economy, especially the manufacturing sector, stagnated.

No nation can survive on the service sector and financial services. You can't eat bonds (whether of the

gilt-edged or junk variety), or drive shares in privatised companies. So Britain had to buy more and more of the goods it consumed from abroad. As a result, the trade deficit went from bad to worse and, to pay for these imports, even more credit had to be pumped into the economy. The country was living on borrowed money and borrowed time. As long as the credit system expanded it was alright—every capitalist was prospering, at least on paper. Share prices went up and up, creating the impression of a prosperous new Britain in which investors could not lose.

This speculator's paradise could not last for ever. As the eighties came to a close, the government had to face the fear that further unrestrained expansion of the money supply would make the pound worthless and discredit the British economy. It had to raise interest rates to slow down the economy—in other words, to curb the appetites of its speculator friends.

However, squeezing credit and slowing down the economy only exposed the unpleasant truth. Without new credit, many companies are forced to concede that their eighties prosperity exists only on paper; there has been little or no improvement in their real efficiency. Once exposed, firms have to face facts and cut back. Sometimes going out of business is the only option for those who hoped to create 'the enterprise culture'. The new depression is heralded by a wave of bankruptcies and redundancies—many in sectors like construction, retailing, banking and finance, the success stories of Thatcher's economy. Chancellor John Major's token cut in interest rates will do little to help; the cost of borrowing is still far too high for British capitalists. And any extra credit they did get their hands on would be needed just to pay off old debts, not to finance new investment.

The recession has nothing to do with high wages. During the past decade the wages of those with jobs—especially skilled workers—have roughly kept pace with inflation. Rising prices have been caused by the growing divergence between paper money and credit on one hand, and real wealth on the other. With so much credit sloshing about in the system, a capitalist could temporarily solve his own difficulties not by becoming more productive, but through the simple expedient of raising prices. As long as there was enough paper money around to allow prices to be raised, the individual capitalist did not have to confront the real problems. So inflation did not so much cause the recession as help to postpone its arrival.

The recession is bad news for the capitalist class. Unfortunately it is bad news for everyone else as well. Developments over the past few years—the collapse of Stalinism in the East, the defeat of the old labour movements in the West—mean that market economics are in the ascendancy, at least for the time being. People can see no credible alternative to capitalism, which puts the bosses in an excellent position to make us pay for their recession through mass unemployment, further reductions in welfare services, and real wage cuts. They will hold all the cards until people finally see through the hype, and realise that their system cannot deliver. On the pages that follow, we hope to help that process along by taking issue with some of the more prominent myths of modern capitalism.

Exposes 'Enterprise culture'

The unfree market

For 'free enterprise', read monopoly, price-fixing, and privatisation sleaze, says Jonathan Fryer

Margaret Thatcher likes to take the credit for creating a free market, rolling back the state and nurturing an enterprise culture. Her claims about the efficacy of the capitalist market are taken as given, and many on the left have now abandoned all alternatives and embraced the free market gospel. The collapse of the Stalinist central command economies of Eastern Europe appears to confirm that the capitalist market is the only efficient way to run an economy.

It's a fix

Yet economic reality puts to question the Tories' generous claims for the market. Forget all their boasts about *freeing* the market: *fixing* is a better way to describe what they have been up to over the past decade.

Whether it is Ernest Saunders manipulating share prices to help the Guinness takeover of Distillers, Lord Young giving away state assets, sweeteners and tax breaks to companies like British Aerospace, or John Major announcing an early entry into the exchange rate mechanism, government and big business have been busy fixing the markets and feathering their nests. Former cabinet ministers have been jumping on the privatisation gravy train, getting six-figure salaries for

sitting on the boards of companies which they helped to privatise (Lord Young, Cable & Wireless; Norman Tebbit, British Telecom; Peter Walker, British Gas, etc).

Even leaving aside these embarrassments, the government's achievements in the spheres of privatisation, small businesses and rolling back the state suggest that the free market is a myth. Let's look at how far the reality matches the rhetoric.

'The long-term success of the privatisation programme will stand or fall to the extent that it maximises competition', wrote Thatcherite minister John Moore in 1983. 'If competition cannot be achieved an historic opportunity will have been lost.' Unfortunately for Moore, big city investors had no desire to be exposed to the rigours of a free market. Only the perks and easy profits to be gained from the *absence* of competition could entice them to take over Britain's dilapidated state industries.

Privatisation led not to competition, but to the creation of new forms of monopoly. By 1985, nationalised giants like British Aerospace, British Gas and BP had been eased into the private sector directly as monopolies. Moore was forced to change his tune:

'Privatisation policies have now been

developed to such an extent that private ownership of natural monopolies is preferable to nationalisation.' By selling off assets as lucrative monopolies, the Tories maximised revenues for the treasury. Between 1979 and 1987, asset sales raised around £13 billion; cabinet spending plans now assume privatisation receipts of around £5 billion a year.

Privatisation failed to create a free market. For example, the Tories denationalised three oil companies in the eighties: BP, Britoil and Enterprise Oil. BP's oil exploration was thereafter strictly confined to the stock exchange and Wall Street. The oil giant soon flouted government competition policy with a £2.5 billion takeover of Britoil, thereby swallowing half the competition. Enterprise Oil had to merge with chemicals giant ICI. Instead of freeing oil markets, Tory policies encouraged a centralisation of oil capital among a few big players.

Lord King's British Airways is often paraded as the flagship of the new free enterprise culture. The airline had faced stiff competition from sole domestic rival British Caledonian. But when privatised in 1987, it was left with its fleet intact, a monopoly over certain routes and massive market power. BA was eventually encouraged to mount a



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Having a word in the right ear is often the most efficient 'market mechanism'

successful takeover bid for BCal after senior ministers like Norman Tebbit had invoked the national interest to scupper an earlier bid from Scandinavia. Other than the small regional Midlands airways, there is no longer any domestic competition at all in the airline industry.

The popular capitalism share buying extravaganza at first appeared to confirm the idea of a free market revival. The Tories enticed investors through giveaway share issues. The first slice of British Telecom was privatised at 50 per cent of its market value. Indeed, the entire Tory privatisation programme has been carried out by flogging off state monopolies for far less than their market value. Now desperate to sell off the electricity industry in a more cynical and downbeat climate, the government is offering free shares and subsidies on bills.

Most small investors cashed in quick, indicating that people bought shares because they wanted to make some fast money and not because of a philosophical commitment to the enterprise culture. Within a year, the 158 000 original investors in TSB had fallen to 27 000; 157 000 in Cable & Wireless to 26 000; and 158 000 in British Aerospace to 27 000. Instead of creating a genuine popular capitalism, shares are increasingly concentrated in the hands of big-time

speculators and financial institutions. In 1957, 66 per cent of the total shares were in the hands of individuals; in 1985, the figure was 23 per cent. So much for Sid.

Merger mania

Another central tenet of the free market philosophy is that the individual must be given free rein to develop his entrepreneurial capacities. According to the Thatcherites, the state has mollycoddled society and created a dependency culture which has stifled individual initiative and creativity. They promised to recreate the spirit of enterprise by freeing the small man from the apron strings of the nanny state. More than a decade after the Thatcher experiment began, however, the capitalist marketplace is no place for small businesses or self-made men. It is a battlefield in which giant companies fight to break their rivals and monopolise the market.

Instead of the rise of the small businessman, the Thatcher years have witnessed a surge in takeovers and a huge centralisation of capital. Between 1982 and 1986, 137 of the largest 1000 non-financial companies disappeared. But the really staggering boom in mergers has taken place since then. According to the department of trade and industry, the total value of mergers and

acquisitions in the UK rose from £14.9 billion in 1986 to £22 billion in 1988. The reality of centralised and monopolised capitalism flies in the face of the free market dictum that the individual entrepreneur can make it on his own.

Today most sectors of the economy are dominated by a handful of vast companies. Three groups control more than 90 per cent of UK vehicle production. BP, Esso and Shell account for virtually the entire petrol retailing market. In telecommunications, a small number of producers operate a cartel with the monopsony consumer BT. The textile industry is dominated by giant Courtaulds. Along the high street, the centralisation of retailing is disguised only by the proliferation of brand names, franchises and company mastheads. The food industry is controlled by five large chain stores. Six giant breweries ('the beerage') control 83 per cent of the market. Four groups control the national newspapers. Two companies market virtually every soap powder.

Centralisation of economic power also continues apace in the financial sector. In 1891 there were 168 joint stock banks; today the commercial banking sector is dominated by the big four clearing banks. They account for more than half the employment in the entire financial

Far from
freeing
markets, the
Tories have
confirmed
that the state
is a vital
support
machine for
the capitalist
system

sector. This oligopoly is jealously guarded by the Bank of England, which has powers of veto over stakes of more than 15 per cent in any clearing bank. Amalgamations and takeovers among building societies, insurance companies and unit trusts have reduced the field elsewhere in the financial sector to a few big players.

The Tories point to the growth of small businesses and self-employment as evidence of the decentralising powers of the market. In reality, hefty state subsidies have been behind the rise in small business ventures. The loan guarantee scheme accounted for 14 000 loans between 1981 and 1984 at a cost of £455m. With failure rates running at up to 30 per cent, the government soon had to bail them out to the tune of £34m to the banks.

Then there are the £40 a week enterprise allowance schemes for getting people off the dole by getting them to set up on their own. The house of commons public accounts committee revealed that nearly half the 300 000 small businesses set up under the scheme failed within the first three years. The other half simply displaced existing businesses.

Sugar turns sour

Even the much-vaunted rags to riches success stories of the early eighties have come unstuck. Only a couple of years ago, the Thatcherites were still boasting about the success of barrow boy turned business maestro Alan Sugar, who travelled from the East End to the top of Amstrad Electronics. Today, the miracles of the eighties like Polly Peck, Sock Shop and even Amstrad are on the brink of bankruptcy. The self-made entrepreneur has had his day: the people who call the shots in Thatcher's Britain are the unscrupulous corporate predator and the price-fixing cartel.

The sway of big business is reinforced by clandestine market-rigging agreements between trusts and trade associations. Most of the acquisitions considered by the office of fair trading involve a company taking a larger share of output in its existing market. The battle for market share is also a battle to control prices. Instead of being determined by the laws of market competition, prices are increasingly set by a few giant firms. For example, ICI and BP recently met together with 23 international chemical companies in luxury hotels in Switzerland. The resulting cartel controlled 90 per cent of EC consumption of PVC. British automobile prices are fixed far higher than those elsewhere in Europe.

Petrol costs are managed through a cartel run by Esso, Shell and BP, which have demonstrated their capacity to dictate prices in the wake of the Gulf crisis.

Until 1979, Britain possessed one of the largest state sectors in Europe. The Tories set themselves the grandiose task of rolling back the state. Since then 21 major enterprises have been privatised. But the new breed of privatised firms remains in the grip of government regulation.

Free Ofwat?

Denationalised monopolies have been hemmed in by a new framework of institutional control: Ofgas for British Gas; Oftel for British Telecom; and now Ofel for electricity and Ofwat for water. The state has retained golden shares or 'specific limited powers in the future ownership or operation of a privatised company'. The very existence of a high-profile monopolies and mergers commission, office of fair trading, restrictive practices court, serious fraud office, etc, is testimony to the continuation of heavy-duty state intervention.

Instead of rolling back the state, the Tories have merely adjusted its relationship to the private sector. It is no longer owner, but protector and regulator of private capital. The proliferation of price and profit controls, new watchdogs, hidden taxes and underhand subsidies reveals state intervention in the market to be as strong as ever. Britain remains one of the most interventionist nations in Europe. State spending has risen by 11 per cent under Thatcher. The Tories have never seriously considered privatising the Bank of England or severing state control of interest rates or the money supply.

Slush fund

Many British companies are entirely dependent on the state slush fund for survival. Almost the only sectors of manufacturing industry which have remained viable over the past decade are those which enjoy state patronage through defence contracts. When British Aerospace bought the state-owned Royal Ordnance at the knockdown price of £190m, the bounty included a host of government missile and munitions contracts as well as acres of prime-site land.

In 1988 BAe bought Rover for £150m, in return for £547m in state aid and vast debt write-offs. The subsequent scandal revealed much about the customary dealings between government and big business. Lord Young had tried to slip BAe an extra £400m by agreeing

a 20-month delay in the company's payment for Rover, financing its costs in buying up Rover shares, promising to make up the shortfall in juicy defence contracts and pledging sympathetic inland revenue treatment.

In public, Thatcher talks about letting market forces decide. In practice, British firms need state patronage to survive. State subsidies, tax breaks, guaranteed contracts and protection against overseas competition have been doled out to British companies. The result is that, far from freeing markets from dependence on the state, the Tories have simply confirmed that the state is a vital support machine for the capitalist system.

Tory nostalgia

Creating a free market is not an option for British capitalism. The new right correctly recognises that state intervention is a symptom of capitalist stagnation. Yet it wrongly assumes that less state intervention will revive the market. The problem is that it is not state interference which has corrupted the free market. It is the failures of the market which have forced the state to step into the economic arena. The failure of the project of freeing the market is clear evidence that the root of the problem lies in the market itself.

Conservative nostalgia for the days of the free market is easy to understand. Only during its mid-nineteenth century heyday was British capitalism able to do without the crutches of state support. For the workshop of the world, *laissez faire* seemed like a workable policy. But in the era of capitalist decline which began towards the end of the last century, the state has to play an ever-expanding role in economic life.

The recession will expose the myth of the free market, and exacerbate all the stagnatory tendencies towards monopoly, centralisation and state bail-outs which have been a feature of the past decade. Tory propaganda about the need to roll back the state and liberate market forces was never really a practical proposition. British capitalism is too senile to be able to survive without state assistance. In the hard years ahead, the market is going to need more and more state support. But a government which has balanced the books over the past decade only by one-off sales of state assets is going to find it harder to step in and stop the free market going into freefall.

Where their profits come from

Exploitation

Helen Simons on the secret of the self-made men

For the past few years the papers have been full of stories of self-made entrepreneurs amassing fortunes by skilfully buying and selling on the share and financial markets. Now they are full of scandalous tales of sharp operators making millions through share swindles, and tragic tales of the dramatic ruin of yesterday's multi-millionaires in the City of London. This focus on financial matters might reveal how individual crooks and gamblers get their money, but it only serves to obscure the true origins of profit in capitalist society.

Billions of dollars change hands every day on the world's stock markets, yet few businessmen appear to be involved in the production of new wealth. Appearances, however, can be deceptive. The capitalist class cannot live by financial speculation alone. It is the profits produced by industry which provide the wealth to finance the market deals. The way in which the speculative bubble of the eighties has burst shows what can happen when the paper value placed on stocks and shares exceeds the real values created in the productive sector of the economy.

New money from nowhere

In the financial markets, existing money simply changes hands from one speculator to another. In production, on the other hand, the capitalists seem able to create new money from nowhere. A company like Tarmac may lament the fact that, with the slump in the housing market, its pre-tax profit has declined from £154m to a mere £98m in the last half-year. But this is a decline in income that most of us would happily live with. Tarmac's owners are still £98m richer than they were six months ago.

Most people look upon industry and manufacturing as a way of producing goods and products that we all need. By contrast, for the capitalists the production process has the single objective of generating profits. Employers can have no interest in anything which interferes with the process of profit-making. Care for the environment, health and safety measures, quality control of the product are all subordinated to profitability.

Capitalists are clear that the sole purpose of production is to line their pockets. They are less clear as to the source of profits within the production process. Most of the time they avoid discussing the matter. Profit-making is just assumed to be a neat trick that happens under capitalism. When pressed, most employers claim the Richard Branson mantle, portraying themselves as hard-working risk-takers and entrepreneurs for whom profits are a just reward. After all, they argue, the employer does all the work of hiring workers, buying raw materials, installing machines and marketing a finished product. It is only fair that he should gain some reward for such a risky business.

There are risks and risks in this world. Most of us

would jump at the chance of running the risk of making £98m in six months. It seems a less risky business than working for a capitalist, where the risk of impoverishment is only one wage packet away. Even the bosses who face so-called financial ruin seem to suffer little more than a modest decline in income. Gerald Ronson might claim that he cannot afford to pay his £5m fine from the Guinness affair; but he is not exactly slumming it in a squat in Hackney and signing on the dole.

All the talk of capitalist risk-taking is a smokescreen. To discover what lies behind their money-making trick, we need to unravel some of the mysteries of capitalist production.

The generation of profits is dependent upon the creation of a surplus-value in the production process. If the capitalist can market products for a greater value than it costs him to produce, then he has created a surplus-value from which he can profit. The source of this surplus is the source of all profits. And the source of this surplus is our labour.

Commodities only acquire a value in our society as products of human labour. This is the common feature which allows all goods to be measured in money terms, and exchanged on the market. Commodities that take a lot of time to produce have a greater value than those that can be produced more quickly. Thus a diamond, which takes an age both to discover and to mine, is highly valuable, while a stone picked up off the pavement is worthless. There may be situations in which a rock is more *useful* than a gem—for example, a diamond necklace wouldn't provide much defence against an assailant. Nevertheless, nobody in their right mind would pay for a stone when they are so readily at hand. Labour is the source of all value; and the amount of labour, measured in labour-time, which is embodied in an object determines its value.

Our labour, their profits

If all value is ultimately reducible to labour-time, then all profits must be produced by the labour of the workforce. In an attempt to refute this claim, the bosses will insist that they pay for all of the labour which the worker expends in the production process. Since our workers are paid the going rate for the job, say the capitalists, how can we be accused of exploiting them? The old maxim of 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay' seems to confirm the capitalist viewpoint.

But the fair and equal contract between the capitalist and his workers disguises the real relationship of inequality and unequal exchange. Workers sell their ability to work, their labour-power, to the capitalist in return for a wage. The capitalist then has the use of the labour-power within the production process. The money-making trick stems from the fact that the workers create more value in the production process than the cost of their own wages. All value created over and above the value of workers' labour-power is

surplus-value for the capitalist. Surplus-labour—the unpaid labour of the workers—is the source of the employers' profits.

The exploitative relationship between employer and employee becomes more obvious when we step back from viewing the individual worker and his boss, and look at the capitalist class as a whole in relation to the whole of the working class. The working class produces all of the value within capitalist society. Yet, through the wages system, workers are allowed access to only a small proportion of the wealth which they create. The rest remains the property of the capitalists.

Modern workers may not look exploited in comparison to slaves or feudal serfs. When a serf was forced to leave his own land and work for free for the local lord, nobody could be in any doubt as to who was exploiting whom. However, the fact that exploitation is less obvious today does not alter the fact that workers perform unpaid labour for their bosses, and are therefore exploited.

The irony of capitalism is that, under the guise of equality, inequality has reached a scale unknown to previous societies. The working class is the most exploited class in human history. And as production methods develop, so it becomes more and more exploited. When new technology and methods raise the productivity of labour, many more goods are made in the same period of time, leading to a massive expansion of wealth. However, workers are denied the benefits. Even though their wages may rise a little, the fact that their productivity has increased means that they are receiving a smaller and smaller share of the products of their own labour. The widening gap between the wealth which workers produce, and the proportion of it which they receive, means that the modern workforce is more exploited than ever before.

Today exploitation is usually associated with the impoverished regions of the third world. Conditions in the third world are undoubtedly barbaric; yet it is often the workers in the most modern factories of the industrialised world who are the most exploited. This is because their wages amount to a tiny proportion of the tremendous amounts of wealth produced by their high-productivity workplace. While a worker on a plantation in the third world may work in horrendous conditions, he will be producing nothing like as much surplus-value for his employer. Thus he is likely to be less exploited than a carworker in a robotic Nissan plant. Today a few carworkers produce countless thousands of cars a year, but they find it hard to make enough money to buy one.

When the next Guinness or Polly Peck scandal breaks in the financial world, it is worth remembering that fraud and deception are not the preserve of a few crooks under capitalism. The entire system is founded on appropriating the wealth which workers produce, and praising the exploiters for their skill at making a profit.

**What Barclays, the Midland,
Nat West and Lloyds do
with our money**

They're banking on us

The advertising image of a user-friendly, personalised banking system has been a huge financial fraud at our expense, according to Phil Murphy

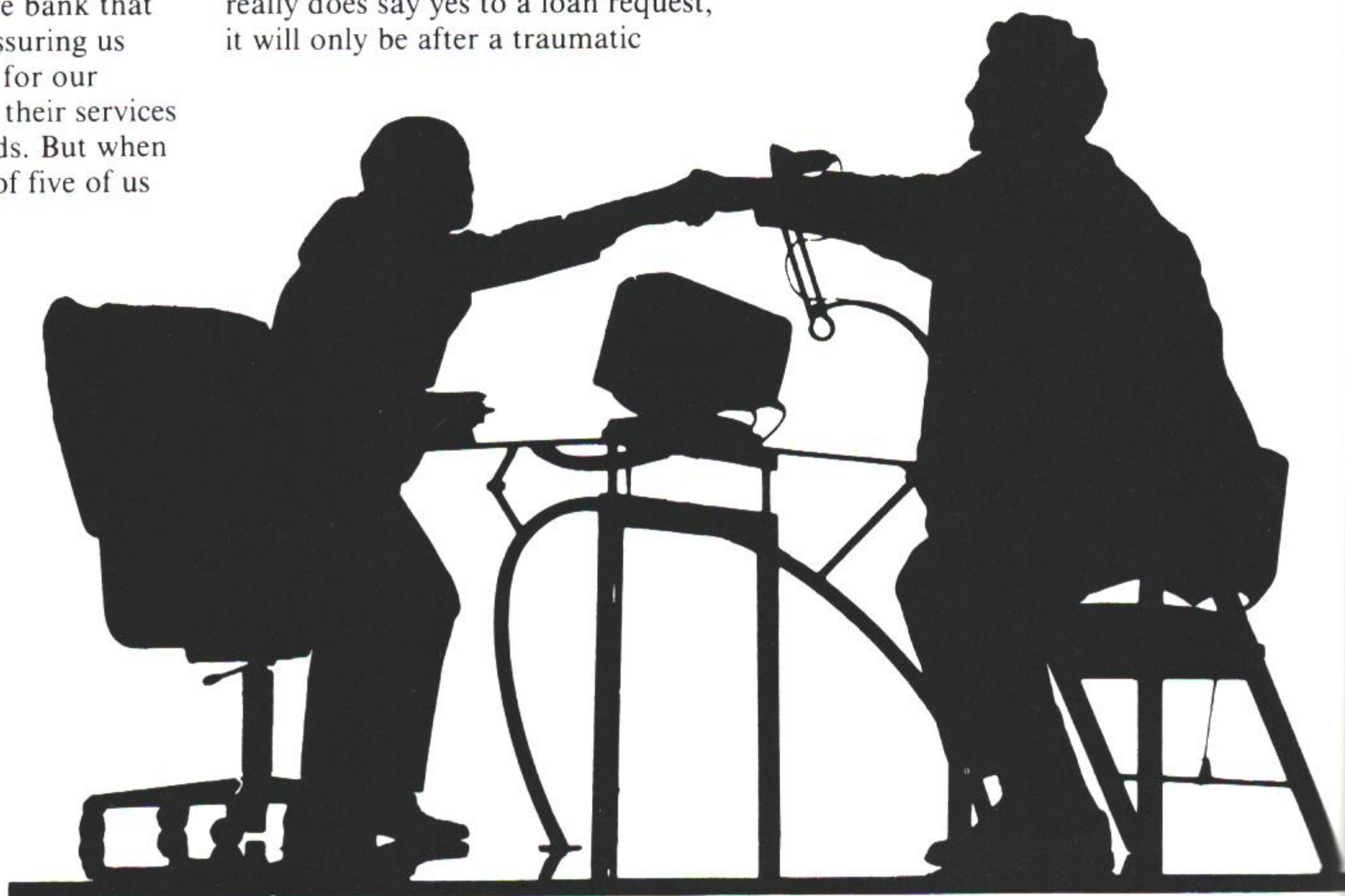
The high street banks have been in the frontline of the campaign to publicise 'popular capitalism' in recent years. We are bombarded with hundreds of millions of pounds worth of television and press advertising, encouraging us to open accounts with 'the action bank' or 'the friendly bank' or 'the bank that likes to say "yes"', all assuring us that the banks are there for our benefit, willing to shape their services to suit our personal needs. But when we sign up, as four out of five of us

do, the advertising slogans bear little relation to the treatment we receive.

The action bank is distinctly inactive when it comes to giving sensible explanations for its exorbitant charges. The friendly bank sends us distinctly unfriendly letters when we go overdrawn by a few quid. If the bank that likes to say yes really does say yes to a loan request, it will only be after a traumatic

procedure. And for those who get a yes, there are many more who get turned down when they ask for a little loan, a cheque card or a credit card (usually after receiving a ton of junk mail from the same bank, telling them how easy it is to get all three).

Everybody has a story of banks being all smiles and sweetness when we make our first deposit, but somewhat less affable when the cost of living exceeds our limited means. One student who secured a cash card found the hole in the wall machine less generous as the term wore on and her bank balance fell. Her final request to the money machine was turned down altogether. This came as less of a surprise than the discovery that her bank manager had staked out the machine. As she turned away



empty-handed she felt a tap on her shoulder. It was no ordinary mugger. It was the manager, who grabbed her magic card, smiled and departed.

The contrast between the advertising hype and such experiences has little to do with the meanness of bank managers—although some of us are less fortunate than others in this respect. The gap between the public image and the private reality of banking is rooted in the unproductive, parasitic role which banks play in capitalist society. So what do the banks do?

Bankers and other financiers are not involved in creating new wealth in the way that, say, manufacturers are. Banks usually make big profits, but only by taking away a proportion of the profits made by the productive parts of the capitalist system at home or abroad. Interest rates and other charges are the banks' way of creaming off some of the money made elsewhere in the economy.

Personal parasites

The banks are essentially parasites. But they are still essential to the functioning of the modern capitalist economy. The productive capitalists—those who run ICI and Glaxo and British Aerospace and Plessey—could not realise their profits without the banks. Under capitalism, things are not produced because people need them; they are produced in order to realise a profit through exchange. Instead of going direct from producer to consumer, goods have to go through the market, where a complex system of intermediaries makes the connections between the two. Money is needed for various traders and middlemen to buy goods from the producers before they sell on to the consumers. This is where the banks come in.

Two of the banks' basic functions are, firstly, to provide banknotes and coins to make possible the continuous process of buying and selling, and, secondly, to transfer money from one operator to another, which is done mostly by computer nowadays. The banks may present themselves as public servants and plead with us to take advantage of their customer-friendly services. But the real reason they need our money is to provide the lubrication for the bosses' profit-machine. And in the process, the banks themselves seek to make a handsome profit without producing a thing.

The high street banks would have us believe that, by taking in our money, they are providing a public service. They promise to keep your money safer than the mattress can, and to stop you blowing all of your wages in the pub or the bookie's on

the way home by having the money paid directly into your account; more than half of the British workforce are now paid in this way. Of course, the banks say, we'll probably have to charge you—just to cover our costs for this unique service, you understand. And if you promise not to use any of the money for seven days we'll even give you a few per cent interest. How friendly can you get?

But who really benefits from this? First the banks do. Traditionally their most important role is to take deposits from some customers and make loans to others. For the high street banks, the most lucrative business is to borrow money from individuals like us and lend it out to companies. The banks make most of their money from their margin—the difference between the rate at which they borrow and the rate at which they lend. Until recently the norm of paying no interest on current accounts and only minimal interest on deposit accounts, while lending it out at rates as high as 20 per cent on overdrafts, meant that the 'big four'—National Westminster, Barclays, Midland and Lloyds—could almost guarantee rising profits. The banks even had the gall to charge us fees, based on secret and often inexplicable formulae, for the privilege of having our money used in this way.

Industrial distress

The other main beneficiaries are the industrial capitalists. British companies have long needed credit to stay in the business of profit-making; this has been truer than ever in recent times, as manufacturers have found that their profits were not even enough to cover basic operating costs and meet interest payments on loans. As a consequence 'distress borrowing'—borrowing to pay off past borrowing—has become a significant feature of corporate financing. Turning to the banks for company loans and overdrafts is now an everyday part of British business.

Uncompetitive British capitalists have also been borrowing for another reason over the past decade. As they have found making profits out of production tougher and tougher, they have concentrated more on playing the money markets—foreign exchange dealing, gambling on the futures markets and other forms of financial speculation. Hanson Industries, a British firm which the advertisers told us was a pioneering enterprise 'doing rather well over there', rarely produces anything. It makes most of its money through asset-stripping takeovers which the banks help to finance.

The Hansons, the Bransons, the Saunders, the Maxwells, the Saatchis and the Nadirs would not have risen to the heights they did in the eighties if it hadn't been for the massive extension of bank credit. These are the people who really do find the banks friendly and listening and active. They have built up record levels of corporate bank debt over the last decade. Many people are appalled by the multi-million pound speculations in shares and properties which these capitalists indulged in through the eighties. They would be even more upset if they realised that a good deal of this money has come from our bank accounts.

Consumer boom

During the past decade, of course, the banks have also lent a lot of money to ordinary people, through personal loans and consumer credit. This was a relatively new departure in the eighties, and became a central feature of the banks' popular capitalist image. They competed to appear more generous than each other in providing us with 'cheap' credit to get the CD players, suits and summer holidays which we wanted but couldn't afford. The boom in personal debt was presented as another great service by the banks; but it was only another example of how the credit system had become crucial to manufacturing, retailing and banking capitalists.

In its simplest form credit allows goods to be sold before they are paid for. The banks' expanded role in giving personal credit in the shape of overdrafts, personal loans, credit cards and mortgages, has allowed the capitalists to sell far more goods and make far more profits than would have been justified by the real state of the economy over the last 10 years. Without the eighties explosion of this type of bank lending the consumer goods producers and house builders would have felt the pinch much earlier. This was all that concerned the bankers and financiers. They could not care less about what their personal account customers need. They will turn the credit tap on or off to suit the changing needs of the system. Thus they have recently cracked down on consumer credit, at a time when many people need financial help more than ever.

With rough, recessionary times ahead, it is going to get harder and harder for the banks to keep up any sort of benevolent image. They are set to crack down on both their staff and their customers in a bid to keep themselves afloat. The banks are no strangers to hard times. They have toughed it out several times over the past two decades, since the 1973-74

recession brought a spate of company bankruptcies and precipitated the first banking crisis of recent times. The problem is, however, that the escape routes which the banks have pursued in the past are all more or less closed today.

When faced with financial crises, the banks have launched aggressive drives for business in new areas, until they are forced to retrench by the problems of overextended credit and the difficulties of repaying loans. In the second half of the 1970s, international bank lending to industrialising third world countries was the big new market. The debt crisis sparked off by Mexico in 1982 put a dampener on that, as these countries proved unable to pay the annual interest charges, never mind repay the loans. The 'big four' British banks are still suffering the after-effects of this experience; as recently as last year they had to put aside another £5 billion to write off their third world debts.

Big bad debts

The British banks' next drive for business was back home, as corporate borrowing took off again in the mid-eighties for reasons discussed above. Now, however, the recession is hitting the boom sectors of the eighties which did most of this new borrowing—property companies, service industries, financial business. The banks are having to carry the burden of enormous debts owed by companies on the verge of insolvency. In the first half of this year the 'big four' set aside £1.25 billion for some of these bad debts. Barclays had to write off £100m for lending to just one collapsed company, British & Commonwealth Holdings. With profits of only £36m for the first half of 1990 it's not surprising that the governor of the Bank of England has expressed concern about the survival of the weakest of the 'big four', Midland. Although Midland's problems have been compounded by disastrous takeover deals in America and failed gambles on the money markets, none of the major British banks are much better off.

The deregulation and liberalisation of the finance markets gave another short-lived boost to the banks in the eighties. It allowed them to diversify into areas other than the traditional reliance on lending to industry. Banks lent out large sums, for example, to be spent on adventures in the property market or takeover bids on the stock market. Although this gave banking an extra lease of life in the eighties, the speculative and superficial character of the businesses doing the borrowing also put the

banks in a vulnerable position, as the current slump in both property and share prices confirms. The US banking system is already in the middle of a serious crisis thanks to its creation of a similarly shaky house of credit cards in the eighties.

Deregulation has also backfired on the banks by intensifying competition within their sphere of business. Many big British companies have sought to compensate for the poor profitability of their productive operations by moving into financial deals on their own account. BP spearheaded this development when it set up its own in-house bank in 1985. This removes a large chunk of potential business from the high street banks. It also adds to their difficulties today in making use of the other escape route which they used in the eighties—the personal banking business.

The difficulties which British banks encountered in their corporate and international lending, exacerbated by fiercer competition from Japanese, German and US banks, forced them to put much more emphasis on the domestic personal banking sector. This has been a key element in the making of their user-friendly, popular capitalist image over the last 10 years. Targeting new customers with gimmicks ranging from piggy banks for children's accounts to record tokens for student accounts, alongside expensive advertising campaigns, has become a survival tactic for the high street banks. They have also moved into many other services to try to boost their fee and commission income by providing insurance and wills and pension funds, and even estate agency and travel agency services. The 'big four' now provide about 300 services in addition to borrowing and lending.

The game's up

But the banks have not had things their own way. Deregulation has allowed other institutions, not least the building societies, to move into this market and further cut back bank margins. In the past the banks always insisted that it was unprofitable for them to provide current accounts, so they had to impose charges and could not pay interest on these accounts. However, deregulation measures in 1987 and 1988 allowed the building societies into the personal market. Under pressure from this new competition, the banks have begun to introduce interest-paying current accounts, high interest cheque accounts and a wide range of other accounts which are supposedly geared to the particular needs of the (fairly well-heeled) individual customer.

It has recently been speculated that

the diversity of these accounts was designed not so much to provide tailor-made personal banking for new customers, but to so baffle existing customers that they would give up and stick with their non-interest-paying current account. If so, the ploy has only been partially successful. The market men have viewed the higher than projected take-up rate for Midland's Orchard, Vector and Meridian accounts as an extra problem rather than a boost for Midland, since these accounts eat still further into the bank's slender margins.

In 1990, the game is up. Falling profits and the end of the consumer spending boom have begun to force banks to come clean about their PR exercises and cut the sales gimmicks. Lloyds has already imposed an annual charge for using its Access credit card. Barclays has introduced a similar scheme for its Barclaycard, claiming that too many people have been paying off their card debts within the interest-free period, thus avoiding the exorbitant interest charges of around 25 per cent. Not long ago, this interest-free period was the major sales pitch used by Barclaycard; now it complains that it has been too successful.

The high profile the main banks have given to the needs of the personal customer over the last few years has been a sham. It is not a sign of the banks' role as public servants and purveyors of popular capitalism, but a desperate move to survive the loss of traditional business. The proliferation of personal accounts and other new services indicates the banking system's fragility rather than dynamism. Banks cannot be successful when the rest of the economy is moving into recession. Out of necessity, with lower profit margins in international and corporate business, the banks have taken to grabbing what they can from the man and woman in the street. For the last three years they have, literally, been banking on the consumer spending boom. As that ends the gloss is fading on their promotion brochures.

The recession is set to wipe the phoney smile off the face of high street banking. It will mean higher charges, closures of branches and a worse, more hard-headed service. For those who work in the banks there is the certainty of further redundancies to add to those already being pushed through. Whatever the adverts say, the nineties will be a much grimmer period for bankers, bank employees and the much-abused bank customer.

The rise and fall of Donald Trump

Craig Barton on
a man who made
a fortune without
making a thing

How to look like a billion dollars

Deals are my art form', wrote Donald Trump in his first book, *The Art of the Deal*: 'Other people paint beautifully on canvas or write wonderful poetry. I like making deals, preferably big deals.' When *The Art of the Deal* came out in 1988, Trump's reputation as a multi-billion dollar success kept it on the bestseller lists for weeks. Now in the recessionary nineties, with the creditors banging at the door of Trump Tower, his second book, *Surviving at the Top*, has finally come out amid much amusement about the title. He might be surviving, but nowhere near the top.

The rise and fall of the Trump empire is the story of American capitalism in the eighties. Most of his critics concentrate too narrowly on his personal greed and grossness. They miss the point that Trump was a product of his times, of the speculative, paper money economy created by the explosion of credit in the eighties. It was only a matter of time before that junk system, and the junk billionaires it created, came tumbling down.

When the young Trump graduated in 1968, his prospects of entering the New York property market seemed nil. His father was a small-time slumlord from Queens, and the rocketing prices of Manhattan real estate were out of his league. But the property boom ended in 1973 as the USA entered recession: credit dried up, New York City came close to bankruptcy, and business confidence dropped through the floor. Big-time property developers bailed out, and little Donald Trump bought in—at rock-bottom prices.

When he purchased and renovated the Commodore Hotel on a prestige site near Grand Central Station in 1975, the Trump strategy became clear. Fight like hell for every government concession going; pick big-name projects, and hype them to the heavens; use the hype to attract big loans, to be paid off when the property is sold at a future date. The Commodore Hotel, like most Trump ventures, was built on tax relief, hot air and credit.

The Trump property scams only worked because of factors outside his control. The Reagan administration embarked upon a massive programme of credit expansion after the 1980-82 recession. One of the favourite areas of bank lending became real estate. In the five years to 1989 real estate's share of banking business rose from 25 to 37 per cent, while its share of new bank loans hit 64 per cent. New York fared best in the property boom, and Trump was one of the most successful developers in New York.

As the credit-fuelled boom took off, Wall Street banks were falling over themselves to loan millions to a huckster and hype merchant like Trump. 'It's funny what's happened', he noted, 'bankers come to me to ask if I might be interested in borrowing their money'. He was. In 1981 he built the Trump Tower, a 26-storey monster on swishy Fifth Avenue, and put his name on the New York map in more ways than one. The next year he built his first casino in Atlantic City in partnership with Holiday Inns. And in 1986 he bought Holiday Inns out with the new form of financial gimcrackery: high-interest, quick-repayment 'junk bonds'.

By the end of the eighties the Trump Organisation included Trump Tower, Trump Plaza Hotel, Trump Regency Hotel, Trump Castle Casino, Trump Plaza Casino and Trump Palace Condominiums. He'd just bought an air shuttle which he named... Trump Shuttle. And then there was the Trump board game (sadly, a flop), a Trump gold pen and a Trump TV gameshow scheduled for release this year. His lavish lifestyle was front-page news: everyone knew about the 300-foot yacht *Trump Princess*, the Trump Tower penthouse with its 80-foot living room and 12-foot waterfall, the 118-room Florida mansion, the Boeing 727 and a personal expense account estimated at more than half a million dollars a month. He boasted of receiving congratulatory notes from Barbara Bush ('a classy lady') and requests from the British royals for the use of his helicopter.

But Trump's greatest friends were the banks. As one developer said: 'The bankers got mesmerised. They thought it was almost an honour to lend to

Forbes, the US business magazine, published an exposé on the Trump debt (he retaliated by calling its publisher a 'homosexual hypocrite') and he was sued for defrauding junk bond investors. His bank creditors offered a bridging loan, but only if he sold off his assets and kept his personal allowance to a humiliating \$450 000 a month.

While the business community sniggered at the prospect of Trump on pocket money, the banks had little option but to bail him out or risk losing the billions that they had already loaned him. As Trump explains: 'I said to the bankers, "Listen fellows, I have a problem and you have a problem. We have to find a way out or it's going to be a difficult time for both of us". They lent him some more, but put the Boeing 727 and the yacht up for sale. Trump claimed that he had planned to sell up anyway, since in the next few years 'cash will be king'. The trouble is that cash is king now; Trump will have trouble selling his overvalued empire in a dwindling market.

Ivana Trump: down to
her last designer
dress collection



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Donny.' They would often lend Trump more than the mortgage value of a property because its value was on the rise. Some banks even gave him 'unsecured' loans, for which the collateral was nothing more solid than the Trump name itself.

By the turn of the decade, Trump had bought up the Plaza Hotel (\$400m), the shuttle (\$365m) and the Taj Mahal Casino (\$835m) with junk bonds and bank credit. The Plaza Hotel loan alone had an interest repayment of \$40m a year, \$15m more than the hotel's income. And the Taj Mahal Casino had to earn \$1.3m a day just to break even (it didn't). Trump could keep the financial juggling act going just as long as he had access to more easy credit. But by the start of the nineties the heady days of the Wall Street credit boom were over. The New York financial sector and property market slumped. Trump, with debts of \$2 billion, made a shocking discovery. 'I thought capital would be more readily available', he said, 'and all of a sudden—boom!—the curtain came down'.

With the Trump empire crumbling, Donald's public split with Ivana Trump, which kept New York entertained for most of February, raised the matter of alimony and the question everyone wanted answered: how much is the guy worth?

Trump the innovator, Trump the pioneer now stands exposed as Trump the mouth at the end of the telephone. That Trump was just a speculator who contributed nothing more to the sum of human civilisation than two banal books is hard for Donald to swallow. One of the rather endearing things in his books is the way he tries to pretend he is doing something productive, comparing dealing to poetry and painting. But the parasitic character of Trump's business is now clear to many, and his fall from grace has prompted countless sermons about greed.

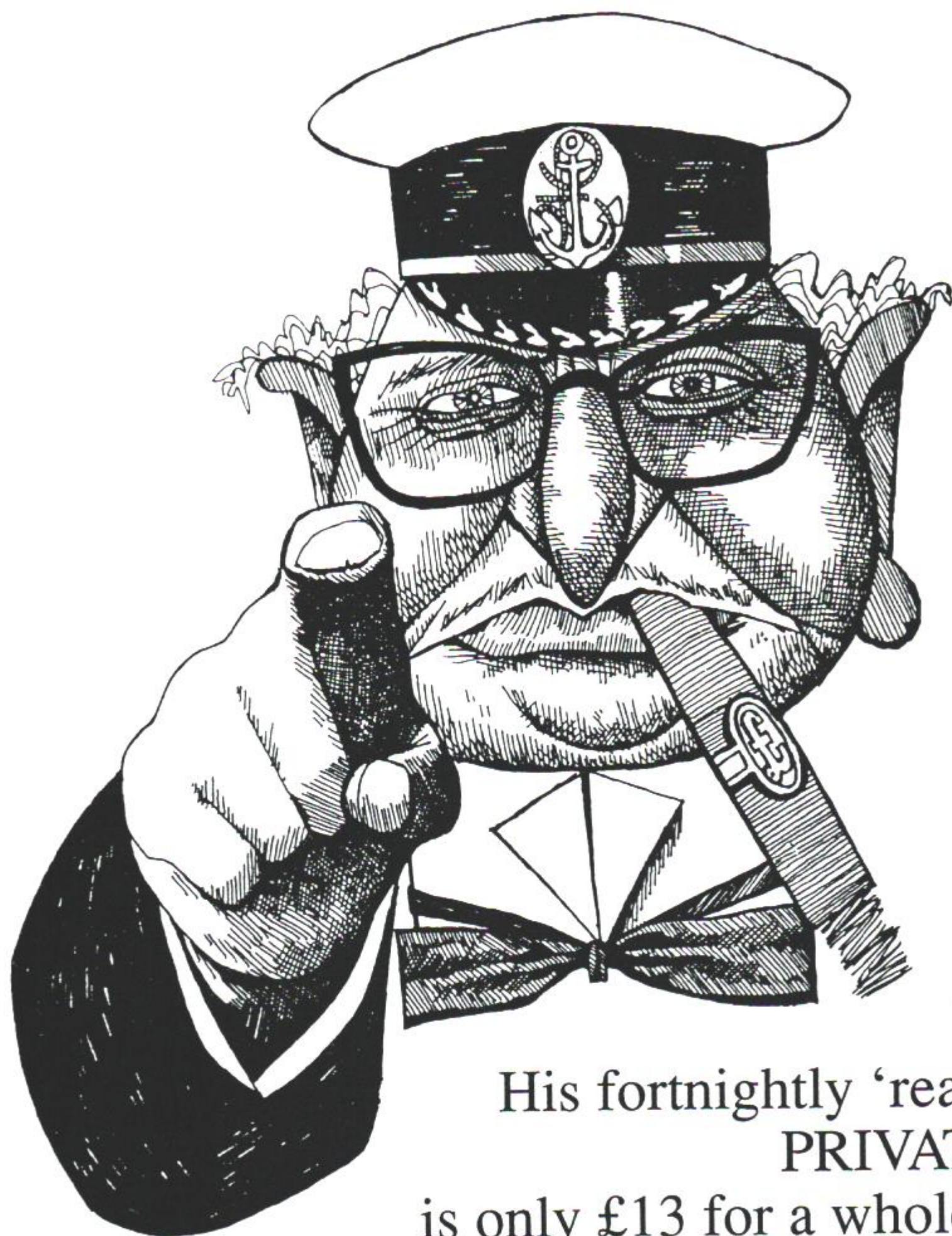
'Now Donald Trump and America have to get back to making things as well as money', commented the *Guardian*. Fine; except that capitalists have always been about making money, nothing more. What happened in the eighties was that American (and for that matter British) capitalists found financial speculation a far more realistic option for making money than investing in productive industry. The end of the Trump story suggests that even that option is closing.

• Donald Trump, *Surviving at the Top*, Century Press, £14.99



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ann bradley

Satan never ate my baby

After a sleepless summer, the good people of Rochdale could once more rest easy in their beds, when local police officially declared that the latest batch of allegedly abused children to be taken into care was not part of a Satanic sex ring. The police were still hedging their bets on whether there had been some sort of a sex ring—but if there was it seems Lucifer was not a member. A shocking revelation.

No doubt the gutter press was more disappointed than shocked. 'Satan ate my baby', 'Rape hell in Satan's coven' and 'I skinned my baby for Satan' are the kind of headlines sensation-seeking newspaper hacks dream of. But the editors need not fear. The devil may have escaped prosecution this time, but if things follow true to form in the next couple of years Old Nick will be raising his head (at least) in many more Satanic sex covens.

Satanism is the problem of the month as far as some incest counsellors are concerned. At a recent international conference on 'Incest and related problems' at a hospital in Harrow Sue Hutchinson, who organises a helpline for abuse victims, claimed that human fetuses were being killed and eaten by Satanic sex rings around the country. She says that in the last six months she has had 10 phone-calls a week from victims of Satanic abuse. Women have apparently told her how children were hung up by their feet, suspended over electric saws, and subjected to rape, buggery and bestiality.

Recently a Church of England vicar told a Sunday paper of a woman who had come to him for help last New Year's Eve. She believes, and so does the vicar, that she was initiated into a black magic coven in London and ritually dedicated to Satan when she was six weeks old. She was married to Satan when she was 11, raped by several members of the coven and also by demons. She also claims to have witnessed the sacrifice of babies. Some of these depravities took place in a public park but nobody saw them because Satan made them invisible. The vicar conceded that he found this final point hard to swallow.

It is not surprising that these kind of stories are printed and believed by some people. After all, some people believe the stories about the man with a two-foot penis in the *Sunday Sport*. What amazes me is that they are treated seriously by the police, social services and health professionals. After a 'Satan molests children' panic in Nottingham last year, a joint team of police and social workers was set up by the chief constable of Nottinghamshire and the chief executive of the city council. In an unpublished 650-page report obtained by Central Television, the team found—wait for it—no evidence of ritualistic abuse.

Claims of ritual and Satanic abuse of children have only just come into vogue in Britain, but in the USA they have been rife for some time. Since 1984 at least 100 people have been charged with ritual sex abuse. It has been claimed that there are as many as 10 000 human sacrifices a year in the USA, most of them fetuses which have been bred specially from teenage 'brood mares'.

Concern about Satanic cults became fashionable in the USA after Michelle Smith published her memories of childhood Satanic abuse, *Michelle Remembers*, in 1980. In the book she claimed to have been involved in black magic ceremonies where she witnessed debauchery, murder, human sacrifice, the mutilation of animals and the drinking of blood. She was eventually saved by the power of God. She wrote the book to warn the world after she and her therapist, Lawrence Pazder, visited the Vatican to alert it to the previously untold dangers. They have now married and Dr Pazder has cultivated a nice little earner organising 'occult crime seminars' for police and therapists. Since then Satanic and occult crime has become a growth industry generating books, videos, prevention material (whatever that is—garlic?) and TV and radio appearances by well-paid 'experts'.

As well as being used to line people's pockets, the Satanic abuse scares have served a useful function for the American fundamentalist Christian churches, which have long argued that the 'evils of Satan' are being ignored. A good devil scare is bound to have people running for the safety of the church fold, so the American fundamentalists have made a lot of mileage out of the ritual abuse issue. These are the same people, we should recall, who prosecuted rock groups like Judas Priest for Satanism on the grounds that, if played backwards, their records pass on the devil's orders to teenagers. Here in Britain, it seems that many of the helpline initiatives and network groups which are predictably burgeoning around the Satanic abuse issue are likewise being run by the Evangelical Alliance and other 'born again' Christian groups.

Of course, child abuse itself is not an invention of the media or the God squad. The point is, however, that you do not have to be a devil-worshiper to do grisly things to children. Indeed the vast majority of child abuse takes place within the secret confines, not of a Satanic coven, but of that most Christian of our society's institutions, the nuclear family. Scare stories which try to shift responsibility for this social problem on to a few Charlie Manson types are so ridiculous that they would be funny, if they did not have practical effects on people's lives. But they do.

Earlier this year Chris Sempers and her partner Graham Raven from Humberside were having tea when they received an unannounced visit from the social services and the local CID. The local NSPCC had apparently received a complaint that their son Michael was abused during certain occult rituals which involved people cavorting around naked. As Chris and Graham are both locally known as 'pagans' the powers that be decided to investigate.

'Pagan' literally means 'inhabitant of the land' and there are as many different varieties of pagan as there are of Christian. Yet the social services, not wanting to clutter up their casebook with details, decided paganism=Satanism and therefore declared that Chris and Graham's son must be in 'moral danger'. Chris and Graham, on the other hand, declare that they 'are more likely to turn Christian than ever consider abusing him'. They have been terrified by the discovery that 'moral danger' can mean anything which the authorities want it to mean. So, although they've managed to convince the police that they're harmless cranks this time, next time it could be a different story. They're worried that their child could end up in care because an official has strong prejudices.

Some people would say that children should not be subjected to such pagan mumbo-jumbo, however 'harmless' it is. I tend to agree—mumbo-jumbo is bad for kids. But I don't think pagan mumbo-jumbo is any worse than Christian mumbo-jumbo. The notions of hellfire and damnation, the virgin birth, transubstantiation and the crucifixion, are not exactly susceptible to rational analysis. In fact, when you think about it, Christian teachings contain many similar themes to the torture, cannibalism and violent death which so concerns the people panicking about the involvement of children in Satanic rituals. Even Freddy Krueger never went on about eating 'the body of Christ' and drinking 'his blood'. Perhaps it's only a matter of time before some enlightened social worker conducts a study to prove that millions of Catholics are ritually abusing their children by taking them to mass on Sundays.

'Most child abuse takes place within the secret confines, not of a Satanic coven, but of the Christian family'

the personal column

The Personal Column is open to all *Living Marxism* readers, to provide a platform for your opinion on anything from pit bull terriers or the poll tax to Norman Tebbit or New Men.

Write to us today—next month's Personal Column is waiting to be filled. Send contributions (of about 1000 words) to The Personal Column, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

Legalise drugs

Conrad, a drugs counsellor, argues that the state's abuse of the drugs issue can only be cured by decriminalisation

One day you've got papers like the *Sunday Times* debating the possibility of legalising all drugs; the next day the government's talking about stemming the flow of illegal drugs from the Far East and South America. This contradictory legalise/persecute approach to drugs use is compounded by various strands of thought: moralists take the view that it's the users' fault (they've got a weak character), the dependable liberal types believe that society puts such a strain on us that some are forced to look for oblivion and support from drugs, and the medical modellers believe that people will always search for something to get hooked on, no matter what society we live in. Then, of course, there's the individualist approach: drugs are a matter of choice and I'll live my life as I want to (all you free spirits out there will appreciate this theory).

Speaking as a drugs counsellor I say 'decriminalise all drug use'. The reason I stipulate decriminalisation is because, unlike the state's do-gooding, often unknowing collaborators in the drugs counselling profession, I realise that the state has an interest in people using both legal and illegal drugs.

Why is there so much public debate about the use of illegal drugs like heroin and cocaine, but none about legal and widespread addiction to Valium? While the police orchestrate dawn swoops against 'illegal' drug use, the Valium users are ignored by everyone. No police raids, no public interest. For over 20 years this pill has been the answer provided for the problems of grannies unable to cope with minuscule pensions, teenagers unable to understand where they fit into society, middle-aged women struggling with housekeeping and middle-aged men unable to cope with unemployment. So why is acid seen as a scourge of society, while 'mother's little helper' is legally prescribed to countless thousands of addicts?

The state condones the use of legal drugs like Valium, Temazepam and Nitrazepam because it has no other answers to those who can't deal with

this society, but it criminalises those who take banned drugs such as cannabis, cocaine and heroin. In other words the state can accommodate legal drugs as a support for those who need them (after all we are all individual and deal with life's normal stresses and strains in a different fashion), but cannot countenance the consistent rejection of society's rules by the miscreants who take illegal drugs. Drug users are not



Drugs raid, Broadwater Farm

modern-day revolutionaries, but the symptoms of a failed system that cannot serve our social, material or developmental needs.

In general, drug use benefits the state. OK, I am sure that the state would prefer a drug-free society because of the costs drug usage incurs for them.

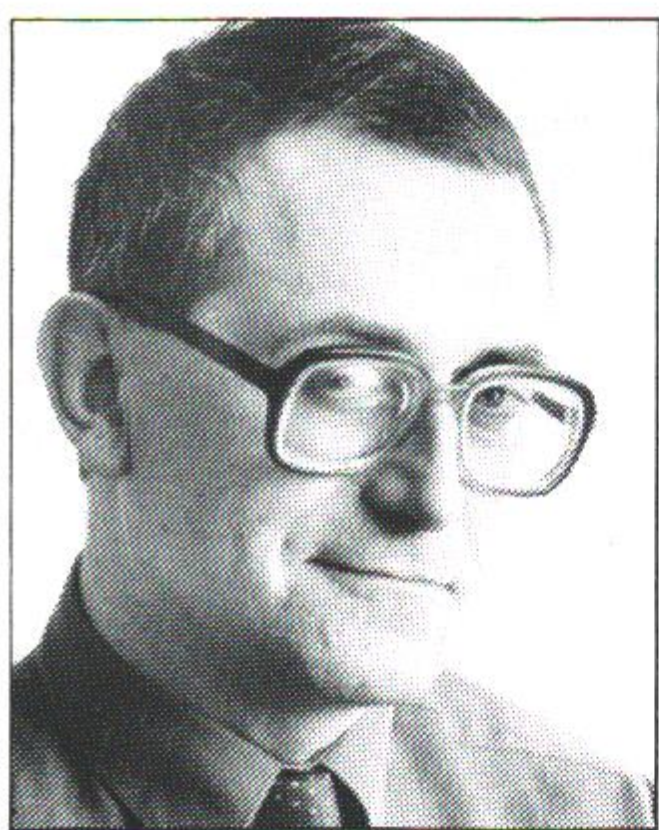
But the simple fact is that capitalism does not work, so they need drugs to keep the lid on society. The state reminds us time after time about the measures they will adopt to rid society of this scourge, but persecution and sedation are the only solutions on offer.

My job as a drugs counsellor is not made any easier by the bullshit debates that ensure that the state keeps control of the answers. We, the working class, have to dictate the answers if I am to be any use to drug users. The state has always been complicit in the use of drugs when it was convenient: ask yourself why they allowed opium dens in the last century or Valium prescriptions in this. But they also use drugs as a weapon against us: today the tight-lipped mention of crack or acid house parties is met by the entire might of the state hell-bent on eradicating this social menace, while rushed legislation giving the courts unprecedented powers to imprison and sequester funds smacks of a new police state.

It's also rarely mentioned that the state tested many now illegal drugs out on us to begin with. Various imperialist military establishments have planted acid on their own troops to test the extent of disorientation it would cause opposing forces, and amphetamines have been used to test how much further soldiers could march, and on how little food, under their influence. But these days LSD and 'speed' are illegal. All this just goes to show that the state either promotes or prosecutes drug use pretty much as it pleases.

My call for the decriminalisation of all drugs will not receive much airplay without understanding the issues at hand. My definition of a useful response to the problem would include independent analysis of the history of drug use and the complicity and response of different societies to drugs; and the establishment of addict's unions (for legal and illegal drug users) to promote understanding of their problems. If these ideas gain some purchase in society, they may force people to question contemporary understanding and state control.

The state has always been prepared to use drugs both to pacify and to victimise the working class. As a consequence, decriminalisation, which removes drug use from the domain of the courts and the police stations, is the only possible working class response.



don milligan

Irresponsible citizens

One Saturday morning early in September I was strolling through the West End. Although a little rickety (recovering from a night on the tiles) I had had a good breakfast and I felt ready for anything. I was pleased by the bright sunshine and the crowds of Japanese kids waving Union Jacks. Trafalgar Square sparkled and I was infected by the eagerness of the tourists. I jostled my way across the square and was carried along by the crowd past Whitehall. It was not until I was being swept along the pavement that runs through the Admiralty Arch that I realised that something strange was occurring.

The tourists were thinning out; they were being diluted by Brits as the river of people swelled along the Mall towards Buckingham Palace. My gentle befuddlement gave way to a dreadful clarity: 'This', I thought, 'is the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Britain. And I'm stuck in the bloody middle of it!'. The tiny Queen far away on a balcony, then on a saluting stand. Furiously loud fighters and bombers rasped across the sky in astonishingly tight formations—wave after wave. It was all too much.

However, I did think of the Brylcreem boys, of sacrifice, of duty and responsibility; I thought of 'the few'. The cost of the flying circus was not entirely wasted on me. But the impression was short-lived. A few days later it had faded away. And the tribulations of 'those who had died so that we might live'? Forgotten, completely forgotten, until I heard Frances Morrell talking on the radio. The former Labour ruler of London's education system was not talking about the war or the Battle of Britain, but she was conducting a phone-in on the rights and duties of the citizen. She believes in the 'active' citizen—the one that 'has a go' against indifference, and against the depredations of the bully and the vandal. From her room at the offices of Community Service Volunteers Frances orchestrates the work of the commission on citizenship, trying to recreate something approximating the 'Blitz Spirit'.

Established a couple of years ago by the speaker of the house of commons, the commission has been set up to promote a better understanding of what being a citizen actually involves. Like the Citizenship Foundation, launched by the Law Society as the charity, Law in Education, in 1984, the commission is working on ways of insinuating lessons about citizenship into the national curriculum, into personal and social education classes, even into English lessons. What everybody is supposed to have known instinctively in 1940 we now have to learn painstakingly. Young offenders must develop a balanced appreciation of their legal and moral responsibilities. Schoolchildren must understand their rights and duties as citizens, and all of us must develop a deeper awareness of what we owe to our neighbours, to passers-by and to society at large.

The young law-breaker in an 'intermediate treatment setting' is going to be helped by the Citizenship Foundation to accept the rule of law, the rights and powers of the state and the duties of the citizen. In

the bracing climate of the nineties Thatcher and Kinnock, and, of course, Frances Morrell, think that we would all benefit from the lessons being handed out to the community service conscript and the Borstal boy. Consequently, the citizenship message must be strengthened. It is at this point that the tautology and bamboozling begin. Vandalism and hooligan violence is attributed to a sort of spiritual ennui abroad among the masses. For some reason (that we cannot quite put our finger on) Britain has apparently suffered a catastrophic decline in standards of conduct among her citizens.

The left blame Margaret Thatcher and the enterprise culture, the right blame it on the decline of religion, sexual experimentation, envy, and sheer bloody-mindedness. However, the consensus remains: we have spawned a people dominated by selfish private interests who know all about their rights and very little about their duties. People witness beatings on public transport and on the streets, yet they refuse to 'have a go'. People leave their cars and windows unlocked and then whine when they are robbed. People complain about everything from the police to the poll tax, yet they have little constructive to put in its place. Such people, and they're all too common nowadays, never stop to think how they could help, or how they could contribute. The time has come to paraphrase St John F Kennedy: the question is not what the community can do for you, but what you can do for the community.

This much is now agreed by the government and the opposition frontbench. For the left this is a heaven-sent opportunity to trumpet the virtues of 'community' and 'socialism'. Something called the 'moral high ground' is now ours for the taking. Because we are presumed to believe in public provision, welfare and community values, we are presumably the natural exponents of citizenship. We are much better at lecturing and hectoring the man and woman in the street in the duties that they owe to society; better than the Tories, better even than Liberal Democrats! What the *Spectator* might call 'higher priggery' is ours for the taking.

In place of the old oppositions: rights and duties, we can place 'responsibility' at the heart of true citizenship. Responsibility can now be the watchword of the left. At last a concept that encompasses

the rule of law, community, personal politics, citizenship and caring for the less fortunate and the environment. Now, at the risk of making yourself sick, just roll it around on your tongue for a bit... re-spon-sib-il-ity. D'you see what I mean? It's a word made especially for the conquest of the moral high ground. A word that was sent from heaven to enable the left to outsmart the right in the struggle to subject the public to sanctimonious sermons on their shortcomings. The really splendid thing about lessons in responsibility and citizenship is that they enable our pundits and ideologues to attribute most of what goes wrong in British society to turpitude.

However, we must not despair. Help is at hand. Frances Morrell, the Citizenship Foundation, and the research teams of the shadow cabinet are working flat out. Soon somebody will surely produce a set of comprehensive measures covering such diverse policy areas as cleaning your own street without pay; being prosecuted for not preventing a mugging while on your way home from work; and self-restraint in the consumption of food and clothing. We will be closely instructed in our duties and in our responsibilities. In this way we shall all be cured of the old masculine rhetoric of class war. We'll have 'total recall'. The anachronism of fighting oppression and exploitation will be replaced by the 'virtual reality' of the responsible citizen.

Now, I should admit that like most people I have mixed feelings about responsibility. Sometimes I accept it and sometimes I don't. Sometimes I enjoy it and sometimes it scares the wits out of me. But one thing I'm sure of is that I wish I wasn't responsible for keeping the landlord. Some days, I could even do without looking after the nation's shareholders. I really do wish that I wasn't responsible for making profits for the boss. The truth is that on my off days I carry on as if the world owed me a living. It is absolutely true. I even forget my allegiance to the state and refuse to salute the fly-past. In fact I'm so concerned for the safety of my soul that I'm seriously considering applying for a stiff dose of citizenship in an intermediate treatment centre. And, because of the disturbing and persistent rumours about most of my readers, I feel impelled to urge you to join me.

'Thatcher, Kinnock and Morrell believe we would all benefit from the lessons being handed out to the community service conscript and the Borstal boy'

Richard Ingrams

Eye-opener

Richard Ingrams of *Private Eye* spoke to John Fitzpatrick about MI5 sex smear campaigns, the supine British press and the issue it wants to avoid most—Ireland

It is five years now since Richard Ingrams gave up editing *Private Eye*. He had a lengthy sojourn at the house of Gnome (22 years), and left a swollen organ with a circulation that is now around 210 000. He also managed that most difficult trick—a smooth succession: 'Yes, I was very pleased when Hislop sort of turned up.' He never really left of course, and still goes into the Soho offices every fortnight to do 'the funny bits in the middle' with three or four friends. I talked to him there, in what appeared to be a stationery cupboard, which he referred to with typical deadpan as his office.

As you might expect from his cultivated fogginess, his background is 'upper middle class, I suppose', (father a banker, mother upper class). Public school (Shrewsbury) and Oxford (University College) led to a brief flirtation with the theatre before he became editor of *Private Eye* in 1963, for its sixth issue. He's proud that the magazine has survived. 'Magazines are subject very much to fashion. *Punch* had a circulation of 120 000 when we started, now it's almost defunct. The *New Statesman* is almost defunct, the *Listener* is pretty well defunct. Magazines are on the whole shortlived. One of the reasons is that the wrong people get appointed. Everyone agrees that the appointment of Bruce Page at the *New Statesman* was a disaster.'

The scourge of the Street of Shame has a lower opinion than ever of the press. He blames proprietors as well as editors, particularly Rupert Murdoch: 'Take the original *Sun* story about Elton John. It was wrong, but then they kept on attacking him: "Elton's a poof. We're going to screw you in court", and so on. They were utterly humiliated, and had to pay £1m. And the Hillsborough story about the fans being drunk and urinating on police, it was completely made up. In earlier days if an editor had that kind of record he would be sacked. There would be an assumption that they would bring in someone else. It's the utter cynicism of Murdoch. He doesn't give a bugger

about them being wrong as long as the *Sun* is selling a lot of copies.'

Hang on, hadn't he been careless with the truth himself on more than one occasion? 'I suppose, partly, yes', he chuckled wryly, 'But my own feeling is that *Private Eye* has very rarely got a story, a big story, completely wrong. If you look at the libel actions, there is often some element of truth in what was said. I've committed errors of discretion, but nothing on the scale of the Hitler diaries, Elton John and Hillsborough. Anything that the *Eye* might have done pales into insignificance alongside that. I do have a terrible tendency to think that if something has been in *Private Eye*, then it must be true'. This last observation amused him considerably.

'The obvious place to smear'

However bad the press may be, he is opposed to a law protecting privacy as suggested by the Calcutt inquiry. 'It will be exploited, like the libel laws are exploited now, by the rich and powerful who want to keep their affairs quiet. The idea that it is about protecting the little man from the intrusion of the press is wrong. That business of Cecil Parkinson, not just about Sara Keays, but about his share dealing. He could have got an injunction stopping that story if these proposals had been law.'

It would seem reasonable to assume that *Private Eye* gets a good deal of information from inside the security services. After all, where else would anybody get the sort of insider knowledge which the *Eye* used in its exposure of the Gibraltar executions by the SAS and the subsequent cover-up? Ingrams, however, insists that he is very wary of the security services feeding misinformation to the press, especially *Private Eye*. 'The *Eye* is the obvious place to smear somebody. It was used once by the Clockwork Orange thing, a story about Ian Paisley, a very serious story, which I can now see was put out by MI5. Initially, I would have been reluctant to believe

the extent to which that sort of thing could go on. Now I would believe anything.'

'I believe there was an MI5 smear campaign against Leon Brittan. A few years ago there suddenly began to circulate and come into *Private Eye* rumours about Brittan's sex life involving little boys. Anonymous letters and so on. Everybody seemed to know about this story and I was obviously quite interested in it. I did make some attempt to follow it up and it appeared not to lead anywhere. People had heard it from friends, but no one seemed able to confirm it in any detail at all. In the end I formed the view that it was deliberately being put about by intelligence people. It may have been partly due to anti-Semitism. It may have to do with his attitude on Ireland, I don't know, he was home secretary at one time, so he must have been involved. I then published a thing in *Private Eye* which I thought was quite daring at the time—to say what the story was and that this was being put about deliberately as a smear.'

The same sort of thing still goes on. 'A chap came to the *Private Eye* lunch not so long ago. He'd been with MI5 the day before, writing a book about them. They told him that the reason why Lawson resigned was nothing to do with Professor Alan Walters but, again, to do with little boys on a trip to Belgium. It was a deliberate attempt to spread a very unlikely story and confirmed my opinion about Brittan. There were similar stories about Wedgewood Benn.'

Ingrams is still getting his own back, writing a column now for the *Observer*. Just about every week he uses it to lambaste the government for its policy on Ireland, and a supine press for its complicity. Surprisingly, he has had little feedback—a gratifyingly angry letter here, some support letters (from Ireland) there, but nothing to speak of. Not even from his editor? 'I have very little contact with Treford. That's part of the trouble. Writing that column for me is like throwing a stone in the well. You don't have any reaction.'

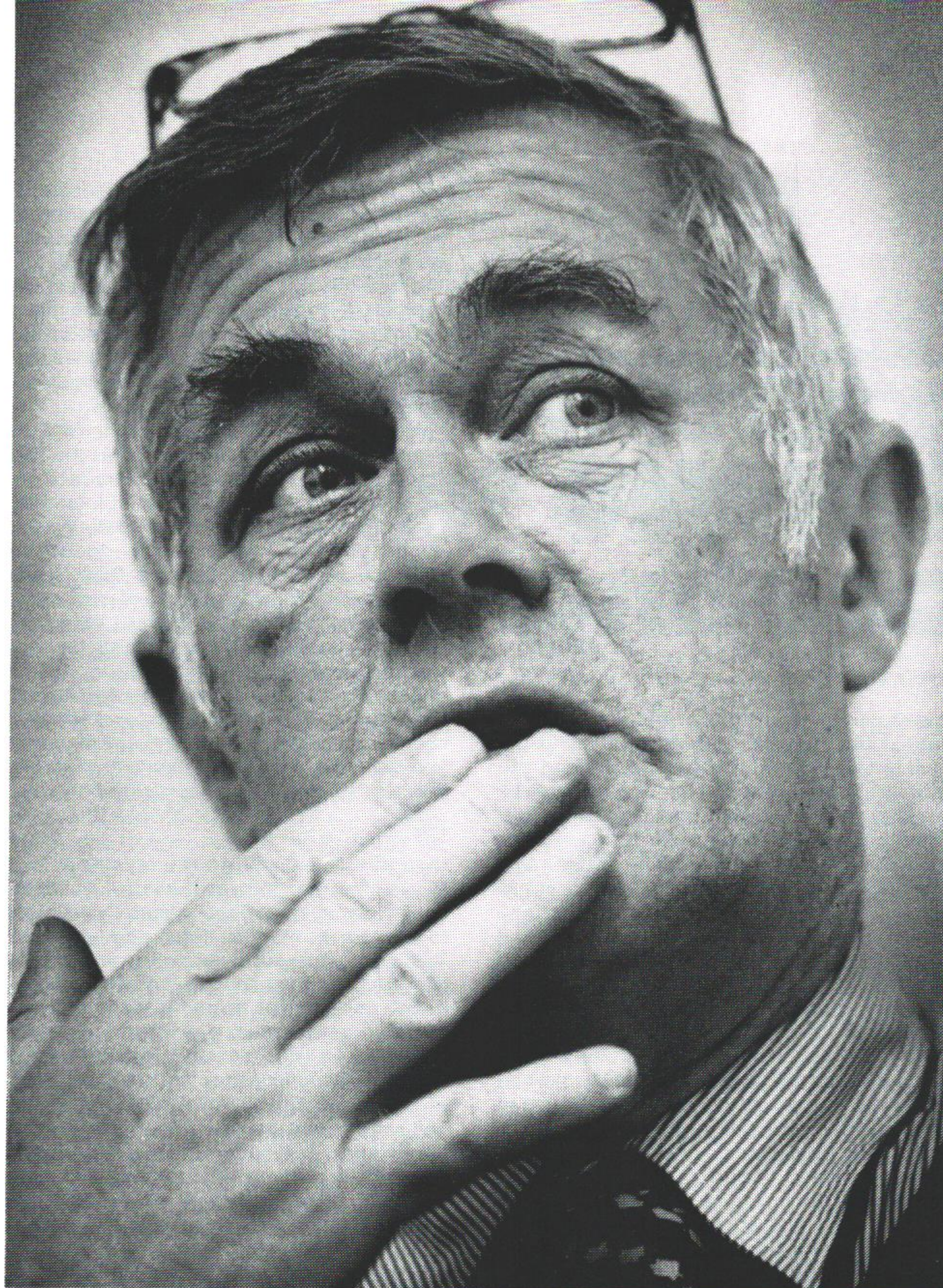


PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

'The idea that Northern Ireland is part of Britain and not part of Ireland is ludicrous'

Why is he so interested in Ireland? 'I'm drawn to write about the things that other people aren't writing about. That's how it was with *Private Eye*. We would get a story which someone else had done but for one reason or another couldn't get it into an orthodox paper. Ireland is very much in that category. It is amazing that you can see very long interviews with Thatcher or Kinnock and no one will refer to that issue. Quite extraordinary. When the BBC announced it was going to cut out the voice of Eamon de Valera on a programme in accordance with government regulations—a quite incredible thing to do considering the man and the history of Ireland—I didn't read any editorial comment about that, not a single voice raised. I do find it amazing that I should be the only person to comment on that.'

Why did he think there was such a conspiracy of silence? 'I think there's a consensus amongst the establishment, the press, political parties that nothing much can be done about it. There was a leader in the *Sunday Telegraph* at the time of the Guildford Four's release which said that with the IRA killing people on the scale of Guildford and Birmingham it wasn't surprising if innocent people were imprisoned: that was too bad, particularly if you were Irish. For that view to be advanced in a serious paper is quite

interesting. I don't suppose you would be surprised at anything from the *Sunday Telegraph*.'

Ingrams gives every impression of having stumbled on the Irish issue as if he'd found just another establishment scandal which they want hushed up. As to why they should be so sensitive about it, he is quite at sea. I probed repeatedly for his explanation but he is openly bewildered: 'Very difficult to say', 'I do find it very difficult', 'I think it's very difficult to explain', 'I'm afraid I find it completely baffling', 'it's weird'.

Might it be that the establishment would be grievously weakened, even at home, if the republican movement were seen to prevail? 'The irony is the damage being done to the establishment anyway, by cases like the Guildford Four. The damage to the legal establishment is absolutely enormous, and it hasn't finished yet. From their point of view they have to conduct a proper investigation and they have to name the guilty men. In the Guildford case the guilty men are probably quite senior, Imbert and Havers. It seems to me there was a cover-up. Things were withheld from the defence. The May inquiry, however, has no power at all to compel people to give evidence.

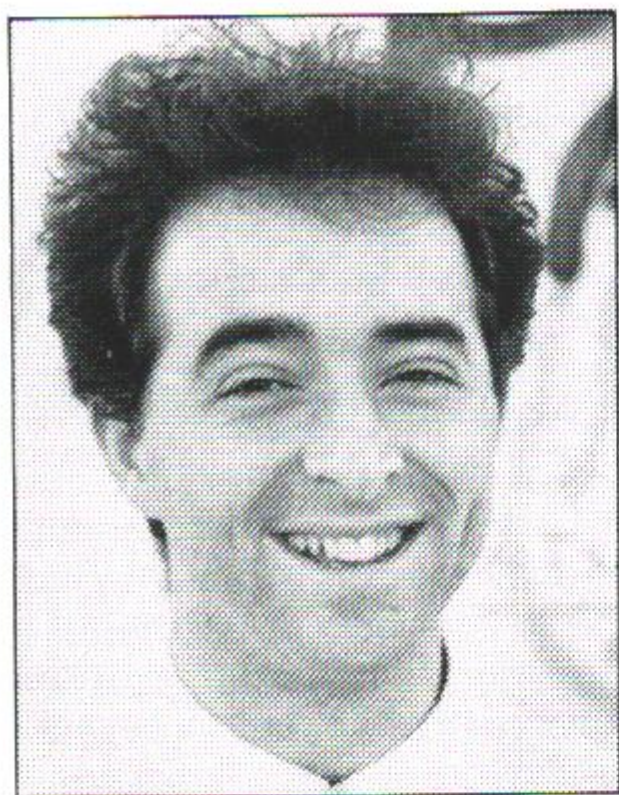
'The curious thing I find is that it is in the interests of the opposition to bang on about this, but they don't. If you take something like Stalker, which although it had an Irish dimension was a wider case, the opposition has attacked the government very little over Stalker. In parliament it's been left to odd little MPs, often Tories, to raise it. On the basis of my experience with *Private Eye* I think in terms of governments being very prone to scandals. If you think of the Profumo thing around when the *Eye* started. It was really a very small affair, but it grew and grew as a result of cover-ups. The Labour Party made the most of it. Wilson used it to destroy Macmillan. Stalker is much more serious. The people involved are much more senior.'

His own views on the question of Ireland are straightforward. 'I agree with AJP Taylor that there should be a British withdrawal. I agree with him too that one cannot quite propose the solution, it has to be left to the Irish to determine their own future. British involvement and interference only make things worse. I've never believed that if the British Army withdrew from Ireland there would be a so-called bloodbath. It's the only way out, the only sensible solution. The idea that Northern Ireland is part of Britain and not part of Ireland is ludicrous.'

He is not surprised that the press has co-operated. 'It comes back to the idea that journalists in this country are tame recipients, being fed stories. A lot of journalists can only operate on the basis that they play along with the people who are running the show. The thing that brought that home to me a long time ago was the Concorde project, which was obviously a white elephant. There were all these aviation correspondents being given information by whatever British Airways was then called. They were like glorified PR men. An anti-Concorde story had no outlet at all. No one was prepared to put it in.

'The more I looked the more I could see that the whole system operated like that, the political field as well. Go back to the Guildford Four. If you looked at the newspapers the day after they were sentenced you would find huge pieces about what terrible men they were. That would have been supplied by the police and all the hacks would have taken it down. There is an unspoken assumption that unless you play the game with the police or whoever you won't get any stories. That's how it works.'

This should not suggest that Ingrams and *Private Eye* are in favour of bucking all prevailing trends in the British press. They have often gone along with, and helped to spread, conservative prejudice against such familiar media targets as the left, the trade unions and homosexuals. I asked him if this last point was just because he was anti-gay. 'I should say the present editor regards me as a bit of a reactionary on this. I'm anti-gay to the extent of being anti-gay propaganda being put out. I object to the politicising of the gay movement. If you're gay I don't mind, but I don't want it turning into a great campaign.' Wasn't this a rather pathetic preoccupation with other people's sexuality, and likely to make a difficult situation worse for a large number of people? 'If gays go out into Piccadilly Circus and start kissing each other that will create prejudice. The prejudice is caused by the aggressive campaigning of gays.' Then, presumably oblivious of Section 28, renewed 'queer-bashing' and anti-lesbian legal decisions, he started to tell me that in fact society was more liberal and tolerant than ever...and we ran out of time.



frank cottrell-boyce

Religious broadcasting

Well, despite twin hypes, the most talked about TV programme of the early autumn was not *The Simpsons*, or the latest thing from David Lynch, but an import from the Middle East—*Guest News*, with your host, Saddam Hussein. We saw a lot of *Guest News* because the BBC and the ITV companies could not resolve their legal wrangle over who should get the credit for real news footage. In the end they gave up trying, and took whatever the Iraqis gave them, glossing it with a disgusted commentary. So while duly elected Sinn Féin councillors were banned from the air waves in case they corrupted us, Saddam was never off them, charming us with his winning way with children and his dashing moustaches. Bush fought back with a video message to the Arab nations. It became clear that God was with the president in his attempt to raise an international *jihad* against Saddam. Meanwhile Manchester raved on in the grip of a Satanist invasion. And the Jesus army erected a tent outside my house. Fundamentalism was everywhere.

Talking of fundamentalism, the highlight of September was surely the appearance of Luther Vandross on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. And I do mean appearance. For this was the occasion on which Luther unveiled his new body. Luther used to weigh in at 23 stone. He now weighs 13. He lost 10 stone by the simple expedient of eating nothing at all for nine months. The result was hailed as a miracle by Oprah and the reception the new body got from the studio audience was religious in its fervour. We were left in no doubt that Luther was, like his namesake, a victor in the battle against the World, the Flesh and the Devil. And the greatest of these is the Flesh.

Oprah kept referring to Luther's diet as a fast. It turned out that Luther had subjected himself to all kinds of temptations. One night he held a party for all his friends ('Well, you know, Arsenic, Sylvester and you, Oprah') at which they were served a 12-course meal and he stood by and watched. This brought to mind stories of fakirs who sleep with lubricious young women to test their own sexual restraint. Like them, Luther had seen the horror in his own soul and knew that only the most extreme measures would stop him. As he said, 'I can't eat two ounces of duck. You put a duck in front of me, I will eat that duck'. He later let slip that not all his peccadilloes were this sophisticated. As well as duck he liked economy family buckets of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Footage of the old Luther—the Pavarotti of pop—sweating his way through 'Superlady' was exhibited like the sinful former life of the

new believer. When the slimline Luther entered you could see that he was saved, and the audience whooped and praised the lord like revivalists. Some wept for him. He told them he used to hate himself but he doesn't anymore. Now he really likes himself. In fact, Luther cannot get enough of himself. Which is a bad sign—it's worth remembering that Luther has been 13 stone at least three times before, and each time has ballooned back up to his usual size. The spirit is willing but the flesh keeps coming.

There was no doubt that this was a religious occasion. Luther's amazing transformation was proof that his identity was a different entity from his body. In fact, in slimming, he had released his real self from under the layers of adipose tissue. It struck me that the philosophy of dieting is distinctly gnostic in tone—its emphasis on suffering as the path to self-knowledge, for instance, and its strict division of the body and spirit come straight from Dionysus the Areopagite, as does the mystically intense self-absorption of all dieters. Like all religions, dieting can plug itself into an ethical vision too—you shouldn't be fat because most of the world is starving. Though like all heresies, dieting quickly turns this back into self-flagellation—you greedy bastard, don't you know that most of the world is starving?

The diet iconography even has its own martyr—the anorexic. Anorexic women lose their libido of course, and indeed stop their periods, so that they seem to become innocent and childlike again. They are perfect saints for the Aids age. Given the religious nature of the diet, the man who thought of using 'naughty but nice' as the slogan for cream cakes must have been Satanically gifted. As a matter of fact, it was Salman Rushdie.

The whole notion of ideas which are religious in structure but not in content is one which I find more and more irritating. The scientific clothing of these ideas can disguise the superstitious nature of our times. Take IQ. A ludicrous notion dreamed up by a known fraud and promoted for the crudest of financial reasons. It makes no logical, let alone scientific sense. Everybody knows this. Yet the idea persists, especially in the middle-brow Sunday papers. Why? The appeal of IQ is as a restatement in pseudo-scientific terms of the idea of the soul—something that exists inside you, invisibly, and whose worth is not related to your public performance, so that a clerk can have a higher IQ than the scientist who discovers the cure for cancer. It is hidden away like the true Luther inside the singing blimp.

IQ is one of a long line of fictitious substances—like ether, ectoplasm, flodgeston and the humours—but this one still has an education system founded upon it; a depressingly un-inventive attempt to enshrine one aspect of a particularly dull class society as a principle of nature, like dressing up your satellite dish as a cherub with a sundial. Marx would have called it reification. Abraham would have called it idolatry. Give me a gold calf any day.

Which brings me to David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*. Like *Blue Velvet* it promotes the idea that beneath the apparently calm surface of a small town in America, there is something darker. The appeal of the detective story is that it pits the powers of reason—deduction, research and, in the case of *Blue Velvet*, innocence—against the powers of unreason—passion, corruption and hatred. When the culprit is revealed, mystery is dispelled and reason restored. Interestingly, in the first series of *Twin Peaks* the identity of the murderer is not revealed. Agent Cooper does not solve the mystery but watches it expand and elaborate and, with his fetish for 'damn fine coffee', becomes himself part of its bizarre patterns.

Instead of unravelling the mystery, *Twin Peaks* cherishes it, begs it to stay. And once again this mystery has a distinctly religious tone. From the moment that the body of Laura Palmer is washed up, wrapped in plastic, pale, beautiful, a homecoming Lady of Shallot, murder is shown as beautiful, glamorous and above all mysterious. It gives the life of the town direction and meaning. Nobody wants it tidied away. The series courts a religious, ritualistic viewing. First of all because it is being promoted as art and therefore important. Second because it offers the audience a mass of detail to observe, acquire and imitate; so that in the States groups of fans meet to watch the show, bringing with them doughnuts, coffee and the occasional log.

The scripts are wallpapered with a swirl of allusions and cross-references. Laura Palmer is named after a character played by Gene Tierney in a film called *Laura*. The *Twin Peaks* vet is named Lydecker and has a pet mynah called Waldo. The man who hunted the original Laura in 1944 was called Waldo Lydecker. There is tons of this stuff—a mystic subtext for the trivia generation, a series of dead ends and scholarly clues designed to mystify and misdirect rather than elucidate. A mystery story that yearns not for a solution or an arrest but for the extension of the mystery. I should add by the way that it's total crap—too decorative to be genuinely unsettling and too smart alec to be threateningly engaging. It is also masturbative. Murder may look cute and interesting from the suburbs. In fact living with or near the threat of violence is numbingly boring. The neighbours of violence are a quiet, conservative, drained people.

With all of this substitute religion around, it was paradoxically uplifting and exhilarating to see a totally secular, indeed nihilistic drama. Paradox on paradox, this one is beamed down from heaven and looks simply divine. If you find it hard to take Luther Vandross—the man with a pinball machine in his front room—as a spiritual hero, wait till you see Mr Simpson walk in from a tough day reprocessing nuclear fuel and try to blow dry his son's tears. This can be seen only on Sky but if you're worried that the dish will look naff, fear not. There's an advert in the *Mersey* for one shaped like a sundial held by a cherub.

Denis Leary

Denis Leary's shows carry a bad taste warning,
but that didn't bother Andrew Calcutt

The Keith Richards of comedy

In his prime, Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards was the archetypal bad boy of rock and roll. Nowadays Richards is almost as docile as the Queen Mum, but his image and his haircut live on in the stage persona of Boston-born badmouth comedian Denis Leary, who is performing in London later this month.

Leary doesn't tell jokes. Wide-eyed, gap-toothed and grinning like a maniac, he stalks the stage firing machine-gun bursts of satire and cynicism. Nothing is sacred, not even his own heroes: [alligator-skin] Keith Richards 'is a giant piece of luggage'; Jerry Lee Lewis, whose young wives have a habit of drowning, 'should marry someone who's old enough to know how to swim'.

Leary is not interested in soft targets. Dan Quayle doesn't get a mention, whereas the Kennedys come in for a royal roasting. His first album was called 'I shot the Kennedys'. Boston is Leary's birthplace as well as the home town of the Kennedy clan. 'Where I come from', says Leary, 'you vote Kennedy or go to hell'. Boston city fathers banned him from performing there.

After starting out as an actor/musician, Leary moved on to the comedy circuit four years ago. Impersonating Keith Richards and Andy Warhol got him noticed. He made his British television debut on the night of the poll tax riot in the West End. Following a sell-out season at Edinburgh's Assembly Rooms this summer, Leary is playing London's Bloomsbury Theatre this month.

In Edinburgh Leary performed 'No cure for cancer'. He jammed his mouth full of cigarettes and sucked on them all at once, declared he had no sympathy for Yul Brynner who 'lost no

hair in chemotherapy', made numerous references to comas, colostomy bags, voice boxes and the 25 672 people who die every minute. Edinburgh audiences were so taken with Leary that by the end of the show they would have licked out his ashtray.

Leary sets out to be offensive, but his humour is not degenerate or degrading. He deliberately sets up his stage persona as the epitome of all that is tacky, tasteless and backward about the USA. 'I'm an asshole', Leary's opening number, is the song of a Middle American suburban bigot who 'pisses on toilet seats' and drives a car with whaleskin hubcaps. When Leary's stage persona declares war on the third world ('We got the bombs, we got the weapons, thaw out the Duke'), the audience is laughing with the real Leary at his asshole caricature. His act depends on an unspoken but essential distinction between the on-stage bigotry of an Alf-Garnett-on-acid and Leary the off-stage liberal who opposes state censorship. It remains to be seen what Leary would do if he found himself playing to a right-wing audience who swallowed his venom neat, without the irony.

I was not disappointed by Leary's performances, except in one respect. His claim to be a serious smoker was all but destroyed by the fact that when I saw him he was inhaling those sticks of fresh air sold under the brand name Silk Cut. Keith Richards wouldn't be seen dead with them.

• Denis Leary's 'No cure for cancer' plays at the Bloomsbury Theatre, London, from 26 November-1 December at 8pm



Moscow Gold

Pat Ford reviews *Moscow Gold*, a play about Mikhail Gorbachev by Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton

London dross

Just before she died recently, Tamara Deutscher, the widow of Isaac Deutscher, Leon Trotsky's biographer, appeared with Tariq Ali in a television discussion. 'Trotsky alone of all the old Bolsheviks has not been rehabilitated in the Soviet Union', said Deutscher, 'because the atmosphere is not congenial. Gorbachev and his team, they take their inspiration from the West. They want to build a common European home with Kohl and Thatcher; Trotsky wanted to build a proletarian democracy. He wanted a proletarian international, not a

bourgeois international. There is just no room for Trotsky there, for the moment. Trotsky is essentially a revolutionary who wants the workers to take part in changing the system. Gorbachev, with all due respect, he conducts his glasnost, so to say, from above'.

Tariq Ali who has written a book about Gorbachev, respectfully entitled *Revolution From Above*, took this hard. The point is, he pleaded, that the only thing the people below now look towards is capitalism. 'That's possible', replied Deutscher, 'that's a defeat, but it's not

the last word. History doesn't stop there'.

It does for Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton. There is no room for Trotsky either in *Moscow Gold*, the play they have written for the Royal Shakespeare Company. (Even Ali's own Trotskyist past is missing from his potted biography in the programme, as absent as Trotsky's face from one of Stalin's photographs.) The relevance of any perspective which rejects both Stalinism and capitalism is given short shrift here. 'The third way was crushed in '68 in Prague', says one character, disposing noisily of the first straw man. The next one, an unsympathetic youth who has espoused the need for a new party, defects even more noisily to the decadent West. This is really to provide Ali with the excuse for putting in an extremely arch pre-emptive strike, 'When the ultra left go bourgeois, they really go all the way'.

Moscow Gold is an ambitious, but unsuccessful attempt to project the dramatic political situation in the Soviet Union on to the London stage. The failure is both dramatic and political. The authors try to cram in too much, sketching

in the main political events not only of the Soviet Union but of Eastern Europe too from 1982 onwards. They try to represent every important development and strand of opinion, focusing them all around the central portrait of Gorbachev (who is well played by David Calder).

They are well served by bold sets from Stefanos Lazaridis, in particular a huge circular metal politburo table-cum-apparatus-cum-prison-cum-platform, and by skilful direction from Barry Kyle. But even Kyle cannot instil the necessary intimacy into the snatches of naturalistic drama, nor the necessary sharpness or wit into the louder strokes of agitprop. There is pantomime and pageant, too, and much diversion to be had in the great cast of characters alongside Mikhail and Raisa: the politburo featuring Andropov and Ligachev, three cleaners as a chorus, a Moscow queue, Yeltsin, Reagan's astrologer, an ordinary KGB man and his family, and a parade of the pressures on the bureaucracy—punks, fascists, Baltic nationalists, Muslim fundamentalists, striking miners, hardline Stalinists, a bewildered teacher. There is a Red Army conservative; Chernobyl Man; Honecker and Ceausescu.

Ali and Brenton are sufficiently well informed to present a fairly balanced account of the dilemma facing the bureaucracy: unless they bring in reforms there will be chaos, if they bring in reforms there will be chaos. The whole thing would serve as a useful piece of dramatised current affairs for interested schoolchildren, were it not for some notably objectionable features.

In the first place, an inordinate amount of the piece is devoted to ramming home the

message that the Soviet Union is a corrupt, inefficient and oppressive society that failed. Nobody would disagree with this. It has been commonplace in British society for decades. The revelations about the showtrials, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Afghanistan in 1979, and so on. Are there any fellow travellers left? Who is this directed at, but a smug London audience? Do we need to be told again by Ali and Brenton that the politburo were 'old vultures who had lived too long', that the nomenklatura are 'more deadly than the Borgias', that 'for 60 years our people have been lying in the shit', that the KGB tortured and killed on a vast scale, that there are queues in Moscow all the time, and on and on?

Then there is the matter of Lenin. Call me squeamish if you like, but I don't normally mind a bit of poetic licence. I do mind when the Bolshevik leader is projected as the chummy patron and ally of this offspring of the bureaucracy in a manner that buries the fundamental differences between Gorbachev's political project (save himself and the bureaucracy with whatever comes to hand, the market for example) and that of Lenin (making a social revolution). Ali and Brenton thump home time and again that they are both building (or rebuilding) socialism in the Soviet Union. But it's one thing being 'pro-Gorby', as Brenton boasts they are, it's another to pretend that 'Gorby' is a Leninist. To bolster this outlandish view there is included here some far-fetched padding about how Lenin's New Economic Policy and Brest-Litovsk Treaty were the sort

of thing Gorbachev is now up to.

Some conservative commentators have of course accused them of being soft on Lenin, of not really nailing him for his responsibility for Stalinism. In fact the authors do go half-way. In a superbly equivocal statement our hero declaims, 'the party of Lenin has failed our people...(pause)...because it became the party of Stalin and Brezhnev. The party is over'.

The central problem is both political and dramatic. If all the problems confronting a social system, from the price of meat, to pogroms in Azerbaijan, to nuclear disasters, are refracted through one man then it is hardly surprising that we get a distorted perspective on them. We end up with an exasperated figure surrounded by fools and rogues all blindly and impatiently pressing their claims on him. It's no wonder that he and other characters start dispensing absurd observations like the following: 'To attempt to govern this country is like teaching a penguin to fly', 'Has any leader ever taken absolute power and then given it to the people?', 'Stop theorising about human nature, there is too much to be done', 'The struggle for purity always ends badly for the pure', and the prize buffoonery: 'The problem is how to devise a socialism that human nature can handle?'

Not one of these—stupidity, personal aggrandisement, theory, purity or human nature—is responsible for the problems facing the Soviet people, although if you are looking at it from Gorbachev's point of view it might be convenient to see it that way. But why look at it from Gorbachev's point of view?

After the War: Iraq, Iran and the Arab Gulf

Edited by Charles Davies, Centre for Arab Gulf Studies, University of Exeter, UK

Foreword by Sir Anthony Parsons

This book is the most up-to-date and comprehensive volume on the whole region. It is a *must* for everyone with strategic, economic and political interests in the Arab Gulf. It is also a *must* for anyone anyone who wants a better understanding of, and comment on the events that are reported daily in the World's Press.

As news from the Gulf continues to dominate the headlines and speculation on the future of the region is rife, there is a real need for an understanding of the factors and players involved. This book addresses that need and as the *Independent* said:

"clearly a serious attempt to consider the underlying geo-political patterns in the region... the book provides a clear background to the dangerous daily news." *The Independent*, 11th August, 1990

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The Arab Gulf, Global Interests in the Region: Geopolitical, Economic and Strategic Factors

Edited by Charles Davies, Centre for Arab Gulf Studies, University of Exeter, UK

Details the interests in the Gulf Region of the USA, USSR, Japan, India and the Western European Union in the light of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. These interests are also discussed from a historical point of view.

Scenarios for the likely shape of the region are put forward. One, written well before August 1990, suggested Iraq's expansionist ambitions and outlined likely US responses.

Broader economic, and strategic issues are also covered, together with analysis of the military balance and the outlook for world oil prices, the dependence of the region on migratory labour and the inevitability of change in the region.

Many contributors have become familiar in the media as commentators as the recent events in the Gulf have unfolded. No doubt their contributions to this volume will prove equally important and will be watched for by decision-makers around the world.

Contributors include: Anthony Cordesman, Richard Murphy, Vitaly Naumkin, A. Vasiliev, R. Müller-Syring, S. Ishida, J. S. Birks, K. Subrahmanyam, Willem van Eekelen, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, John Townsend, C. A. Sinclair, Peter Davies, Paul Stevens, C. E. Davies and F. Piacentini

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the marxist review of books

Mike Freeman reviews

Istvan Meszaros, *The Power of Ideology*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, £35 hbk

The power of ideology

It is 20 years since the publication of *Marx's Theory of Alienation* which introduced Istvan Meszaros, formerly a student and colleague of the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs (and collaborator with him in the shortlived revolutionary government of 1956), to a Western readership. Though this work took the form of an extended commentary on Marx's 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, it was no dry academic exegesis, but an explicit polemic against the then fashionable trend for separating the 'early' humanistic Marx from the 'late' scientific Marx. Meszaros insisted on the unity and integrity of Marx's life's work and on the centrality of the concept of the 'transcendence of labour's self-alienation'. He traced this from the earliest stages of his political development, as reflected in the 1844 manuscripts, to his maturity as author of *Capital* in the 1860s. Now professor of philosophy at Sussex University, Meszaros brings the same combination of theoretical rigour and political commitment to the cause of the self-emancipation of labour to his latest work.

The Power of Ideology is a substantial book, both in breadth and depth, and is evidently the culmination of many years of study and reflection on the major philosophical and political controversies of the twentieth century. It tackles a great many difficult questions in a way which is always challenging and often provocative. While strongly recommending this book to readers of *Living Marxism*, it is possible in a brief review only to draw attention to a few important themes and to indicate some points of criticism.

The first section of the book, entitled 'The necessity of ideology', outlines the basics of the Marxist approach to ideology. Meszaros emphasises that the key determinant of ideology is 'the imperative to become *practically conscious* of the fundamental social conflict... for the purposes of *fighting it out*' (p11). The specific character of contending ideologies arises, on the one hand, from the productive and distributive practices particular to a society in a given epoch, and on the other, from the need to subject this mode of social organisation to radical criticism when it ceases to be adequate to the needs of a changing society. Meszaros further draws attention to 'a tendency in ruling ideology to produce a categorial framework that *attenuates* the ongoing conflicts and *eternalises* the structural parameters of the established social world' (p15). Identifying the category of 'modernity' as a striking example of this tendency of

conflict-attenuation, the author proceeds to a critique of the use of this concept, by radical as well as reactionary writers, since the nineteenth century.

For Meszaros, the use of the term 'modernity', rather than 'capitalism', to characterise modern society tends to disguise the socio-historical dimension of contemporary social reality and hence serves an apologetic function in relation to the established order. It endows modern society with 'a paradoxically *timeless* character in the direction of the *future*, on account of its uncritically overstated contrast with the more or less distant *past*' (p16). The concept of modernity exaggerates the discontinuities between, say, mid-twentieth century mass production and the society based on small workshops in the mid-nineteenth century, while underestimating elements of continuity—such as class exploitation. The result of this approach is to postulate illusory solutions to real social problems which can only be resolved through 'the practically fought out confrontations of society's major classes'.

Meszaros traces the apologetic use of the concept of modernity from Hegel, who defined it as the 'rational universality' of 'the modern Germanic state' which represented 'absolutely the end of history', to the post-war ideologists of 'the end of ideology', harmonious modernisation and the convergence of labour and capital, such as Daniel Bell, Raymond Aron and John Kenneth Galbraith (p17). He identifies the crucial link in this process as the German sociologist Max Weber with his definitional distinction between 'modernity' and 'traditional' forms of society. Furthermore, in a polemical tour de force, Meszaros dissects the ideological trend that links Weber, the early Lukacs, the Frankfurt school and post-war consensus theories. This trend continues with the contemporary German theorist Jurgen Habermas and culminates in the fashionable French postmodernist Jean-François Lyotard, who are both subjected to a blistering and fully justified critical deconstruction: 'Thus, while the contradictions of the social world become stronger than ever, manifesting themselves more and more in a way that approaches an all-engulfing global scale, they are repeatedly declared to be... "superseded" in an unending succession of ideological constructs that verbally metamorphose, under a new desocialised "post-" label, the same soothing rationalisation as soon as its previous version loses its credibility.' (p18)

While much of the current debate on postmodernism emphasises the distinctive features of this theory by contrast with the outlook of modernism, Meszaros exposes what they have in common—a summarily negative attitude...towards the emancipatory potential of labour' (p43). He condemns the 'utter negativity' of theories which combine abstract assertions of the objective of liberation while repudiating the role of any social force capable of acting as the agency of emancipation. Meszaros' consistent emphasis is that those who seek to challenge the ideology of the ruling order cannot advance 'unless they can indicate a historically identifiable potential hegemonic force as their supporting ground' (p169). The key issue for Marxists is to discover the 'necessary mediations' between the day-to-day struggles of the working class and the project of overthrowing the capitalist order. The identification of 'transcending mediations', not in the future, but in the present, is a challenge to the

progress as the driving force of social development, which in turn was identified with the development of the capitalist system. He extended the methods of natural science into the social sciences, abandoning any attempt to discern the unobservable causes of phenomena in favour of establishing law-like regularities among phenomena that appeared on the surface of society. The resulting 'models' were held to explain and predict social trends and to enable appropriately scientifically trained experts to control them. Comte dubbed the new order 'scientific industrial society' and science emerged as a secular contender to replace the role played by religion in medieval society.

Meszaros points out that the central contribution of positivism to bourgeois ideology was in 'radically eliminating the historical dimension from the dominant worldview' (p183). He points out that this approach is at the core of all functionalist and structuralist

'While much of the current debate on postmodernism emphasises the distinctive features of this theory by contrast with the outlook of modernism, Meszaros exposes what they have in common—a summarily negative attitude...towards the emancipatory potential of labour' '

atomistic isolation of life under capitalism and the sense of inertia and impotence that results from it. As Meszaros concludes, it is a striking feature of the outlook of modernism and postmodernism that it is 'wedded to *atomistic individualism* and radically opposes not only the idea of transcending mediations but also all *comprehensive* approaches that can fracture the carefully protected mystificatory shell of inertia' (p173).

The second part of Meszaros' book is devoted to the role of science as one of the most important and effective ideological themes of capitalist society. The current crisis of science, as reflected in the popularity of irrational schools of thought such as Chaos theory, can only be understood as part of a wider social crisis. Meszaros surveys the changing role of science in the development of modern society. In the late eighteenth century, science made a major contribution to the triumph of Enlightenment thought over the obscurantist ideologies of the old order which acted as a constraint on social development. Through the advance of capitalist social relations a new relationship was forged between science and industry, and with the resulting spectacular development of the productive potential of society science offered a powerful new mode of ideological legitimacy. Meszaros cites the confident conviction of the leading theoretician of bourgeois political economy, Adam Smith, that the advance of science would rapidly ensure the resolution of the residual difficulties of the new order (pp180-81).

Writing in the period of rapid capitalist industrial development in the mid-nineteenth century, Marx took over the enthusiasm for the science of the Enlightenment and corrected its one-sidedness. He contrasted the creative potential of science and technology and the destructive reality of capitalist society, identifying the source of the problem in capitalist social relations, not in science itself. Hence he emphasised that the systematic application of the creativity of science to the development of the productive forces required the removal of the barriers of private property and the profit motive and the introduction of a system of rational planning. As Meszaros emphasises, Marx never isolated science from society, but regarded it as one aspect of the overall complex of social development (pp181-82).

By contrast, in the same period, the characteristic bourgeois ideological approach to science took shape in the 'positivist' theories of Auguste Comte. Starting from the conservative assumption that the existing order of society was natural and eternal, Comte abstracted science from society and identified scientific

sociologies. He notes that this repudiation of the historical and dialectical approach of Marx (the positive aspect of the theory he appropriated from Hegel) is also at the centre of the revisionist outlook of social democracy and Stalinism.

Meszaros contrasts the mid-nineteenth century, when 'positivistic scientism was linked to the great expectations of a somewhat simple-minded evolutionist optimism' (p187), to the turn of the century, when deepening social crisis raised growing doubts about the capacity of science to solve the problems of society. The result was the drift of scientific ideology in a more sceptical and pessimistic direction, a trend powerfully reinforced in the twentieth century as events from Hiroshima to Bhopal and Chernobyl have revealed the ascendancy of the destructive capacities of science over its creative potential. However, as Meszaros observes, the prevailing pessimistic attitude towards science results from a one-sided view of the autonomous development of science and technology, the notion that the negative consequences are the outcome of some immanent logic in science itself, rather than the results of science subordinated to the logic of capitalist accumulation. If capitalism is taken for granted, then science itself seems to be the problem. But the dangers of science and technology result from their use by social forces; they are not intrinsic to science.

The dilemma of modern society, as Meszaros points out, is that development is always tied to the contradictory dynamism of capital itself. Two questions arise. First, what kind of social development is it that deploys science and technology in such a way as to threaten the very survival of mankind? Second, how is it possible to bring the totality of social practices—including science—under social control? Meszaros surveys the heroic, but ultimately futile, quest of some of the greatest scientists of the twentieth century, notably Einstein, to establish some element of social responsibility in science. He concludes that only concerted and coordinated social action, with scientists playing an integral part, can measure up to the historical challenge.

The third major theme of *The Power of Ideology* is that of 'emancipation'. Meszaros develops Marx's basic proposition that 'liberation is a historical not a mental act' (p409). Whereas the philosophers of the Enlightenment confidently anticipated the triumph of reason over obscurantism their successors, notably Hegel, were forced to acknowledge the contradiction between the aspirations to self-fulfilment unleashed by the French Revolution and the constraints imposed by the reality of capitalist society.

However, because these theoreticians uncritically accepted the standpoint of bourgeois political economy and took capitalist social relations as given, they were unable to perceive that capitalism itself was the obstacle to human liberation.

Marx's conscious rejection of the standpoint of political economy made it possible for him to offer a radically different diagnosis of the issues at stake and a different response to the pessimism about emancipation which followed the disappointments of the French Revolution (and which has been reinforced in our century by the failure of the Russian Revolution). He insisted that the key to the transcendence of ruling class ideology was the transcendence of the structural and hierarchical social division of labour under capitalism. Meszaros emphasises that although political revolution is the precondition for this transcendence, because it may be reversed it is 'not even the first step' on a project which can only be conceived as taking place on a global scale over a prolonged historical period (p391).

One of the strengths of Meszaros' discussion of ideology is his relentless insistence on the decisive importance of its material roots in society. Thus he emphasises that the strength of 'common sense', like that of more esoteric forms of ideology, is not the result of the internal coherence or popular appeal of particular ideas in themselves, but arises from the affinity of these ideas with the prevailing structure of society. He challenges Gramsci's 'depressing conclusion' that "'in the masses as such, philosophy can only be experienced as a faith'", a view which leads to the 'problematic remedy' of simply changing the influence of one intellectual elite for that of another (p402). Meszaros argues that 'the radical transformation of the "ideological panorama of the age" [Gramsci's phrase] cannot be defined within strictly ideological terms, as the *work of consciousness upon consciousness*' (p408). Rather this work of transformation must be conceived as part of a wider practical revolutionary strategy which aims at the negation of capitalist social relations in their entirety.

Meszaros repudiates the conventional view of ideology as simply 'false consciousness', a dark cloud through which the truth can be perceived only by a few privileged experts (pp381-82). The consequences of this sort of intellectual elitism and detachment are widely evident in the negativity and pessimism of the radical academic world. For Marx, the solution to the problems of ideology lay, not through an abstract theoretical understanding, but one directly geared to the demands of *revolutionising practice*. Only the concrete determinations of social being, manifested in antagonistic social forces, can provide a practical solution to the mysteries of mutually antagonistic social standpoints (p383). The critique of ideology cannot therefore be separated from the quest for emancipation.

Weaknesses concern the spheres of political economy and revolutionary strategy, where Meszaros appears to rely too much and too uncritically on American radical left theories of the sixties and seventies.

Meszaros borrows not only the concept of the 'military-industrial complex' from the American left (which adapted it, as Meszaros notes, from president Eisenhower's 1961 'farewell address'), but also its notion that the enormous post-war expansion of military production provided a long-term resolution of the inherent defects of the capitalist economy. Identifying the fundamental problem of the capitalist system as the tendency towards overproduction (the creation of a surplus), theoreticians such as Paul Sweezy and Paul Baran explained the sustained expansion and stability of US capitalism in the fifties and sixties by the successful dissipation of this surplus in an industry whose products were simply 'wasted', either by being blown up or being rendered obsolete through the 'arms race' (see PA Baran and PM Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order*, 1966, pp178-215). Meszaros endorses this theory in relation to contemporary capitalism:

'This newfound normality of the capitalist system enables it to displace (but not of course to eliminate) the fundamental contradiction of developed capital: overproduction. For thanks to the ability of the military-industrial complex to *impose* its needs on society, the age-old wishful thinking of bourgeois political economy—the claimed identity of *supply* with *demand*—is manipulatively realised for the time being within its framework.' (pp229-30)

Meszaros continues, arguing that 'the barriers to capitalist production today are overcome by capital itself in the form of securing its own reproduction...in the form of *destructive self-reproduction*, in antagonistic opposition to genuine production' (p231). He concludes that 'capital's limits can no longer be conceptualised as merely the material obstacles to a greater increase in productivity and social wealth, and thus as a *brake* on development, but as the direct challenge to the very survival of mankind'.

Meszaros attributes to Marx an underconsumptionist theory of crisis. For Marx, however, the fundamental contradiction of developed capital was not overproduction as such, but the overproduction of capital in relation to the availability of surplus-value to sustain the cycle of expansion. Under capitalism the rising productivity of labour results in a growing mass of surplus-value and a declining rate of profit. According to Marx, 'the progressive tendency of the general rate of profit to fall is...an expression peculiar to the capitalist mode of production, of the progressive development of the social productivity of labour' (*Capital*,

'One of the strengths of Meszaros' discussion of ideology is his relentless insistence on the decisive importance of its material roots in society'

The Power of Ideology includes much else of interest and value. Meszaros places a strong emphasis on the pre-eminently global character of capitalist social relations and the consequent need for a global approach to their transcendence, by contrast with the staunchly Eurocentric narrowness of social democracy and its successors. He offers challenging discussions of difficult problems as diverse as those of methodology and ideology, social class and the division of labour and the process of transition from capitalism to communist society. His philosophical mode of presentation of some of these debates will make the book heavy going for readers not familiar with such an academic style. Two more important

Vol 3, p213). The overproduction of capital is expressed in the growing relative scarcity of surplus-value. There is no overproduction with respect to social need, only in relation to the needs of continuing profitable capital accumulation.

From a Marxist perspective, accumulation in the military sector, far from stabilising the capitalist economy, has a particularly adverse effect on the tendency of the rate of profit to fall (see *the next step*, August 1980). If capitalists raise productivity in industries which produce commodities consumed by the working class, such as food and clothing, the value of these articles can be lowered and the value of labour-power reduced. This allows exploitation to be

increased. The same result occurs if productivity is raised in industries producing means of production. Cheaper machinery and raw materials lower the costs of producing all commodities. These ways of cutting the value of labour-power cannot work for capitalists who produce *luxuries*—goods, like arms, purchased neither by industry nor with workers' wages. Raising productivity here does not help capitalists to raise the rate of exploitation. Hence, as investment rises in the luxury sector, capitalists are less able to fight falling profitability. The rate of profit falls even faster.

The view that the emergence of the 'military-industrial complex' explains the post-war boom is not only theoretically flawed, it also distracts attention from the decisive contribution of the devastation caused by the Second World War and the associated defeat of the working class internationally to the subsequent stabilisation of capitalism. It also raises the question of why, if state expenditure on weapons can suspend the basic contradictions of capitalism, it should not be able to continue to do so indefinitely—a question not adequately answered by Meszaros' assertion in parentheses that these contradictions are displaced but not eliminated. Meszaros' argument ends up replacing a materialist critique of capitalist society, which identifies the barrier to the development of society as capital itself—as expressed in the tendency of the rate of profit to fall—with an essentially moralistic condemnation of the wastefulness and inhumanity of modern weapon systems.

In his discussion of the relative merits of the contributions of Luxemburg and Lenin to Marxist theory and strategy, Meszaros endorses the prevailing anti-Leninist orthodoxy of Western radicalism. He summarises his judgement on the historic disagreements between these two great revolutionaries in a double paradox: 'Rosa Luxemburg was right in being wrong and Lenin was wrong in being right.' (p328)

longer the internal character of capital itself, but the external availability of new markets. Luxemburg's theory of crisis provided no objective basis for the policy of proletarian revolution to which she remained subjectively committed. The consistent weakness of Luxemburg's strategic outlook (which is far from clearly identified by Meszaros) was her overestimation of the scope of spontaneity and her underestimation of the necessity for organisation in providing leadership and direction to the working class movement.

Meszaros rightly emphasises Lenin's unparalleled strategic and tactical insights, but his conviction that the Bolshevik approach was inappropriate for Western Europe must be questioned. It is worth pointing out in passing that Lenin's aptitude for practical politics was closely linked to his profound grasp of the global tendencies of capitalist development in what he characterised as the imperialist epoch. Whereas Luxemburg's theory of accumulation represented a retreat from Marx's critique of political economy in response to the new conditions, Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1915) marked a major development of Marxist theory into the twentieth century.

Meszaros endorses one of the most strongly held prejudices of Western Marxism—the view that the Bolshevik model of organisation was a peculiar response to tsarist autocracy and Russian backwardness, without wider relevance or applicability. Yet if we look at Lenin's 1902 pamphlet *What is to be Done?* it is arguable that the emphasis of this work on the need for a revolutionary cadre organisation capable of challenging the influence of narrow trade unionist and reformist views in the working class movement was even more relevant to Western Europe, where such ideas were much more influential, than to Russia, where the labour bureaucracy was a feeble force. Lenin's *April Theses*, formulated in the aftermath of the February 1917 revolution which overthrew the Tsar and

'Meszaros endorses one of the most strongly held prejudices of Western Marxism—the view that the Bolshevik model of organisation was a peculiar response to tsarist autocracy and Russian backwardness, without wider relevance or applicability'

For Meszaros, the strength of Luxemburg's position lay in her emphasis on the broad historical tendencies of capitalist development at a global level in the early years of the twentieth century. He considers that though she was right in her recognition of long-term trends, she was wrong in the practical policies and tactics she advanced in the intense class struggles in Germany in the years around the First World War. Lenin's strength, by contrast, lay in his grasp of the historical and social specificity of the conjuncture created by the war in Europe and its immediate practical consequences. He was right, according to Meszaros, in seizing the only tactically viable course of action and striking at the weakest link of the imperialist chain in tsarist Russia. He was wrong, however, in generalising from the Russian experience and offering the Bolshevik model as one appropriate for revolutionary strategy in Western Europe.

On closer inspection, Meszaros' double paradox appears rather glib and his judgements on both Luxemburg and Lenin are questionable. Though Luxemburg was subjectively committed to defending Marxism against the revisionist theories of the leaders of German social democracy, her own theory of accumulation also marked a significant departure from Marx's theory of crisis. Whereas Marx identified the fundamental problem in the accumulation process itself, expressed in the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, Luxemburg emphasised the contradiction between production and the realisation of surplus-value, a contradiction that capital could, at least temporarily, overcome by expanding into the 'non-capitalist' markets of the colonial world (see *The Accumulation of Capital*, 1913). The ultimate obstacle to capitalist expansion was no

established a provisional government, and his *State and Revolution*, written on the very eve of the October 1917 revolution, provided strategic direction for the working class movement under a regime which was more democratic than any that existed in Western Europe. His *Left-Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder*, written in 1920, sought to communicate the lessons of the Bolshevik experience directly to the immature communist movements of the West.

Meszaros appears to reduce Lenin's advice to Luxemburg to his counsel of the need for a clandestine form of organisation. Though her tragic fate confirmed the prescience of that advice, Lenin's criticisms flowed from much broader disagreements on organisation and strategy. The consistent theme of Lenin's works was the importance of giving a clear organisational form to political ideas, of combining legal and illegal forms of activity, of combining the maximum of tactical flexibility with decisive strategic direction. The Communist International was quite right to attempt to generalise the Bolshevik model to the West. Lenin and the Bolsheviks cannot be held responsible for the failure of Western communists to adapt successfully this approach to their own circumstances.

Taken as a whole, *The Power of Ideology* is a major contribution to Marxist theory at a time when it is everywhere under attack. I would like to see the first section, which is such a powerful rejoinder to the current modernism/postmodernism debate, published separately in a cheap paperback edition that would give it the wide readership it richly deserves, but unfortunately is unlikely to get in this expensive hardback tome.

Pat Roberts reviews

Peter Mangold, *National Security and International Relations*, Routledge, £30 hbk;
James N Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, £14.95 pbk; David Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role: British Foreign Policy Since 1945*, Macmillan, £35 hbk, £10.99 pbk; Paul H Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: A Memoir of Five Perilous Decades*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £25 hbk; Kathryn Tidrick, *Empire and the English Character*, IB Tauris & Co Ltd, £19.95 hbk; Christopher Hitchens, *Blood, Class and Nostalgia: Anglo-American Ironies*, Chatto & Windus, £15 hbk;
Anne Deighton (ed), *Britain and the First Cold War*, Macmillan, £40 hbk

Cold War and cool jargon

There has been a veritable explosion of publishing in the broad area of international relations, past and present. Given the breakdown of the post-Second World War order, this emphasis is not at all surprising. Unfortunately, however, neither the experts on world affairs nor the publishing industry have yet caught up with the changes. In all these books, an awareness of the post-Cold War world is present in the background, but it remains undigested as a theme.

The books under consideration fall into three categories. Those that tend to theorise about international relations are uniformly lacking in inspiration. As for the rest, the American authors tend to be complacent and uncritical, while the British contributors provide some welcome surprises.

The old-fashioned diplomatic history at least had the virtue of presenting a comprehensible story. Unfortunately, trendy international relations experts are expected to do more than spin a yarn. They have to analyse their subject matter and arrange their material into meaningful theories. Predictably, this project results in the creation of abstract models which purport to anticipate events and predict the future. An exaggerated emphasis on jargon is the well-known hallmark of this literature. Quite often rather ordinary terms like bipolar, multipolar or global are used as if they carry tremendous significance.

International relations theory has an irritating habit of fragmenting global trends into unconnected but manageable bite-sized subjects. In this way, particular structures can be isolated for inspection without any regard to the broader patterns at play. A typical example of this tendency is Peter Mangold's *National Security and International Relations*. Mangold treats security policy as a subject in its own right. Instead of considering specific problems involving specific countries, Mangold discusses security as if it were a transhistorical subject that can be understood in its own terms. Thus he rummages through the whole of world history from the 1812 American-Canadian War to the recent Iran-Iraq conflict without saying anything in particular about any of these events.

Treating national security as an issue which is independent of social and economic relations means wrenching the subject out of its historical context. This leaves the author with formal comparisons and empty analogies. Thus Mangold writes: 'Security policy is often likened to insurance. Just as a householder decides what premium he is willing to pay to guard risks to life and property, so the state must determine what to forgo in order to reduce the contingent risk of war and coercion.' (p15) The author finds the analogy with insurance so compelling that he ends up sounding more like an insurance salesman than an expert in international relations.

James Rosenau is a leading writer on international relations. Generations of undergraduates have been force-fed on his books and strongly encouraged to memorise his jargon. Rosenau is wholly devoted to jargon, models and analogies, which makes the task of reading his text a challenging experience. Take the following typical sentence from *Turbulence in World Politics*:

'Here, the delineation of the need for multilevel theorising, for the method of potential observability, for the use of new terminology, and for fashioning a jailbreak offers only the beginning of an inner turbulence that leads the analysis into a consideration of counter-intuitive perspectives and a disciplined openness both to reaffirming established concepts where appropriate and to replacing them with new formulations where necessary.' (p44)

There are 461 pages of this charming prose, all aimed at expounding Rosenau's pathbreaking thesis that there is a clash between the 'centralising tendencies inherent in global interdependence and the decentralising tendencies in subgroupism' (p443). In plain English, this means that the world is becoming more international and more parochial at the same time. Many nineteenth-century thinkers would have agreed—which is why they devised far clearer concepts such as *universal* and *particular*.

The pressure to be seen to be using international relations rhetoric must be considerable. Even when an author tries to tell a comprehensible story, the temptation to drop the odd *bon mot* proves irresistible. David Sanders' book consists of a series of lectures on British foreign policy since 1945. It is readable if not very exciting. However, he insists on upholding the international relations tradition by imposing a realist versus idealist paradigm on his story. In practice, this means adding the word 'realist' to whatever policy is under review. Thus we are told that it 'had been only by the exercise of Churchillian realism that Britain had survived' (p42). The assumption behind this statement is that an exercise in 'Churchillian idealism' would have produced the opposite result.

By breaking down policy decisions into their realist and idealist components, the author of *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role* comes to the unsurprising conclusion that British foreign policy was motivated by *realpolitik*.

After the pain of tackling Rosenau, reading Paul Nitze's memoirs was easy going. Nitze has been centrally involved in the formulations of American foreign policy since the forties. He writes in a simple if unreflective style. The reader will find no new insights about the key events under discussion. The most striking feature of this work is the absence of any sense of change in the post-war order. Nitze somehow seems immune to comprehending the speed with which the USA achieved world hegemony only to experience a cumulative erosion of influence.

The only hint that all is not well as far as America's prospects are concerned is Nitze's strange assessment of his country's global economic performance during the post-war decades:

'With respect to our worldwide economic goals, we were immensely successful in meeting and exceeding goals of expansion in production, development, and trade. Perhaps we were too generous in extending grants, loans and general economic help while paying inadequate attention to US requirements for our own economic health. We can be faulted, not for lack of generosity, but for inadequate prudence.' (p464)

This portrait of American generosity and lack of concern for domestic priorities is a self-flattering way of accounting for the country's decline. Certainly Nitze, like most members of the American establishment, is not yet ready to assess critically the long-term implications of his country's decline.

In sharp contrast to Nitze, British writers are far more critical when reviewing Britain's past imperial pretensions and her international role. In different ways, Kathryn Tidrick, Christopher Hitchens and Anne Deighton make a useful contribution to reassessing Britain's imperial past.

Tidrick is the most conservative of the three. Her text is strongly influenced by traditional imperial historiography. According to this view, Britain was essentially a benevolent imperial power which did more good than harm. Tidrick suggests that Britain sought to avoid the use of force because its colonial agents 'believed that they were blessed with attributes which enabled them to prevail without it'. She has a sneaking admiration for those who built the Empire and suggests that this 'imperial experience can also bring out the best' in people (p2).

According to the tradition of imperial history, decolonisation and constitutional reform in the colonies were the consequence of

the development of Anglo-American relations this century. In particular, it focuses on how a declining imperial power like Britain accommodated itself to the realities of American ascendancy. Hitchens argues that one of the ironies of this relationship is that in America 'the reverence and affections for things English has increased in direct proportion to the overshadowing and relegation of real British power' (p251). In other words, once Britain became relegated to the second division, Americans could begin to look upon it as 'quaint' rather than as a threatening rival.

Hitchens assembles some wonderful material (all of which is unreferenced) to show how the English and the American elite sought to establish a common front. The correspondence between Churchill and Roosevelt is particularly revealing, showing how racist and anti-Semitic assumptions form a common Anglo-Saxon bond that transcends the ocean. The aim of successive British leaders was to establish a relationship in which the old country would act as a mentor to the brash young cousin. 'What Greece was to Rome' was the model adopted by Whitehall.

Hitchens suggests that Whitehall attempted to gain American support for preserving the British Empire by playing the anti-communist card. 'The Americans were more likely to work with us

'Once Britain became relegated to the second division, Americans could begin to look upon it as "quaint" rather than as a threatening rival'

the generous nature of the British administrators. Tidrick accepts this perspective in her comments on the reforms enacted in West Africa in the early forties:

'The extraordinary thing about these concessions is that they appear to have been made for no particular reason. Certainly they were not made in response to African pressure. Burns believed that the changes he proposed would come as a pleasant surprise to the inhabitants of the Gold Coast. Bourdillon thought it would be nice to have Africans on his council.' (pp260-61)

So it appears that colonial officials were nice guys who wanted to give the Africans a pleasant surprise.

Fortunately, this apologetic pro-imperial emphasis is subverted by Tidrick's empirical evidence. There is an unresolved tension between the author's sympathies and her material which invites a different conclusion. As a result *Empire and the English Character* is a very interesting book. We learn for example that the British response to the Quit India movement of 1942 was not as peaceful as we would expect from a pacifist imperial power. The author writes in her delightfully understated way: 'The British showed no sign of indecisiveness in dealing with this outbreak. Fifty-seven and a half battalions of troops restored order in a month with about a thousand Indian casualties, aircraft being used on a number of occasions to machine-gun crowds from the air. After that, India was relatively quiet for the duration of the war.' (p250)

The book is at its best when dealing with well-known imperialist heroes such as Selous, Rhodes, Lugard and TE Lawrence. In different ways they personified the culture of imperial leadership. Their greatness derived from the imperial power they represented. Through their individual portraits it becomes clear what Britain once was. Compare these imperial soldiers of fortune to their contemporary equivalents: Richard Branson, Sir Freddie Laker or Captain Bob. But that is another story which a book devoted to upholding the English character is not equipped to handle.

Hitchens' *Blood, Class and Nostalgia* is a well-written essay on

if they saw the problem as one of containing communism', wrote one British official of his attempt to gain support for British Petroleum in Iran (p266).

Hitchens' arguments about the centrality of the Cold War in the promotion of British diplomacy are fully confirmed in a series of articles entitled *Britain and the First Cold War*, edited by Anne Deighton. This is a remarkably coherent collection of well-researched essays, which uses recently released archival material to provide new insights into the subject. Anne Deighton's introduction contains an illuminating quotation from a 1950 lecture by Gladwyn Jebb of the foreign office:

'Perhaps, if we are to think quite clearly, we may admit that the phrase "cold war"...really involves the whole question of the maintenance of the United Kingdom's position in the world, and can therefore be equated with our general foreign policy.' (p1)

A number of articles lend weight to Jebb's emphasis. It appears that Whitehall was determined to counteract the effect of Britain's decline. It looked to the Empire to provide the clout to stay in the same league as the Soviet Union and the USA. However it lacked the resources to retain its territory abroad and required the assistance of America to keep the Empire intact. Imperial difficulties thus tended to be presented as communist threats. It usually worked but not always. Scott Lucas' essay on Suez shows that 'Eden attempted to use the Soviet threat to secure American support for Anglo-French action against Nasser' (p269). This time the anti-communist approach did not work and Britain faced a major humiliation.

Reading between the lines, *Blood, Class and Nostalgia* and *Britain and the First Cold War* seem to suggest that the most enthusiastic advocates of the Cold War resided in England. At the very least, the Cold War helped to ease Britain's transition from being a key player in international affairs to America's trusted retainer. One wonders what will replace the Soviet menace as the demiurge of British foreign policy in the post-Cold War world.

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