

# LIVING MARXISM

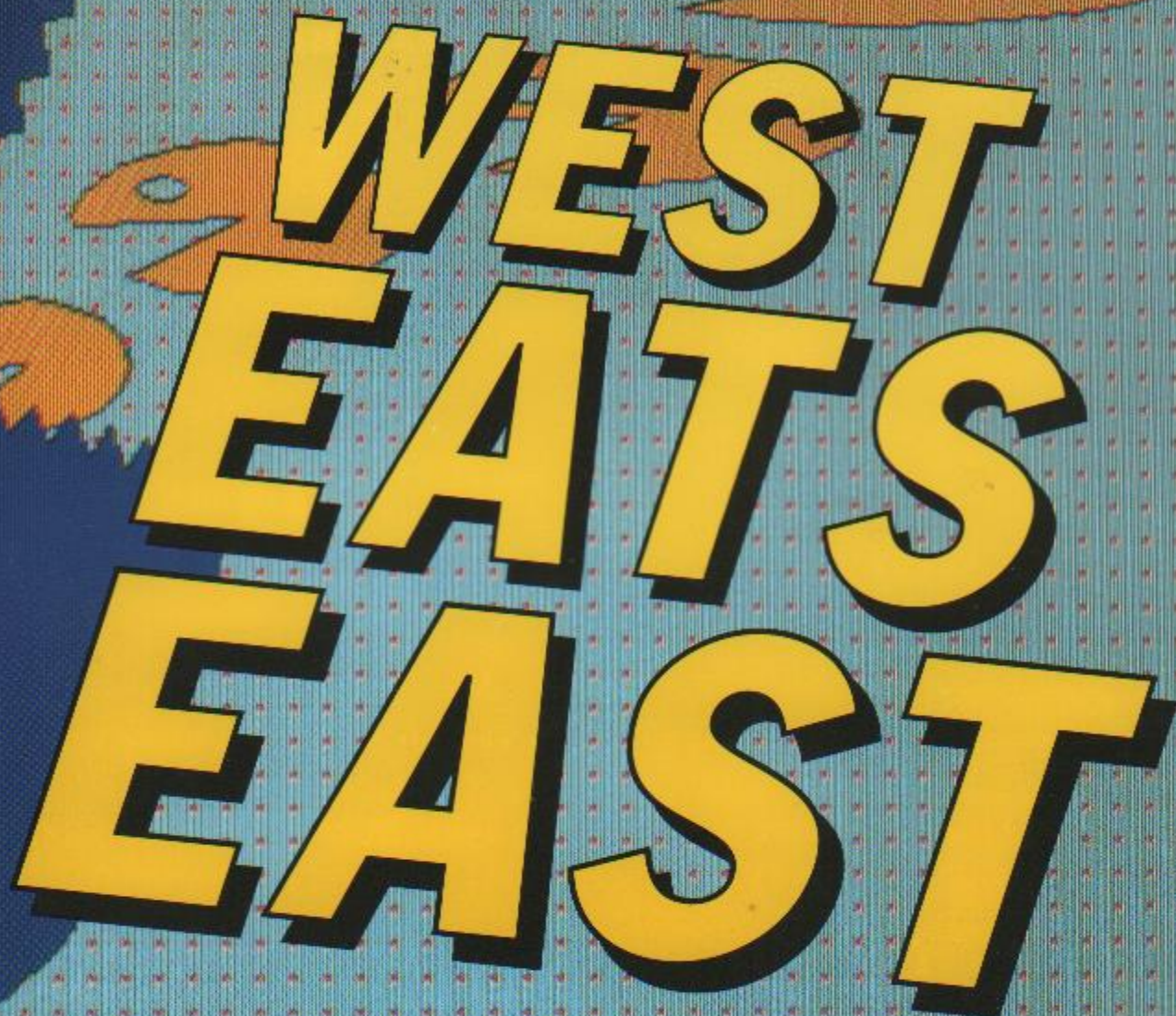


US\$5 DM7 FF25

UK £2

February 1992 No40

As the Soviet Union ends,  
the colonial-style carve-up  
of Eastern Europe begins

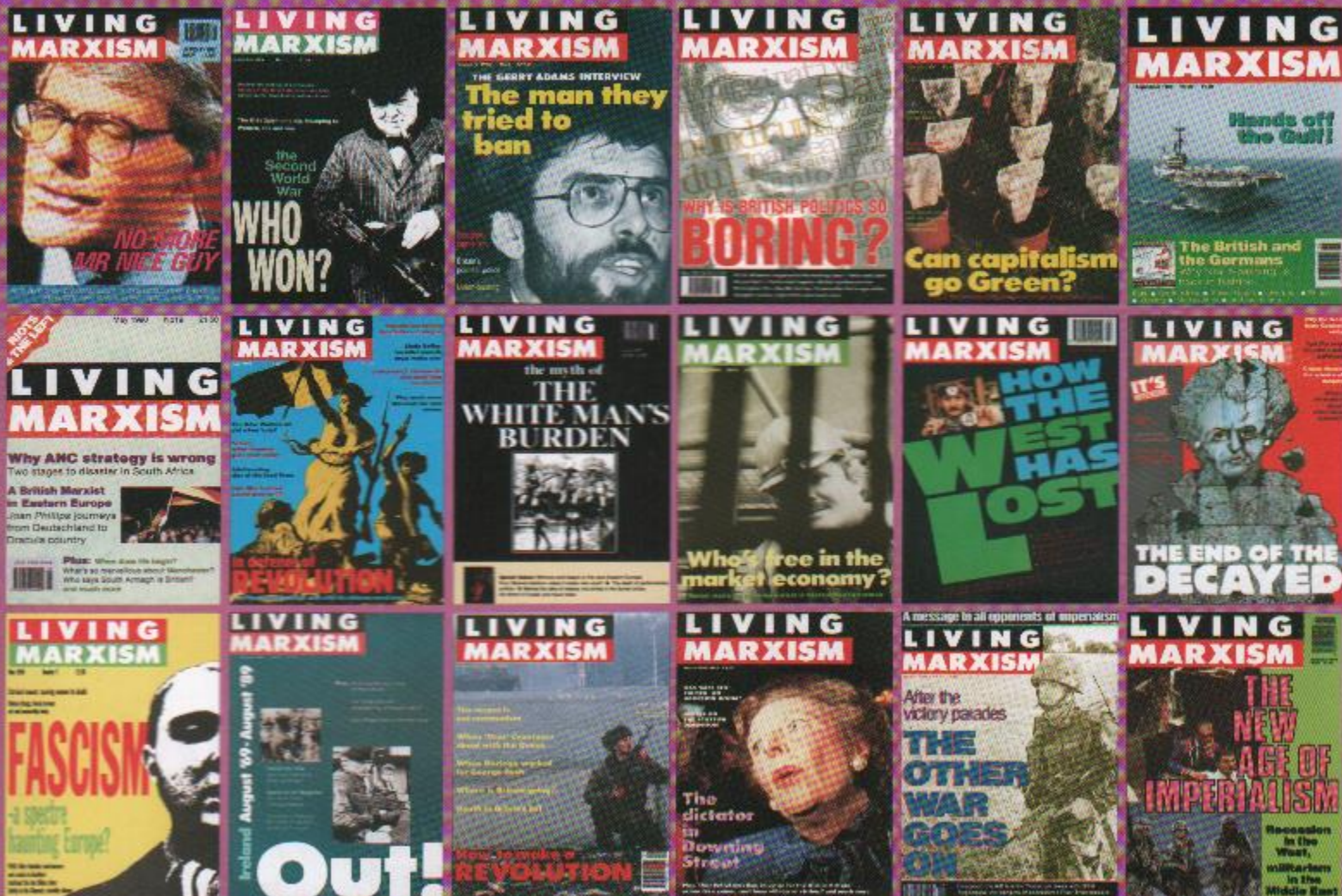


# WEST EATS EAST

**Frontline Croatia**—report from the new East-West frontier

Plus: Education • Rape • Abortion • Irish history • Essex Girls

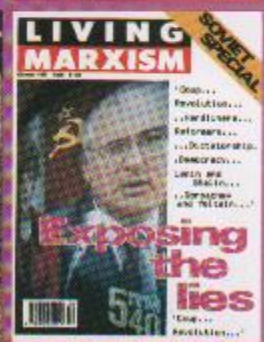
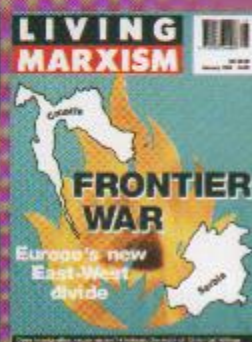
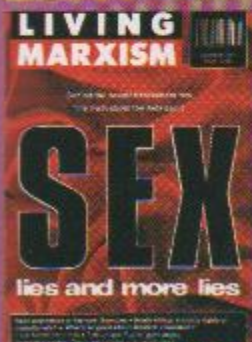
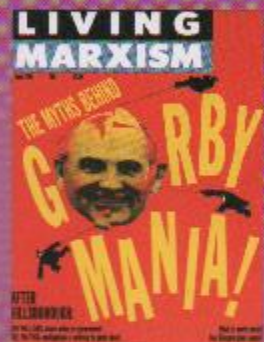
Tories and Europe and much more



# subscribe



A subscription to *Living Marxism* is now better value than ever; at £15 for a year, it saves you more than 35 per cent on the cover price. Write to *Living Marxism Subscriptions* (40), BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX or phone (071) 375 1485 (ansaphone)



# contents

- 4 Editorial
- 6 Letters
- 8 **Rape: Reopening the case**  
*Ann Bradley*
- 11 Ann Bradley
- 12 Education: Expansion on the cheap  
*John Fitzpatrick*
- 15 Toby Banks
- 16 **Today the East, tomorrow the world**  
*Frank Richards*
- 20 A friendly Fourth Reich?  
*Dominic Salter*
- 23 Letter from Frankfurt  
*Rob Knight*
- 24 **Report from Frontline Croatia**  
*Joan Phillips*
- 29 Is Israel out? *Daniel Nassim*
- 30 Carpet-bagger capitalism  
*Kirsten Cale*
- 32 What did Major win at Maastricht?  
*Helen Simons*
- 35 Muslims in France  
*Richard Christiansen*
- 36 **Living: Essex girls; Seventies revival; Travellers' tales**
- 41 Frank Cottrell-Boyce on TV
- 43 **The Marxist Review of Books**

## Whose war is it anyway?



PHOTO: Michael Kramer

The European Community and the United Nations pose as peacemakers in Yugoslavia. But it was Western interference there which exploded a local conflict into a barbarous civil war. **Report, centre pages.**

Editor: **Mick Hume** • Assistant Editor: **Joan Phillips**

Editorial Assistant: **Kirsten Cale** • International Editor: **Daniel Nassim**

News: **Andrew Calcutt** • Living section: **John Fitzpatrick** • Design: **Richard Stead,**

**Charles Longford** • Production: **Michael Kramer, Peter Ray, Helen West**

Managing Editor: **Phil Murphy** • Advertising Manager: **Manda Kent**

**LIVING  
MARXISM**

Monthly review of the

Revolutionary Communist Party

Editorial: (071) 375 1702

Subscriptions: (071) 375 1485

Subscription rates: Britain and Northern Ireland £19.50 • Europe (airmail) £27 • Outside Europe (airmail) £37 • Overseas (surface mail) £23 • (Institutions add £7.50) • Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX; Fax: (071) 377 0346 • Distributed by Comag Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE. Phone: West Drayton (0895) 444 055; Fax: (0895) 445 255; Telex: 881 3787 • Typeset by Junius Publications (TU) © copyright Revolutionary Communist Party • Printed by Russell Press (TU), Nottingham • ISSN 0955-2448 February 1992. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but can only be returned if an SAE is enclosed

# editorial

# West eats East

**H**ow can we accuse the West of starting a colonial-style carve-up in Eastern Europe? After all, Western governments have not launched campaigns of genocide or enslavement there, or started shipping home tons of plundered loot.

Instead, all the talk in the West is of extending aid to the East, of helping to reconstruct the former Soviet bloc's economy, and of acting as peace-keepers in conflicts like the Yugoslav civil war. So what's the problem?

The problem is that imperialism never announces itself as imperialism. Nobody starts out with the declared intention of dominating and exploiting other countries. But the subjective wishes of Western governments do not matter. Whatever they may or may not want to do, the competitive dynamics of international capitalism will

drive them to grab a piece of the fragmenting East anyway, for fear that their foreign rivals might otherwise eat the lot.

To accuse Western governments of a carve-up is not to pretend that they are run by Fu Manchu, Bond movie villains or any other evil individuals bent on world domination. Even if the personal intentions of Western leaders towards the East were entirely noble, there are more powerful global forces at work pushing them into the new colonialism.

●  
Look at the fate of the post-Cold War 'peace dividend', and we can see the tension between Western good intentions and the policies which the major capitalist states have to pursue today to protect their strategic interests.

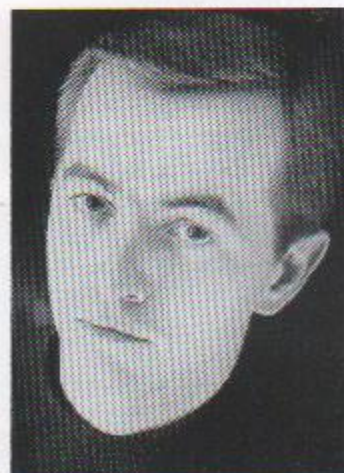
Since the end of the Cold War, Western

governments have all announced defence spending cuts to ease the recessionary pressures at home. No doubt they would like to go further. Yet they are being pulled in the opposite direction by the need to raise their military profiles on the world stage.

The US administration wants to slash defence spending to reduce its trillion dollar budget deficit. The trouble is that, with the decline of the US economy, military matters are the one area in which America retains undoubted global leadership. So, far from giving up gunship diplomacy, George Bush needs to find new Gulf-style pretexts to promote US militarism around the world.

A high-level Pentagon report leaked in January proposed that, while the USA could cut its nuclear arsenal, 5000 warheads should be retained and aimed at 'every reasonable adversary' from Eastern Europe to Asia. This desperate attempt to invent threats from the poorest countries on Earth could not disguise which 'adversaries' the Pentagon is really concerned about; the secret report concluded that the USA must remain the number one nuclear power so as to keep Germany and Japan in their place.

●  
The German government, too, would like to hammer defence spending, with the costs of reunification still mounting and an economic recession starting to bite. However, Germany is just emerging as a major world player and the dominant power in Europe with a growing economic empire in the East. It cannot trust the defence of these interests to the power of the deutschmark—or to the armed forces of its Western rivals.



editor  
**mick hume**

Germany's planned defence cuts are about rationalising its forces, not dismantling them. Like the Americans, the German military want to dump the heavy armaments designed for big, Cold War set pieces, and replace them with the hi-tech weaponry of a modern rapid deployment force—as seen in the Gulf *blitzkrieg*. The German authorities have now floated the idea of playing a military role in future Nato invasions, and Germany's top general has called for parliament to reconsider the constitutional ban on foreign military interventions.

The post-Cold War 'era of peace' has turned out to be a time when the Western powers must become ever-more militaristic, as they seek to maximise their stake in the new world order. The USA (with British assistance) has destroyed Iraq and now has the entire third world and East in its sights; Germany has sent military supplies to Croatia and is laying plans to send forces abroad for the first time since 1945; France has invaded Zaire and Chad and intervened indirectly in Algeria; and so it goes on.

Set events in the East against this global background, and we see why the West cannot act as a united force for good. The collapsing societies of the ex-Soviet bloc are the newest arena in which the capitalist powers must compete with each other for influence. It is this intra-Western rivalry, rather than the 'nightmare scenarios' of renegade republics wielding nukes, which explains why Eastern Europe is replacing the Middle East as the world's premier hot spot.

Like the peace dividend, Western intervention in the East may begin with the pursuit of lofty motives. But the underlying trend is towards colonial-style expansion. It may not be colonialism on the Victorian model, with settler communities and military occupation. But the effect is the same; the affairs of the countries concerned come under the close control of foreign imperialists.

Although the final outcome of all this remains uncertain, we can already identify three key stages in the coming carve-up.

First, a new dividing line is being drawn between 'us and them', the civilised West and the barbaric East. This is obvious in Western (and especially German) analysis of everything from Croatia's supposed superiority over Serbia to the distinction between friendly ethnic German enclaves and dangerous 'Islamic' republics inside the former Soviet Union. The effect of the first stage is to establish the inferiority of the East, and the moral authority of the West; to endorse the right of the Western powers to treat Eastern Europe like the third world.

The second stage involves legitimising interference in the affairs of inferior Eastern states by spreading chauvinist explanations of why Western assistance would be useful. We are told, for instance, that many of the former Soviets cannot look after or even feed themselves, and that they need to be taught how to run an economy properly. The chaos caused by the collapse of the old Stalinist

Western powers are being pulled in to fill a power vacuum or pushed in by pressure from their imperialist rivals. Either way, there is now a clear tendency for them to try to resolve their difficulties on an international stage. They are always careful to present their actions in the East or the third world as a peaceful contribution to building a new world order. But as the story of the 'peace

## Intra-Western rivalry explains why Eastern Europe is replacing the Middle East as the world's premier hot spot

disorder and the new anarchy of the market system is thereby blamed upon the natural inadequacies of the peoples of the East. And the capitalists who have done much to bring this chaos about are presented as the solution.

So far, the West has established in principle that it has both the right and the responsibility to interfere in the East. It now embarks on the third stage: homing in on problems in the former Soviet bloc through which the foreign powers can pressurise targeted states into taking orders.

Different Western nations tend to invent different dangers in the East, according to their own strengths and interests. So the USA emphasises its need to go in and police the region's nuclear weapons, to prevent rogue republics following the example of Saddam's Iraq (which didn't have any nukes anyway). Germany, meanwhile, stresses its responsibility to make Eastern states protect ethnic German minorities (which either don't exist, or already occupy elevated positions in those societies).

Whatever Eastern pretext they might employ to justify their interference, the real cause of the intervention results from problems facing the Western Alliance itself. In a sense it does not matter whether the

dividend' demonstrates, there is little that is peaceful about that process.

As the spotlight of international tensions turns on to Eastern Europe, there is a tendency for Germany to be cast in the role of villain. But all of the Western powers are equally responsible for the carve-up and its consequences. Any British or American complaints about German expansion are motivated by envy; they only wish they had the wherewithal to build an Eastern empire of their own. As it showed yet again in the Gulf a year ago, the Anglo-American alliance has never been shy of colonial conquests.

Where is the new colonialism in the East likely to end? Perhaps British foreign secretary Douglas Hurd gave us a hint of what is to come back in December. During a parliamentary debate, Hurd pointed to the differences that had emerged between Britain and Germany over the speed at which Croatian independence should be recognised. 'There is a tradition in these matters', he said, 'of the main states of Western Europe splitting in rivalry on these Balkan questions...and this all ending up on the battlefield'.

If that is reality, who needs nightmare scenarios?

# Letters

## The truth about Aids

Daniel Johnson (letters, January) responds to the article 'The truth about the Aids panic' (December) with the familiar hysteria and irrationality encouraged by the panic. Although he accuses the article of 'misleading' and 'lies', he is unable to come up with a single fact which refutes its impressively detailed case that, outside of clearly defined high-risk groups, Aids is a rare disease in Britain and likely to remain so.

Johnson then makes the astonishing claim that 'nobody has used the Aids tragedy to promote a return to traditional family values'. Perhaps his fear of contracting the disease has led him to adopt the lifestyle of a hermit, or has every moralist from Donna Summer to Garry Bushell passed him by?

He is, however, quite correct to remind us that the Conservative government did not manipulate the Aids charities, advertising agencies and journalists into mounting a moral crusade. Indeed, it is clear that these groups, along with the medical establishment, were instrumental in persuading the government to mount its original scare campaign. Crucially, the gay liberals who lead the Aids charities thought that, by persuading the government that everyone was at risk, they could gain the resources they needed for the gay men who were (and remain) the overwhelming majority of Aids sufferers, without having to confront anti-homosexual prejudice.

The government was happy to go along with their suggestion since it established a highly effective and entirely voluntary division of labour in the promotion of a conservative moral climate. Ministers have posed as neutral defenders of public health while the liberal Aids industry, the media and the left has set about making the idea that sex is dangerous, and unprotected sex irresponsible, positively trendy. In these circumstances it has not proved difficult for more traditional moralists to restore their bigoted nineteenth-century garbage about chastity, family values and sexual 'normality' to the status of common sense.

Johnson concludes his letter by repeating the Tories' 1987 warning: 'Don't die of ignorance.' The ignorance we need to fear is that resulting from the reactionary ideas that

liberals like Johnson are always apologising for instead of fighting against.

**David Wright** Manchester

I would like to comment, as a medical student, on the article: 'The truth about the Aids panic'. I agree the statistics show the virus to be predominantly high-risk groups. However, you did not consider that this could be the result of an effective campaign by the government.

If they did not encourage sexual morality and 'safe sex', what would be the result? We would have an exponential growth of the virus throughout both heterosexuals and high-risk groups, as has been shown in Africa. If that was the case, you would write articles condemning the government, and quite rightly.

As it is, you have attacked the government for creating 'as much stress and trauma as possible', when it has succeeded in reducing the spread of the virus. If the government fails you condemn it, and if it succeeds you condemn it anyway! The teaching of the medical school shows that Aids will be the main health problem by the year 2000. A cure seems increasingly evasive—moral values or 'safe sex' seem the only effective options.

**Julia Leeds**

## No jockstrap required

Toby Bank's article on rugby ('Rugger off', December) is a far from accurate portrayal of the game as I know it. OK, so Toby doesn't like rugby, and maybe the Rugby World Cup, the TV coverage and the hype deserve some light-hearted analysis, but that is hardly an excuse for an article so obviously written off the top of his head (or was it out of the back of his neck?).

'Twickers' isn't the only place that rugby is played. In South Wales, the majority of rugby players are working class. The sport is cheap to play: in 1988, my annual subs were £7.50 and £1 per game, and on top of that all I needed was boots, socks and shorts. A jockstrap isn't obligatory and there is none of the hi-tech, fluorescent designer gear and high fees of other sports.

Banks' point that international sides tend to be a 'hand-picked bunch of solicitors and doctors' with a 'high proportion of police officers' is by and large true. But rugby is an

amateur sport—to compete at that level you need a sympathetic employer. To generalise, the more working class your job, the less flexible your employer. It is not unknown for an employer to issue an ultimatum to an employee unable to work due to a rugby-related injury.

Rugby is just a game, with good and bad points. Like any other sport at its highest level, it serves as a means by which the state can manipulate popular opinion to its own ends, be it extolling the virtues of good sportsmanship or condemning the scourge of hooliganism.

**Ian Yates** Sheffield

## Support Croatia

I am deeply distressed to read your views on the Croatian war. You seem to have swallowed hook, line and sinker virtually every myth propounded by those sections of the media whose views coincided with the Foreign Office. In this interpretation of events, Tudjman's regime is a throwback to the wartime fascist Croatian state and the present German support for Croatia is the start of an attempt to create a Fourth Reich.

Marxists should have no difficulty supporting Croatia's rights to self-determination if we only dispense with a few myths. First myth: the Croats are fascists who butchered the Serbs during the Second World War and are doing so again. This is a vile piece of racist propaganda used by all who want to justify Britain's 'neutral' position towards Croatia. During the Second World War, the Nazis set up puppet regimes in both Serbia and Croatia, neither of which had any real basis of support. The Serbian Chetniks collaborated with these regimes, allying themselves to the Ustashe and fighting the communist partisans while carrying out their own atrocities against Croats, Muslims, Albanians and Jews. Among the partisans, Croats were at least as strongly represented as the Serbs. To see which side are the fascists in today's conflict you need only note that the Serbian fighters call themselves Chetniks, whereas the extreme right is being repressed in Croatia.

The second myth is that the war is simply an unprincipled battle over land between rival Stalinists, of which the Serbians are the

impoverished underdogs. In fact the difference in living standards between the two republics is very marginal and if the Serbians were the underdogs they would not have control over the federal army. If this is a civil war between the prosperous north and an impoverished south, why are southern Macedonia and impoverished Kosovo following Croatia's example and seceding?

The third myth is that Serbs and Croats are part of the same nation. This is such an utterly ridiculous view that it hardly warrants answering. One might as well say that Germans and Swiss are part of the same nation because they speak a similar language. Approximately zero per cent of Serbs and Croats hold this view and I feel they have the right to decide. If they were 'all the same', this conflict would never have happened.

It is not necessary to support the politics of Tudjman's government to support Croatia's right to self-determination. We must take a leaf from Lenin's and Trotsky's book and support self-determination for every nation, for the Croats as for the Irish and the Palestinians.

**Attila Hoare** London

## Who killed Bambi?

I was rather concerned to read in Toby Banks' review of Jon Savage's *England's Dreaming* (January) that 'The contradiction between punk's arty roots and its street kids rhetoric tore it apart once it became a "youth movement" and the real football terrace boys caught on...a crude "dole queue rock" tag was tied tight around punk's neck'. If I read this correctly, Banks is saying that punk flowered whilst it was the preserve of the art student but once the working class got hold of it, it was somehow debased.

I would suggest that punk was bound to be only a short-lived phenomena given its limited goals and agenda—indeed, this is what allowed it to be absorbed into the mainstream entertainment business relatively quickly. To blame working class 'youth' for its demise seems to fit rather snugly into current anti-working class prejudice. This is particularly annoying given *Living Marxism's* recent critique of the 'underclass' debate.

**Steve Banks** Leeds

## Don't give a XXXX

It was nice to see *Living Marxism* asserting its godlessness coming up to the festive season. However it is misleading to suggest that the term Xmas originated in the desire to suppress the name of Christ from the annual piss-up. In

fact the X here represents the first letter (kai) of the Greek *XPICTOC* (pronounced *Khristos*). Hence it has long been a commonplace of the ecclesiastical shorthand to take the letter X as an abbreviation of the syllable Christ, or Xtianity or...Xmas. After the revolution we'll just have to devise a new calendar, like the French did in 1793!

**Louis Roche** Paris, France

## A sustainable argument?

As an environmentalist, the first article I turned to in the December issue was on sustainable development. John Gibson rightly asserts that it is 'incompatible with capitalism'. However, he ends by saying that the concept is misguided and dangerous, although he has only shown that those who believe capitalism can achieve sustainable development are misguided and dangerous.

I believe that the concept of sustainable development is a vital part of Marxist analysis. It and the 'green movement' can help us all move beyond capitalism before it makes our planet uninhabitable. We need to look at what sustainable development means in different situations and expose why capitalism fails to achieve it. We need to find ways to help third world countries promote and improve their traditional methods of production and organisation. The IMF will not do this, but who will?

Capitalism is not seriously challenged yet because there is no sufficiently broadly accepted basis for an alternative. Sustainable development could be it.

**Roger Clague** Birmingham

## Pearl Harbour revisited

Daniel Nassim's article: 'Harbouring Illusions' (December) was very astute in cutting through the myths surrounding the attack on Pearl Harbour. Recently declassified papers show that the USA had intercepted enough Japanese naval messages to be able to predict the forthcoming air-raid. However, a 1945 study by the US National Security Agency argued that 'due to a lack of personnel during 1941, none of the [messages] were read'. Sounds like a lame excuse to me.

If the 'surprise attack' was a set-up by president Roosevelt, it was a highly successful one, as Nassim notes. However, he omitted to mention the importance of Pearl Harbour in US-Japanese relations today. Foreign minister Michio Watanabe has recently issued an apology for starting the war: George Bush has refused outright to apologise for the

annihilation of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. By posing as the innocent retaliator to Japanese aggression, America can whip up hatred against modern Japan—a powerful weapon for American nationalism as imperialist rivalries intensify. So you can be damned: sure America will 'remember Pearl Harbour', whatever the truth or otherwise.

**Ralf Collis** Tokyo, Japan

## Animal magic

While I agree with a lot of what Ann Bradley says in her article 'Animal crackers' (January), it is a dangerous assumption to say that we are superior to 'mere beasts'. People debase the animals they 'love', but that is the fault of a society that leads to isolation and fear of other people, and enables the Jack Richters of this world to exploit them to the tune of £9.99 a book.

However, to place ourselves in a position of unquestionable superiority over animals comes close, I fear, to the still widely held belief that men are unquestionably superior to women. As a member of that small species, the female journalist, Ann Bradley should bear this in mind.

**M Montgomery** Bristol

Ann Bradley's article, 'Animal crackers' may have some value in its observations on elementary animal-lover psychology, but I am worried by the founding belief on which she bases her critique—namely that emotion is a solely human province, and that beasts are mere mechanisms. The apparent motive for this assertion is to protect the value of human action from the debasement of sociobiology.

Instead of defining humans in counterpoint to 'beasts', Bradley would do better to describe exactly what qualities in the human she finds of value—and never mind if chimps and other cerebral animals share facets of these qualities with us. This approach will disarm the reactionary who would otherwise find many examples—particularly in primate studies—to cast doubt on the thesis of humanity as a noble, rational creature, separate from the tooth-and-claw world beloved of capital.

Bradley's argument is flawed—and in our current ideological climate, tiny flaws such as this will always be used to drive in the wedge. In the light of this fact it seems dangerous to stray from rigorous analysis for the sake of flippant light relief.

**Stephen Black** London

**We welcome readers' views and criticisms.**  
Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or fax them on (071) 377 0346



Collection George Melly



# Rape

## Reopening the case

Discussion of what causes rape tends to focus on male lust and sexuality.

Ann Bradley suggests that we should look elsewhere: at the way in which family life subordinates women, and the way that our society associates sex with defilement

**T**he William Kennedy Smith rape trial and the subsequent discussion of 'date rape' have hopefully laid to rest one of the most enduring myths about sexual assault: that women are most at risk from the stranger in the dark. Despite the fact that Kennedy Smith was found not guilty, and despite the ridiculing of his accuser and her counsel, one welcome point was drummed home. It was accepted by the media that it was not only possible for a woman to be raped by an acquaintance, but that she is *more* likely to be sexually assaulted by a man she knows by name than by a perfect stranger.

Left:  
*The Rape* by  
René Magritte,  
1934

The figures to show that rape is most frequently committed by a man known to his victim have been available for years, yet it has always been 'stranger rape' that has grabbed the headlines. Even when a 1989 home office report, *Statistics of Offences of Rape*, revealed the official figures, the police responded with a campaign warning women not to travel alone after dark, to wear dowdy coats over disco gear, and to avoid empty carriages on the tube. Their advice seemed particularly incongruous as the home office study found that only 39 per cent of reported rapes were carried out by total strangers, while 30 per cent were carried out by a former husband or lover, and 31 per cent by acquaintances: 'the sort of men', according to the report's author, 'who drop in for coffee'.

### Macs and minis

Having established that 61 per cent of reported rapes were committed by men known to the victim, the report concluded that this was probably a gross underestimate, as women are more likely to report an attack by a stranger than a sexual assault at the hands of a man with whom they have a social relationship. You might conclude that the most sensible advice would be that women were safer standing on a deserted train station in a mini-skirt at midnight than accepting a lift from their best friend's husband.

A common explanation of why the police emphasise stranger rape has been that it is qualitatively more

horrific for a woman. This is debatable. You could argue that when a man drags a woman into a bush and rips her clothes off, it's easier, once the terror is past, for her to seek the support of her peers and to press legal charges than it is when her former boyfriend comes to the house to 'give her one for old times' sake'.

There are, however, two more credible explanations for the emphasis on stranger rape. The first is that, from the point of view of the police, it is easier to build a criminal case when the sexual assault is so blatant as to negate any claim that a woman consented—a claim which dogs cases when a woman knows her assailant. The second, which has been underlined by many feminist writers, is that, from the point of view of the authorities as a whole, playing up the threat of stranger rape is useful for reinforcing the traditional notion of women as frail victims who should be tucked up in bed at night, not putting themselves at risk of attack.

The debate surrounding the Kennedy Smith trial helped to popularise the idea that rape is not just about men in dirty macs jumping out on women in dimly lit city streets. But it has done so by reinforcing other more subtle myths about rape.

### Uncontrolled lust?

The recent discussions on date rape have reinforced the idea that rape is an extreme form of sexual lust. The allegation against Kennedy Smith was that he was so worked up about a woman that, when she said 'no', he couldn't exercise control over his sexual apparatus. Much of the discussion since the trial has concentrated on how men need to learn to exercise restraint, or how women need to learn to make their intentions, or lack of them, more clear. The discussion reached its nadir on one mid-morning British TV chat show, when the argument of an unreconstructed oik that women often say 'no' but mean 'yes' was parried by a woman claiming that even if she climbed naked into a man's bed she would not expect him to make an advance without her express permission.

A central feature of the discussion on date rape has been that women are under siege from lusty men who will not take no for an answer. This is a misconception about rape which stems from the notion that heterosexual intercourse runs a spectrum, with shared desire at one end and violent rape at the other. Diana Russell, a leading US authority on rape, expresses a commonly held view when she writes ▶

that rape 'should be seen as being at one end of the...sex continuum, with voluntary, mutually desired and satisfying sex at the other end'. Sex which is unwanted, or where the woman 'is totally passive' or sees herself as 'servicing' her man fits 'somewhere in the middle of such a continuum' (*Rape in Marriage*, 1982, pxxxvii).

At first sight the 'sex continuum' approach to rape can seem useful, since it avoids the problems of trying to define rape purely in terms of violent assault. Even today, many police officers, court officials and juries find it hard to accept that a woman can have been raped unless she has the cuts and bruises to prove she 'fought to defend her honour'. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the 'sex continuum' definition of rape really strips the term of any meaning.

Understood in this way, rape becomes undefinable. Who knows whether a woman is having sex simply out of obligation; does she always know herself? What about a man who feels obliged to have sex with his partner when he doesn't really feel like it, is this rape? To see unenthusiastic sex as connected to rape at best broadens the definition of rape so much as to make it meaningless, at worst trivialises the suffering of women who have experienced the brutality of unequivocally unwanted, resisted sexual intercourse.

### Ends and means

Rape is no more a continuum of loving sex than poisoning someone is a continuum of taking them out to dinner. Buying someone a dollop of Häagen-Dazs and slipping them cyanide may seem physically related to wining and dining them—you give them something and they put it in their mouth. But there the similarity ends. The motives for the action and its expected consequences are entirely different. The difference is just as stark between rape and sex. Both may involve the penetration of a penis into a vagina, but the motives and consequences have nothing in common.

Sex between a man and a woman is usually a combination of lust and mutual affection. Although rape involves a sex act, it is unrelated to such sexual desire. The source of rape today is not uncontrolled male lust. Rather, it stems from two intrinsic features of the way that contemporary society is organised. One is the subordination of women, the other is the fetishisation of sex.

The rape of a woman by a man is a demonstration of his power over her, not his untrammelled desire.

Rape is a consequence of women's inferior position in society. Even today, when every political, business and economic organisation competes to parade its commitment to equality, women are seen as second class citizens and play a secondary role in the labour market.

### Power denied

Women are denied top jobs, and the status and financial independence that goes with them, because they are expected to prioritise the demands of the domestic sphere above those of the world of work. Women are still expected to spend a significant proportion of their lives dependent on men. Women have the babies and look after the home and family while the men bring home the wages. Their role as wives and mothers, (or the expectation that they will become wives and mothers if they are not there yet), excludes most women from positions of influence.

It is the powerlessness of women that makes them susceptible to rape. And women are not rendered powerless by individual men, but by the way in which society relies upon the traditional family structure.

Rape is one of the most brutal physical reflections of power relations between men and women in capitalist society. In a world where women are in reality dominated by men and denied equality, power and influence, it is unsurprising that they are physically brutalised. Women's susceptibility to sexual assault is just one extremely brutal aspect of their inferior status. The rape of a woman is in some ways similar to baby-battering, in that it represents the most brutalised form of the social relations of domination. An adult has complete control and power over a young child, and in its most degraded and perverse form that control and that power can be exercised through physical abuse. A power relationship also exists between men and women, and the inequality can similarly take on the aspect of physical abuse. Rape and domestic violence are two expressions of this.

### Dirt and defilement

The second social factor involved in rape is the fetishisation of sex as a thing in itself, isolated from everyday life and relationships. The brutalisation of women frequently takes on a sexual expression because of the way that sex is viewed in modern Western society. Sex is generally regarded as something a man *does* to a woman. It is widely perceived to be something that is dirty, degrading and embarrassing. In a society where penetrative sexual intercourse is seen as an act of

defilement, it is hardly surprising that, in some circumstances, it is also seen as a weapon.

In one respect rape is similar to sexual harassment. A man may make a pass at a woman because he fancies her but he does not persistently harass her out of desire. Sexual harassment is employed to humiliate a woman, to put her in her place, to accentuate the subordinate position that she is in. Rape plays a similar function. It is an expression of power, of anger, it is a way for an inadequate man to demonstrate that he is able to force one other person into physical submission. And because sexual intercourse is seen by society as the most degrading thing he can do to a woman, it is the thing he does to humiliate her.

Study after study of rapists echoes the same responses to the question about how a man felt when he raped. Routinely they claim to feel no lust for the victim and no sexual satisfaction when the rape is over. The most common feelings are of uncontrolled anger: the victim is someone to take it out on.

### Moral stigma

If we accept that sex can be used as a weapon because of the associations with defilement, it becomes clear how difficult an issue rape is to deal with within the parameters of society as it exists today. Currently all sides agree that rape is the most degrading thing that can happen to a woman. Yet this moral attitude itself helps to heap on the humiliation. The ordeal of a woman who has been raped is made far worse by having to describe the intimate details of the assault to the police and courts in an atmosphere heavy with moral and sexual stigma, and then having the events paraded in lurid detail across the pages of the press. Worse still, in accepting that rape is the worst thing that can happen to a woman we surely help to lay the ground for rape to continue to be used as a weapon of degradation.

This is not to suggest that as individuals we can somehow elevate ourselves above the fetishisation of sex that is reflected in concern about rape. But we should try to understand the mechanisms that are at work.

Some things at least should be clear. It is essential to establish that rape is primarily an act of physical assault unrelated to lust or sexuality. And it is a distressing fact that rape will exist as long as women are trapped in a subordinate role, as long as individuals are brutalised by capitalist society, and as long as sex is viewed as unclean. ●

# Abortion in demand



**Ann Bradley**

The latest official abortion figures have thrown the anti-abortion movement into a predictable frenzy, despite the fact that they haven't a single surprise in them. In 1989, 186 912 women in England and Wales had abortions, a moderate increase of 1.6 per cent on the previous year.

The figures, produced by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, show that one in five pregnancies end in abortion. Not much to write home about, you might think. Especially as the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, a body not known for its radical credentials, issued a report last year claiming that one in three pregnancies are unplanned.

The anti-abortion campaigners see matters rather differently. The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (Spuc) claims, in a recent statement, that the increasing number of abortions is a 'sad reflection on the way in which respect for human life has declined since the 1960s'. They have declared this year, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act, a year of action on behalf of the unborn child, and are calling for the Act to be repealed.

Those campaigning against abortion claim that the three million legal abortions which have been carried out since the passage of the 1967 Act amount to genocide. Abortion, they believe, is now available on request and it's time the government put a stop to it. To persuade MPs of their moral responsibilities, Spuc have produced a pamphlet by Professor Hubert Campbell, one of its tame medics, to be circulated to all parliamentarians and 'opinion-makers'.

The introduction sets the tone for the intended campaign: 'The sheer scale of abortion is awesome.' Note the subtle use of street language—is this man keying into a hip concern, or what? 'Five hundred abortions a year equals two Lockerbie disasters', Prof Campbell continues. '80 000 a year equals the losses on the Somme; a million every six years equals twice the casualties in the whole of the 1939-45 war. Still it goes on rising inexorably every year'. Finally his *coup de grace*: 'Not only are there three million dead, but three million mothers bereaved and three million occasions on which a gynaecologist has betrayed the Hippocratic oath.'

I'm not sure how convincing the opinion-makers are going to find this emotional claptrap. If I were grieving for a loved one killed in a plane crash I wouldn't be overimpressed by someone trying to compare my emotions to those of a woman who has decided to end an unwanted pregnancy.

Nevertheless, the argument that there are 100

many abortions, and that the 1967 Abortion Act has given women abortion on request, is widely accepted—even by many people who are not in principle opposed to abortion.

If the anti-abortionists are going on the offensive again this year, there are two central points that we have to hold to. One is that the current abortion law does not give women abortion on request; the second is that women need exactly that.

Despite the claims of Spuc, abortion in this country is only legal if, in the opinion of two doctors, it is performed for one of five reasons:

—continuing the pregnancy would pose a greater risk to the life of the woman than if it were ended;

—the abortion is necessary to prevent grave injury to the woman's physical or mental health;

—the woman is less than 24 weeks pregnant and continuing the pregnancy would involve greater risk of injury to her physical or mental health;

—the woman is less than 24 weeks pregnant and continuing the pregnancy involves risk of physical or mental injury to her existing children;

—there is substantial risk that the child will be seriously handicapped.

This does not amount to abortion on request. If a doctor refers a woman for abortion who doesn't fit one of the above categories, he is breaking the law. Naturally, there are some doctors who are inclined to interpret the law more liberally than others, but that's hardly the point. Why should you have to rely on a doctor's personal inclinations (often influenced by his religious beliefs) to obtain an operation you need?

Even if a woman meets the stringent legal criteria, there is no obligation for a health authority to make abortion facilities available on the NHS. Over half the women seeking abortions last year were forced to shell out upwards of £190 for the privilege of becoming unpregnant. To add insult to injury, some health authorities, finding themselves strapped for cash, have stated their intention to cut back on their already pitiful abortion provision. Medway health district in Kent has just announced that it intends to reduce the proportion of abortions it allows on the NHS from 40 per cent to between 12 and 15 per cent. In the West Midlands nine out of 10 women already have to pay.

I too believe that the abortion law is scandalous. I believe it is scandalous because it doesn't permit a woman to have an abortion simply because she doesn't want to be pregnant. It is scandalous because it forces healthy, emotionally stable, socially adequate women to deny that they can

**Why should you have to rely on a doctor's personal inclinations to obtain an operation you need?**

cope, before doctors will 'sign the form'. It is scandalous because it allows health authorities to deny women seeking abortion the treatment they need.

Given the way that pregnancy (never mind motherhood) transforms a woman's life, you might sensibly argue that abortion on request is a basic precondition for the peace of mind of any woman of child-bearing age. Abortion is not a problem—unwanted pregnancy is.

The Tories claim to be organising a revolution in higher education by greatly expanding student numbers and extending access to the disadvantaged. University lecturer John Fitzpatrick sees the government's changes as another attack on educational standards

**A**t the beginning of the present academic year I took up a lecturing post in an English university. Far from escaping to an ivory tower, I have discovered that the world, as Wordsworth put it, is too much with us. For him the problem was 'Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers'. For universities and polytechnics it is getting enough to spend in the first place—for staff, students, buildings, equipment and books alike.

### Short shrift

It appears that the government has squeezed higher education until even the most diffident vice-chancellor has managed a squeak. There is no doubt that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) and the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics (CDP) have made a poor fist of protecting their bailiwick. Belatedly, (at the end of 1991!) a deputation from the CVCP trooped into Number 10 in a desperate bid to go over Kenneth Clarke's head, and tell John Major that laboratories, libraries, halls of residence and lecture rooms were bursting at the seams not to mention falling apart,

and that staff morale was, with their salaries, at an all-time low. Major, with the secretary of state for education at his side, gave them short shrift.

The response of the trade unions has been similarly unimpressive. On 12 November 1991 (six months after the appearance of the government's white paper 'Higher Education: A New Framework'), the Association of University Teachers (AUT) published a document which noticed that higher education was 'facing far-reaching and radical changes' and called for a debate about the future. The AUT estimates that to restore lecturers' pay to its 1979 level relative to comparable professions an increase this year of well over 25 per cent was needed. It submitted a 17 per cent claim, but doesn't appear to have done much about the fact that only five per cent has been granted. Helpfully, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (Natfhe) which organises in polytechnics and colleges accepted five per cent. At present Natfhe and the AUT cannot even decide whether to merge.

Over the past 13 years the government has been juggling with

contradictory pressures regarding education. They have, of course, been trying to restrain public spending in every sphere, and while they have generally found that difficult, education has proved more amenable than most sectors. They have also made it a particular priority to attack public sector pay, and here again, with all teachers and lecturers, they have had considerable success.

### More for less

On the other hand, the Tories have always wanted to disguise the high levels of youth unemployment, and any expansion of education or training helps them to do that. The government boasts for example that since 1983 three million people 'took a Youth Training opportunity'. Expanding higher education also helps to cover the Tories' embarrassment about how badly Britain compares with other Western economies in terms of training.

The government's answer has been to have it both ways. It has been expanding higher education without paying for it. The expansion has already been dramatic. In 1979 one in eight young people went on to higher education. Now it is one in five. By the end of the decade it will be one in three.

### Cheap policy

On paper that might look like a progressive commitment to educating future generations. In reality, cramming more and more students into colleges with less resources looks more like a cheap policy of disguising youth unemployment by turning parts of the education sector into an extension of the social security system.

Various strategies have been adopted to force the colleges to comply. Universities, for example, get their government funding through

Right►  
Expansion on the cheap: students feel the squeeze

# Polyper



PHOTO: Robert Mettler

two routes—direct grants and tuition fees paid on behalf of each student accepted. The government has in effect cut the grants and increased the fees so that now nearly 50 per cent of the cost of teaching a student is met by the tuition fee. Two years ago it was 15 per cent. This forces universities to take on more and more students just to maintain their existing staff levels. By 1993 there will be 363 000 students in universities (an increase on present levels of 5.8 per cent) and 411 000 in polytechnics (9 per cent up), but next year universities will have at least 2 per cent less money for each student, and polytechnics 1.5 per cent less.

### Levelling down

Some of the measures are in themselves unobjectionable, such as the proposed abolition of the distinction between universities and polytechnics. In future all institutions (which may all be called universities) will be able to bid for funds on an equal basis. Fair enough, but with no increase in resources the move is likely to lead to a levelling down of the quality of education.

There is a curious reticence by many in the debate to point out that there must surely be an important distinction between the full and rounded education which at present goes only to those attending the best universities, and the sort of vocational courses which the polytechnics were set up mainly to provide. Perhaps it is considered elitist to insist that universities should be providing a better quality education than polytechnics.

In the extremely defensive, bewildered atmosphere of higher education, nobody seems to be making the obvious demand that the academic standards of universities should first be defended and then ▶

# versities!

### Universities are becoming more like polytechnics rather than the other way around

made available to every young person in society. Why should the vast majority be fobbed off with vocational courses, training and worse?

Of course, those standards don't come cheap; they depend upon good teachers and good facilities; and they depend upon a lot of teachers—a low staff to student ratio is crucial in anybody's account of educational excellence. Even the current (very rough) average in universities of 1:14 is probably too high. It is hard to see how the abolition of the binary system without proper resources will do anything other than accelerate the process through which universities are becoming more like polytechnics rather than the other way around. Kenneth Clarke has cheerfully admitted that a two-tier university structure will soon emerge with a dozen or so 'research' universities, and the remainder becoming primarily 'teaching' institutions. No doubt with massive classes, vocational courses and shoddy buildings.

#### Packing them in

The explosion of interest in new teaching methods, and new course structures, can only be seen in the context of the pressure to squeeze in more students. No doubt there is something to be said for distance learning, for group teaching methods, for self-assessment, for task-based self-directed learning and all the others, but it can hardly be a coincidence that so many of these techniques seem designed to enable fewer staff to deal with larger numbers of students. A confidential CVCP paper of September 1991 openly admits the reason for discussing some of these methods: 'This paper assumes that most institutions will in future admit more students; that there will be too little money to pay for small group teaching; that staff student ratios will rise.' It goes on to note that group methods may well develop the skills which industry values, but this 'may well be achieved at the expense of content, and in particular may reduce the effectiveness of the first degree as preparation for a research career'.

#### Modular muddle

Some of the measures by which expansion-on-the-cheap is being managed would, even if properly funded, undermine the quality of education which universities are supposed to provide. The foremost, and most serious, of these is the modularisation of courses together with credit accumulation and transfer schemes. These are being championed, not least by the

government, as providing greater access to education for the disadvantaged in society, especially women and people from ethnic minorities. 'It will open up the university to part-time and mature students', claims Professor Alan Wilson, vice-chancellor of Leeds University. The *Times Higher Education Supplement* recently reported that nearly two thirds of all universities have either gone over to a modular degree structure or are planning to do so in the near future. It may well be, however, that a momentum is being bluffed up in order to make these developments appear inevitable.

#### Credit control

What modularisation means is that degree courses are being broken down and packaged into self-contained units which can be taught and examined in one term (or, increasingly, semester), and the credits obtained by students can be combined, often with credits in other subjects and from other institutions, to qualify them for a degree. If a degree requires, say, eight credits the student may, within limits, pick from a wide range of options offered by several bodies. It is claimed that this sort of flexibility gives students greater choice and also allows students the chance to accumulate their credits over a longer period while working or bringing up children.

The system is already widespread in polytechnics. Jean Bocock of Natfhe claims that modularisation 'has been extremely important in opening up student choice and access' and should not be confused with cuts in education. Some at least in the universities are sceptical.

#### Advanced tennis

Alan Thomson, a lecturer in law for over 20 years at the University of Kent at Canterbury has recently been vigorously campaigning against the modularisation proposals. 'They facilitate a conception of education as being no different from any other commodity. They represent the rejection of the idea of education as being a process rather than a product, as being an end rather than a means (skills) or a sensation (thrills), as being about individual development rather than individual acquisition, as having a quality rather than a measurable quantity. Thus, the proposals talk of choice not coherence, of flexibility not structure, and of qualification levels not development. They reflect a postmodern lack of faith in the Academy's own authority to distinguish the important from the

unimportant and the serious from the not-serious. Advanced tennis will take its place alongside moral philosophy and quantum physics, as it does in the course credits of many US universities.' Discuss.

Many on the left, too, have fallen for the rhetoric of equal opportunity, student choice and consumer control. Few have thought it worth complaining about the fact that students will increasingly be able to pick and mix their units in a way that undermines the ability of teachers to set out a coherent programme of study which develops over three years. Again, it is probably thought elitist to suggest that teachers may know better than students what they should study and in what order.

#### Money talks

It is hardly course structures which keep women and black people out of universities. More likely it is the refusal of the government to fund a good quality education system for everybody in society. Even in the short term, however, it is money, or the lack of it, which keeps people from entering higher education. The recession has seen the number of part-time students registering at most polytechnics (modular structures and all) fall below expected levels this year. For example, the number of part-timers registering at Humberside Poly actually declined, while at the same time full-time registrations went up by a staggering 30 per cent.

Modularisation will also make it easier to introduce student fees, as each course unit could be marketed separately. (This in itself could lead to the disappearance of unpopular subjects.) Even though the government denies that it wants students to pay tuition fees some vice-chancellors take a different view. Sir William Fraser, the principal of Glasgow University recently indicated that universities would soon have no choice but to charge at least top-up fees to students themselves, and Ken Davies of the CVCP has made clear that fees are an option.

#### 'Take it on the chin'

Meanwhile, David Harrison the chairman of the CVCP has come out fighting: 'One option is to let staff student ratios worsen and take it on the chin. But it will be up to individual universities.' Thanks David. It will in fact be up to the staff and students throughout universities, polytechnics and all the other colleges to oppose these proposals at every opportunity.

(Additional material from Sara Hardy)

# Wild men



## Toby Banks

It's a sick old world, when a man can't go swimming with a dolphin without being accused of sexual harassment. Or is it? From the dolphin's point of view, you might ask which particular swimming stroke involves wrapping your penis around your partner's foot. The courts found in favour of the defendant and against Freddie the dolphin so I won't comment further, except to say that the whole business seems to illustrate perfectly the confusion that reigns in our sexual relations today.

The old rules have gone out of the window and nobody knows what the new ones are. More and more people are giving up the game altogether. Well, that's what Toby Young thinks, anyway. Young edits the *Modern Review*, and since his journal tends to print reviews of artists' Christian names and physical appearances as well as their work it's only fair to extend the same courtesy to him before considering his ideas. With the one or two exceptions, most Tobys are public school wallies, and Young is no exception. Furthermore, like all people from his background, he labours under the misapprehension that he is clever, witty and attractive. When it becomes apparent that others do not share this opinion, he concludes that it is they who are at fault and takes every opportunity to complain about them.

Young has been on TV a good deal lately, and fancies himself to be quite the young scourge of the liberal establishment. These days this means searching hard for dragons to slay, and on a bad day he has to invent them. When a nightclub doorman happened to refuse him entry and called him a 'posh git', he worked up a fine head of steam, and commandeered Channel 4's *Comment* slot to declare that the upper classes are discriminated against in the job market and shunned in society. One author on a late night show, irritated by 28-year old Young's pomposity, remarked 'bollocks!', to which Young replied: 'Oh you're one of those people who still think it's clever to swear on television.' Every time his potato face appears on the screen I scrutinise it for signs of violent injury.

I mention Toby Young because he has recently cobbled together his most dramatic theory yet. Presumably generalising from his personal experience, he has announced that women have stopped having sex with men. 'Thanks to feminism', he says in the *London Evening Standard*, you can't ask a woman out any more. Not only that, but they flaunt their bodies and dress provocatively just to torment him. Curiously, at the same time as Young's theory hit the news stands, other papers were reporting a 4000-woman sex riot at a Chippendales show in Essex. Whatever the truth, it seems a bit soon to throw in the towel.

Young's American counterparts have reacted very differently. Don't get mad, they say, get even. Tired of suffering institutional discrimination and the indignity of 'women's sexism' shaming them into negative self-images, they decided that if they are to be treated like a minority they should organise like one. Result: the male consciousness movement. The National Coalition of Free Men aims to 'reaffirm men's seed-bearing creative capacity', and calls for male-only high school classes. Meanwhile, the Bald Urban Liberation Brigade is busy 'outing' toupee-topped celebrities and promoting positive images of the 'follically challenged' community.

King of the new masculinists is elderly poet Robert Bly, who believes society has lost the traditional father figure, condemning men to eternal boyhood and perverting natural male aggression into destructive violence. 'Sons, angry at their fathers, joyride and cause general mayhem.' The 'first 50 feet or so of soul water' is 'very roiled and turbid', resulting in ghetto riots. Unemployed fathers 'lack the spark to lead' and those in work are too preoccupied to teach 'the kind of deeply rooted wisdom passed on by elders in other cultures'. Modern rites of passage are needed, providing a clear path from boyhood to manhood.

When I first heard about this, I momentarily confused Bly with another Robert, Dr R Chartham of 'Chartham Method' fame—a vacuum device for increasing penis length, now apparently obsolete. (The advert always appeared next to one for a rival product, whose slogan was 'If you can't be bothered to exercise your penis...') Dr Chartham is by all accounts a well-respected therapist with a lot to say about rites of passage. His handbook for fathers promotes domestic nudism, and urges Dad to walk into the bathroom when Son is in the bath and remark casually: 'Your penis is coming along nicely, John.' To which the reply will of course be: 'Yes, but it's not as big as David's, and he's in my class.'

Strange but true. No doubt Dr Chartham's classic text has been updated to keep pace with changing attitudes, yet even his most adventurous ideas appear tame alongside Robert Bly's 'wild man' weekends. Imagine a cross between a Viking theme park and those romantic Nazi films of naked men cavorting through misty forests and rubbing each other down in steamy huts. Now think of a three day singing/tribal-dancing/chanting/hugging/weeping therapy programme structured around 'The Story'—the pseudo-Nordic myth related in Bly's epic bestseller *Iron John*.

Now take a bit of paint-squirting wargame management teamwork course; add some encounter group soul-searching and Jungian

## The National Coalition of Free Men aims to 'reaffirm men's seed-bearing creative capacity'

confessional therapy; slowly stir in some 'Zeus energy', one 'horse of shame' and the Varja sword of sexuality. Finally, sprinkle a little nostalgia to taste, eg, camp fires, pillow fights, midnight feasts and wanking in the dorm. It's not hard to see why jaded businessmen are going bananas for it.

'Bring a drum', says the invitation. Bly supplies the 'bottle', and he's got enough for 100 men. That's how many he claims to accommodate on each course at £300 a head, and they can all become 'warriors' if they want to, under his tutelage.

Will it help Toby Young pull the birds? Bly is cautious. We men have been shamed into 'dragging a long black bag behind us' full of our repressed manly things. But Bly reckons that 'savvy' women kinda like it when we 'get our stuff out of the bag'—and girls, he's not talking about squash rackets.

If it makes the world a safer place for dolphins, I'm for it. But what about the follicle question? Bly gives us just a tantalising glimpse of what the future holds: 'Every modern male has, lying at the bottom of his psyche, a large, primitive being covered with hair down to his feet.'

I'm on my way round, Bob.

ILLUSTRATION: Nick Gray



**Today  
the East,  
tomorrow the**



The Western powers are scrambling for influence and markets in the ruins of Eastern Europe. Is this the start of a redivision of the globe? Frank Richards examines how the collapse of the Soviet bloc is catalysing the emergence of a new world order

It is now very fashionable to project some nightmare scenario on to the emerging new world order. Ex-Kremlinologists confronted with the prospect of unemployment are finding a niche as professional soothsayers. 'There will be civil war in Russia this winter', and 'some of the nuclear weapons lying around in Kazakhstan may well fall into the hands of Islamic terrorists' are just two of the more upbeat forecasts.

This fashion for clairvoyance has taken deep root. Robert S Strauss, the new US ambassador to Moscow, has observed that 'the next big ethnic fight we're going to have to deal with is, I think, that the Germans and the Japanese are going to meet somewhere in the Urals and we're going to see the damndest fight you ever saw' (*Guardian*, 17 December 1991). Other blood-curdling visions speak of millions of desperate and hungry refugees invading central and Western Europe.

Such scare stories surrounding the former Soviet Union have only become popular relatively recently. Not so long ago these sensationalist prognoses and flamboyant descriptions of some horrific threat were largely reserved for third world subjects. The Middle East, teeming with inhuman terrorists, ready to risk all for some incomprehensible religious passion, provided the raw material for the nightmare scenario

during 1990. But after the destruction of Iraq and the tightening of the Western powers' grip over the Middle East, the myth of the third world nationalist terror state is a little more difficult to sustain.

So, are the terrifying predictions of the consequences of Soviet disintegration any more plausible than the old incantations about Iraq being a veritable military superpower? There is certainly a lot of local conflict to come in Eastern Europe. But it seems safe to say that the new predictions of a threat to world peace will prove just as fictitious as the hyperbole that used to accompany the US state department's attacks on Libya, Iran or Nicaragua. Indeed, it is worth noting that Western interpretations of international relations have the uncanny ability of getting everything wrong *all of the time*. This is quite a feat. In case any readers think that is going too far, let us pause to reflect on the post-1945 era.

The message and concerns of the Cold War dominated international affairs for more than four decades. Yet Cold War politics have now been exposed as so much rhetoric. The Western powers spent billions on armaments to defend the 'free world'. Remember the nightmare scenario of the time? Millions of Warsaw Pact troops were to sweep through Western Europe until they paused for breath on the Atlantic seaboard. Now count the numbers of real casualties which resulted from this Nato v Warsaw Pact confrontation.

### Red menace?

Apologists claim that the balance of nuclear arms kept the peace during the Cold War. But how much of a threat was the Soviet Union anyway? Recent events have provided plenty of evidence to call into question the old superpower image of the Soviet Union. The Soviet bloc was an essentially defensive arrangement, clearly inferior to the power of the Western Alliance. The Soviet Union's implosion shows that it lacked any of the dynamics necessary to pose a real threat to the USA and its allies. The reality of a fragmenting system incapable of putting bread in the shops cannot be reconciled with the Western-fostered image of an evil empire bent on world domination.

The importance of the Cold War for the West was that it provided order and stability in international relations. It suspended the traditional conflicts through counterposing two artificial blocs. All of the old differences within the Western world were subordinated to the East-West ideological divide of the Cold War. And all of this was managed by using

the Cold War to legitimise the role of the United States as the top capitalist power and ultimate guarantor of global stability. So what will happen now that the *raison d'être* of the Cold War blocs has disappeared?

The artificiality of the Cold War blocs is abundantly evident when we consider the swift demise of the Warsaw Pact. Today it is obvious that this was a paper pact, with little internal coherence. There is no point in dwelling on the developing fragmentation in the East, the media is saturated with discussion of it. What seems to be far less a subject of debate is the disintegration of the other side of the Cold War divide—the Western Alliance.

The Cold War provided the Western powers with stability at the level of international relations. But it did more than that. It also provided a framework within which Western states could realise domestic stability. The very identity of nations and the coherence of their state institutions was ratified through the experience of living under and assimilating Cold War politics.

### West embarrassed

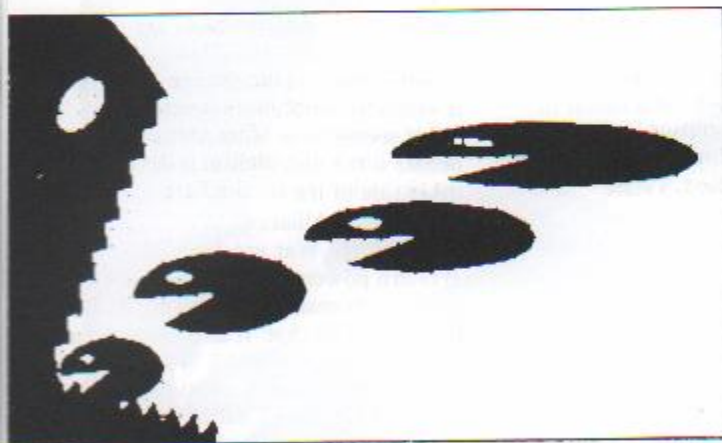
The unifying theme of anti-communism helped to marginalise the more embarrassing details of Western society. Now, without the Cold War, these details stand exposed and new embarrassments are also rising to the surface. All of a sudden one Western nation after another finds that the legitimacy of its state institutions is no longer above question. For example, a country as old and apparently stable as Belgium now seems to be coming apart as the conflict between its Flemish and French-speaking communities intensifies. Italy too faces new demands from regional separatists for its termination as a unitary nation state. Even the USA has found that its own national identity is a focus for controversy. Even the reputation of Christopher Columbus has not been spared in this conflict. And in these and every other Western nation, disillusionment with the traditional political parties is rife.

Today the problem of political legitimacy afflicts all Western societies to a greater or lesser extent. It does so in a variety of ways: from a fundamental questioning of borders and state institutions, to the obvious absence of a usable ideology that could compare with Cold War politics. Faced with a crisis of legitimacy and a lack of coherence in their societies, Western ruling elites are seeking to compensate for their domestic problems by politicising foreign affairs. The attempt by the British Tory government to ►

# world

transform the debate about Europe into an issue of national sovereignty provides the prototype of this trend.

At another time, the Tories and other Western governments could adopt a high-profile approach towards foreign affairs without too many difficulties. The problem for them today is that their intensification of nationalist



diplomacy coincides with some profound shifts in international relations. Just as the old domestic arrangements are undermined by the collapse of the Cold War framework, so too are international conventions called into question. In fact, it is in the international sphere that the new developments are being concentrated first.

The demise of the Soviet Union does not leave everything else intact. American international relations experts might still be discussing a 'unipolar' world system, in which the USA is the sole superpower, but that is really so much wishful thinking. At the time of the war with Iraq, US power appeared overwhelming in comparison to everybody else. Just a year later, it no longer seems so formidable. Of course, the USA looks omnipotent in relation to its Cold War adversary, the late Soviet Union. The image of a battered Mikhail Gorbachev alongside a beaming George Bush at the opening of the Middle East summit in Madrid last year was one which disproportionately flattered America. Set against the economic power of Japan and of Germany, the USA looks far more hesitant.

### America falters

The USA now faces an uncertain future. Its pretensions to global leadership are being badly undermined by economic failure. The divergence between America's enormous military capacity and its poor economic record is very significant. Washington's ability to dictate terms to other powers is now

seriously qualified by its economic problems at home.

Until very recently, the internal weakness of America did not necessarily have any direct consequences for its international profile. The modern economic giants of Japan and Germany had no significant diplomatic or military ambitions in the world. Germany, for example, was quite prepared to accept American leadership and military occupation during the crucial phase of unwinding the Soviet bloc. It even welcomed the stability offered by US management of global relations while German unification was being realised.

### Pax...?

From the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 to the conflict in the Gulf in 1991, America's allies accorded it full responsibility to oversee a smooth transition from the Cold War to the new world order. For many Americans this phase appeared to confirm that they were entering a new era of US power. It is only now evident that the new world order is unlikely to be based on a revitalised version of the post-1945 *Pax Americana*.

At present most of the major players on the international scene remain careful and hesitant about launching new initiatives. Diplomats are still too busy assimilating recent experiences and making their calculations about the likely evolution of world affairs. Nevertheless, it is not possible to stand still. Without the old Cold War framework to hold things together, the element of unpredictability forces the players to act. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and its satellites invites rival Western powers to scramble to secure their national interests in Eastern Europe. The demise of the Western Alliance in general, and of US hegemony in particular, ensures that there are no longer any clear rules and regulations to follow. Everything is about to be up for grabs.

### Taking a lead

The diplomatic tension within the West has been particularly palpable in relation to the war in Yugoslavia and the question of Croatian independence. This conflict has provided Germany with an opportunity to raise its diplomatic and, potentially, its military profile. For the first time since 1945, Germany has taken a significant diplomatic initiative in quickly recognising Croatia and compelling the EC to follow its lead. It did so despite opposition from the USA, and appeals for a delay from most of

the nations of Western Europe. By forcing the pace of the diplomatic recognition of Croatia, chancellor Helmut Kohl demonstrated that Germany is now a major and active player in international relations.

### Rules changed

Just a year ago, at the time of the Gulf War, Germany would not have dared to challenge America's diplomatic authority in such an upfront fashion. Nor would it have publicly confronted other European powers with its political might. At most Kohl would have used France as a conduit through which to launch an initiative. By threatening to recognise Croatia unilaterally, Germany has changed the old rules of the great power game at a stroke.

In itself, Croatia is of no tremendous historic significance. However, the manner in which Croatia has come to be recognised represents a significant precedent which Germany will no doubt use in the projection of its power. Through this gesture, Germany has indicated that it sees itself as the premier power in Europe. It has also warned the rest of the West of its intention to dominate the East of Europe, from the Balkans to the Urals.

### Free for all

Croatia can be seen as the symbol of the new 'independent' client states that are emerging out of the ruins of the old Stalinist blocs. It is not yet clear how far this process of national fragmentation will go. It is certain that most of these new statelets will be unviable in economic terms. Moreover, the very assertion of a particular national identity invites others to do the same. So Boris Yeltsin's declaration of Russian independence from the Soviet Union last year was quickly followed by militant demands for autonomy from regions within his Russian republic.

The main beneficiary of this process of fragmentation is, of course, Germany. The old balance between Russia and Germany is gone. And many of the new political units can only survive as satellites of a new German empire. Whatever happens, Germany will benefit as the powerful magnet of the East.

Croatia is a warning to the USA. Germany's success in flouting the authority of Washington will encourage the other new player, Japan, to take independent initiatives of its own. It indicates new limits on the projection of American power.

The different Western powers probably do not yet know how best to deal with the instability generated by the collapse of the Stalinist system. But regardless of what it

would like to do, the West cannot tolerate a power vacuum in the East. The response of Western governments has been to intervene in one form or another. This has had the predictable effect of initiating a scramble for influence, and so intensifying national rivalries among the major capitalist states.

### Take us, we're yours

The scramble for the East has something of the old colonial style about it. By operating at the level of the individual republics, the West ensured that the Soviet Union would collapse. The relationship between the West and the republics has assumed a caricatured version of nineteenth-century imperialism. The West revels in its moral authority and never ceases to remind East Europeans how grateful they should be for its advice. Western economists offer tips and then dictate policy. Western diplomats literally lay down the law and indicate what policies are likely to get their assent.

The economic and moral collapse of the entire Eastern region ensures that even the most outrageous

recognition as a diplomatic bargaining chip. The Western powers are demanding that East European nations adopt certain policies and laws before their recognition can be considered. The old Soviet republics are being told not only what they should do with their nuclear weapons, but how they must run their countries before recognition will be considered. As one report put it, 'The United States and the 12 European Community countries are trying to impose constraints and commitments as a condition of diplomatic recognition, a device that goes far beyond normal international practice' (*Guardian*, 18 December 1991). Western interference in the East today has less in common with 'normal international practice' between independent nations than with the master-slave relationship of colonialism.

In this sense, the intensity of foreign intervention in Eastern Europe even goes beyond that experienced by the third world since 1945. In general, the West restricted itself to imposing economic policy on third world countries through the

The analysis presented here makes it possible to repose the problems of international relations. The new world order is inherently unstable because it lacks clear rules and regulations and because there is no ultimate guarantor of peace. This instability is clearly visible in the post-Stalinist world. It is less visible but no less important in the West. Moreover, the fragmentation of the Western and Eastern blocs are mutually reinforcing. This relationship encourages the Western powers to adopt more overtly interventionist profiles abroad. A kind of new colonialism is developing in the scramble for the East.

### Losers and winners

It is unlikely that the new colonialist posture will remain in its present unsystematic and underdeveloped form for long. Nor is it likely that it will be restricted to the West's relationship with Eastern Europe. We are witnessing part of a more fundamental process of redividing the world among the great powers. The cause of this redivision is not the collapse of the Stalinist world. Rather, the collapse of Stalinism acts as a catalyst which brings to the surface already existing tensions among the major capitalist nations.

It is not a question of some malevolent drive to dominate the globe. German ascendancy in Europe is not based on a timetable or on a desire to seek revenge for past defeats. Indeed the predominant sentiment in international affairs is ignorance about what comes next. The logic of events, the process of redividing the world, is dictated by the breakdown of the old balance of power.

A new balance of power among the Western nations cannot be established merely through goodwill. Such an equilibrium presupposes losers as well as winners. It will involve adjustments which run very much counter to the interests of the USA in particular. At the very least, adjustments have to be made which reorganise global capitalism in line with the new realities of where economic power lies. This redivision of the world is complicated further by the fact that a very large slice of the globe—the old Stalinist bloc—is there, ready to be divided.

Are the new national units of Eastern Europe client states waiting for Western benefactors? Or are they a white Africa ripe for an imperialist carve-up? In a sense it does not really matter, because the effect will be the same. The scramble for the East is set to become a key focus for the evolution of the new world order. ●

# Germany's success in flouting the authority of Washington will encourage Japan to take independent initiatives of its own

demands of the West go unchallenged. Indeed, the prevailing mood in the East is one of imploring the Western powers to take control. Sometimes this assumes grotesque forms. For example, the British security services are training a new generation of East European spies, no doubt to act as appendages of MI6 and the CIA.

The degree of Western intervention in the affairs of Eastern states is unprecedented in European diplomacy in the modern era. Western nations are now using

medium of the International Monetary Fund. It very rarely made the nature of their political institutions an issue which called into question diplomatic recognition. There are no such inhibitions as far as Eastern Europe is concerned today. As an aside it should also be noted that the Western powers are now extending this approach to the third world, taking closer control of selected African, Asian and Latin American countries under the guise of insisting on the creation of multi-party democracies.

## How can the new Germany expand eastwards, while avoiding associations with the Nazi conquests of the past? Dominic Salter examines the process of 'colonialism in reverse'

**G**ermany is the Western nation best placed to intervene in the power vacuum of Eastern Europe and extend its influence there. But this prospect has aroused fresh controversy by raising the spectre of the last time Germany expanded eastwards, before and during the Second World War.

The government of chancellor Helmut Kohl is seeking to allay Eastern fears of German domination by presenting Germany's present-day expansion as a non-aggressive exercise in neighbourly cooperation. To that end, Kohl signed Friendship Treaties last year with two countries which Hitler invaded and occupied fifty years ago: the treaty with Poland signed in June 1991 was followed by one with Czechoslovakia in October.

### Vulnerable neighbours

Despite their tone of mutual respect and reconciliation, these treaties are not really about forming partnerships between free and equal nations. Poland and Czechoslovakia have each been devastated by the introduction of the market economy. Germany, by comparison, is an economic powerhouse, able to step in and exploit its vulnerable neighbours; even though its investments there are relatively limited, it already holds easily the biggest foreign stake in both countries.

But before it can extend its dominance over the East, Germany

needs to disassociate its present foreign policy from the taint of the Nazi past. Hence the Friendship Treaties explicitly reject territorial claims and condemn racism and other characteristics of fascism. Significantly, however, the treaties also note that Germany and the East European nations are all responsible for what happened in the past. This trend towards the rewriting of history is an important part of Germany's attempt to legitimise its eastward expansion today.

### Spreading the blame

The Polish and Czech governments have faced substantial opposition at home to their Friendship Treaties with Germany. Much of this has been a response to Germany's attempt to present the events of the thirties and forties as a disaster for which all sides are responsible. While Germany has constantly been reminded of its responsibility for Nazi atrocities, it now insists that East European nations should also apologise for their treatment of German minorities after the Second World War.

The issue is rooted in the post-World War decision by the Allies that extended Polish control over former German territory and returned the German Sudetenland to Czechoslovakia. Many German inhabitants were forced to move from these areas to East and West Germany. Estimates of German

deaths during the expulsions range from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands. But this was not the outcome of independent Polish or Czech aggression as Germany is attempting to present it. Rather, it was the Allied powers of Britain, the USA and the Soviet Union which agreed the expulsions at the postwar Potsdam conference.

### 'Duty to apologise'

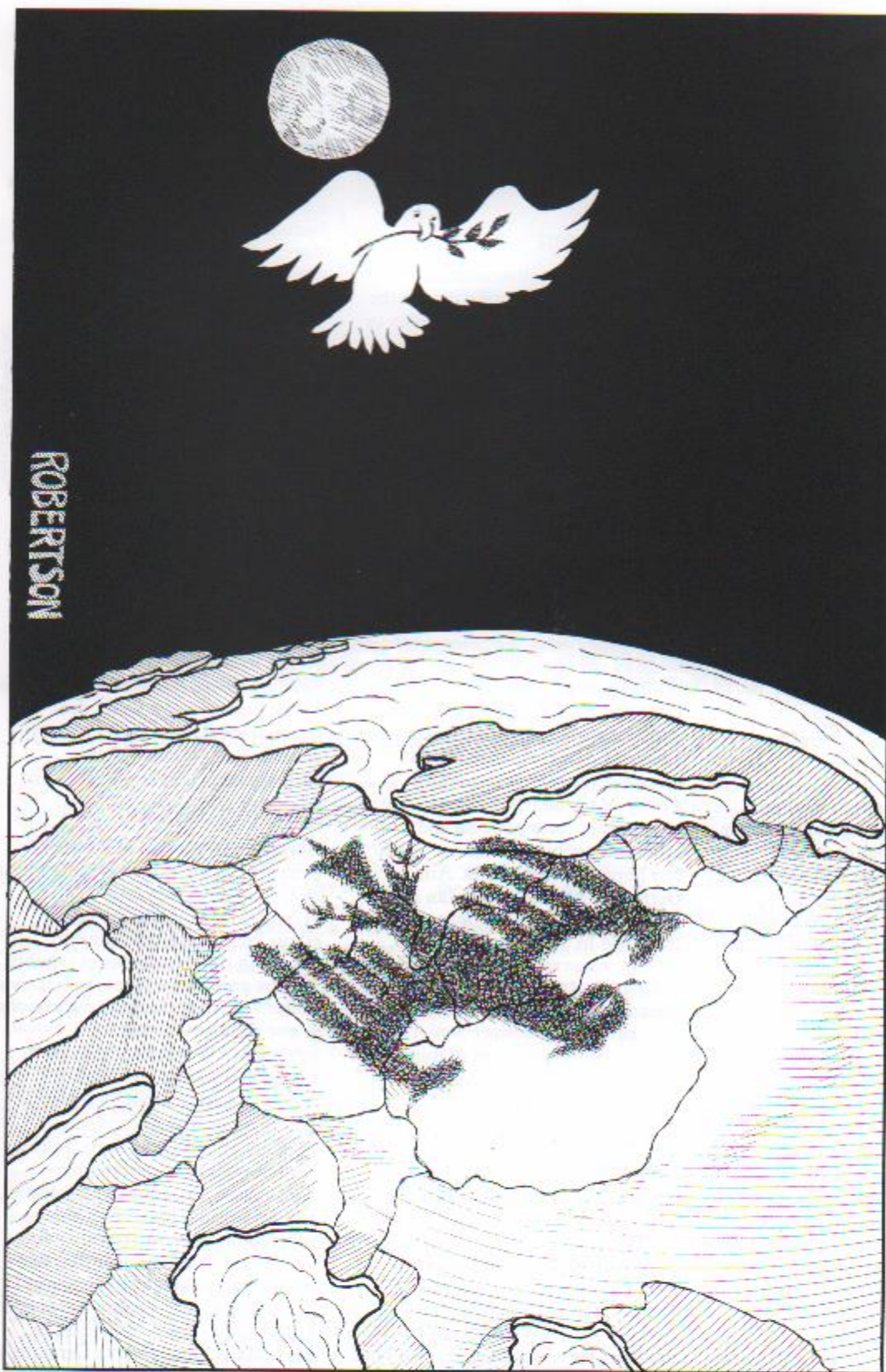
Despite this, Germany has pressed Poland and Czechoslovakia to apologise for these events in return for German recognition of and compensation for Nazi atrocities. The Czech government, acknowledging how much it needs the Friendship Treaty with Germany, confirmed its 'responsibilities'. President Vaclav Havel announced that 'we have a duty to apologise to the Germans who were expelled after the Second World War'. Foreign minister Jiri Dienstbier said Czechs had a 'moral duty to make a statement on what happened to innocent German women and children' (*Radio Liberty Report on Eastern Europe*, 15 November 1991).

Meanwhile, Germany is attempting to play down its responsibility for Nazi atrocities. The Polish parliament, the Sejm, adopted a special resolution alongside the Friendship Treaty, condemning the compensation offered by Germany as insufficient. Many of the parliament's members said that the DM500m promised by the German government was more like charity than real compensation. This debate about historical responsibilities was clearly linked to present Polish worries about the rise of Germany. Whatever their fears, however, economic necessity is drawing more East Europeans ever-closer to Germany.

### Road signs

The rights of German minorities in the East has become a key issue in the attempt to legitimise Germany's eastward expansion. Groups all over Eastern Europe are now being encouraged to discover their Germanic ethnicity, and to demand recognition from the countries in

# A friendly



which they live.

During negotiations over the Oder-Neisse border between Germany and Poland, in 1990, the final treaty was delayed by German demands that Poland should grant special rights to the German minority there. These included dual citizenship (ironically, a right denied by German law), the right of expelled Germans to resettle in Poland, and the provision of German language road signs in areas with large German minorities. Although such direct German interference in internal Polish affairs could not be formalised in the border treaty, the Polish government did sign separate letters of intent to pursue the issue.

The controversy resurfaced during negotiation of the Polish-German Friendship Treaty last year, when the German parliament passed a resolution repeating the demands for settlement rights and German road signs in Poland. In November, the then Polish premier, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and chancellor Kohl signed a joint declaration guaranteeing liberties and recognition for the German minority. Germany has simultaneously pressed Czechoslovakia over the rights of the German Sudeten minority there, demanding resettlement rights for expelled Germans and the return of confiscated Sudeten property.

### We're all Germans now

The issue of minority rights is an artificial one which Germany is manipulating to increase its influence in Eastern Europe. Far from denying rights to the German minority, the Polish government has actively encouraged them, since they are often the most prosperous and well-educated Poles. Putting more pressure on Poland over minority rights is just a way for Germany to legitimise its further interference in Polish affairs.

A couple of years ago there was no German minority issue. As recently as 1988, a Czech survey on ethnic minorities noted that the German minority was the only ethnic group in danger of complete assimilation and was likely to ►

# Fourth Reich?

disappear soon (see *Radio Liberty Report on Eastern Europe*, 15 November 1991). Likewise in Poland, 'the German minority, primarily in Upper Silesia, came with full force to the surface of public life two years ago, agitating huge circles of society' (T Lubiejewski, 'German minority in Poland', *Contemporary Poland*, Vol 24 No4, 1991). Only since the collapse of the Stalinist regimes opened the door to German capitalism have Poles and Czechs begun to discover their German blood.

## Instead of sending settlers, Germany can encourage ethnic groups to invite it in

Today, all over Eastern Europe, people are discovering their German lineage and demanding special cultural and political rights. It is not hard to see why. In Poland, the German minority is concentrated (and apparently growing) in Silesia, which was part of the German empire until 1945. This industrial region has been the worst hit by the introduction of capitalism to Poland, as huge monopoly enterprises close and unemployment soars. It is also the most polluted of Poland's official 'ecological disaster areas'. The contrast between life in Upper Silesia and the relative prosperity and welfare of neighbouring Germany makes it entirely unsurprising that more Poles now want to become Germans. A recent poll in Silesia found that 86 per cent of those declaring themselves German were motivated by economic considerations.

### Reversed colonialism

Germany has taken advantage of this situation and has carefully encouraged these minorities to pursue greater influence and autonomy. The new Chief Council of Associations of the German Population in Poland has been received in Bonn by chancellor Kohl and his foreign minister. They drew up a 16-point plan demanding special privileges for the minority in Poland.

The promotion of the rights of ethnic Germans is playing a key role

in the creation of a German sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. It is a process of 'colonialism in reverse': instead of sending settler communities to occupy foreign countries, Germany can encourage ethnic groups to invite its intervention.

### 0.3 per cent

This process of colonialism in reverse bears some similarities to the past pattern of German expansion in the East. In the 1930s, Hitler promoted the rights of Sudeten Germans in order to legitimise the ceding of Czech territory to Germany. Today, the minority issue is even more blatantly artificial: whereas in the thirties the German minority made up almost a quarter of Czechoslovakia's population, it now accounts for just 0.3 per cent. Yet the collapse of East European societies under the impact of the market has made many more people there willing to bury the past and encourage the German connection.

Despite these developments, Germany is still rather hesitant about openly carving out an empire in Eastern Europe. As Rob Knight notes elsewhere in this month's *Living Marxism*, the German government faces political and economic problems at home which can impede its expansion. And Germany's EC and American rivals are not about to give Kohl an entirely free hand in the East.

But whatever hesitancy Germany exhibits in central Europe today, it is already less restrained in its dealings with parts of the former Soviet Union. The likely shape of things to come is demonstrated by current developments there.

### To Russia with love

Until 1941, an autonomous German Volga Republic existed within Russia. In July 1991, a German interior ministry official announced the appointment of a joint German-Soviet commission to consider the quickest and most effective way of restoring the German republic. He noted that Germany had already put DM200m into the region, in 1990, to establish German newspapers, schools, TV stations and community centres.

Germany is also making overtures to Kaliningrad, a district of Russia bordering Poland and Lithuania. As a region of East Prussia, Kaliningrad formed part of the old German reich until the end of the Second World War. Now there are moves afoot to make it part of the new one.

There is soon to be a referendum on whether to restore the district's former German name of Königsberg.

The railway connecting Kaliningrad to Berlin has recently been reopened, and there are plans to construct a motorway linking Kaliningrad to Germany via Poland. Former German residents are flocking back as tourists. The city's most illustrious son, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, is popular once more; a local Kant foundation is setting about creating a German-educated elite.

Germany is encouraging the build-up of ethnic Germans in Kaliningrad. The head of Germany's Deutsche Bank, F Wilhelm Christians, has outlined a plan to move ethnic Germans to Kaliningrad from the former Soviet republics of Siberia and Kazakhstan. So far, 4500 have moved and more want to follow. This is not surprising given reports that Germany is paying the ethnic Germans to move. One construction company boss in Kaliningrad claims ethnic Germans are receiving 200 000 roubles (about \$6000) to move, with which they are building homes. He claims that this is all the outcome of a secret deal between the Russian and German governments (*Warsaw Voice*, 10 November 1991).

### Nothing 'natural'

German intervention in Russia is presented as an inoffensive attempt to ease Germany's domestic immigration problems by giving ethnic Germans an incentive to remain in the former Soviet republic. But the promotion of ethnic Germans in the Volga and Kaliningrad regions is also another example of colonialism in reverse, designed to extend Germany's grip over the region. It appears that Germany is setting up its first new colonies.

Russian president Boris Yeltsin has felt obliged to declare that Kaliningrad will remain 'an integral part of Russia'. But even if the geographical borders remain unchanged, it seems clear that the region is to be run from Germany. According to one English newspaper, Kaliningrad's chief administrator, Yury Matochkin, accepts Germany's new influence as 'a natural part of the region's evolution into a cosmopolitan economic zone within the common European home' (*Independent*, 25 September 1991). In reality, developments in Kaliningrad are part of the region's evolution into an exploited economic zone within the new German empire. However 'friendly' or 'natural' it might seem, this is simply another stage in the capitalist carve-up of the East. (Additional information from Andy Clarkson)



PHOTO: IN-Press/DaD

# Big Helmut meets 'little Germanism'

Rob Knight reports on uneasiness within the new Germany

Germany's early recognition of Croatia was calculated to send a clear signal to the rest of the world. The message from chancellor Helmut Kohl was that Germany no longer feels constrained to follow America's foreign policy lead, or to stay in step with the rest of the European Community. At almost the same time the Bundesbank raised interest rates, putting more pressure on the economies of France, Britain and Germany's other European partners. To add insult to injury, Kohl then proposed that the German language should play a more prominent role within the EC.

It seems that the German eagle has re-emerged from the ashes of its past and is once more throwing a shadow over Europe. It looks from the outside as if everything is going Germany's way. The final collapse of the Soviet Union has opened up Eastern Europe in a way that previous generations of German capitalists could only dream of. In addition, Germany's unchallenged economic supremacy in Europe means that it is uniquely placed to exploit the economies and peoples of its Eastern neighbours.

## The totalitarian myth

Weaker nations such as Britain and France have every reason to be envious of Germany. But it would be a mistake to imagine that German capitalism can look forward to a problem-free future. Two sets of problems face Kohl's government in 1992. Taken together they could impede the emergence of a new German superpower.

The political problems arise from the same development which has pushed Germany forward: the end of the Cold War. The Cold War and its attendant anti-communism played a key role in cohering the West German state after the Second World War. The deep divisions in German society left after the Nazi experience, and the humiliating effects of defeat in the war, were overcome by uniting West Germany against the 'red menace'. In a recent article, the German historian Eberhard Jackel noted that 'West Germany developed a view

of history which was marked by anti-communism and which made it possible for continuity and integration to be maintained despite the complete breakdown in society'. The liberal identity of modern Germany developed as a mirror image of the repression within the Soviet bloc.

Germany's Nazi past was never confronted. Instead the Nazi experience was blended into that of Stalinism, and both were put under the label of 'totalitarianism'. The German establishment was able to transfer attention away from its own responsibility for Nazism and argue instead that totalitarianism came in many forms. The idea was that Nazi-style repression was not the product of a particular social system, which let capitalism off the hook, nor was it unique to Germany, which likewise freed the German ruling class from responsibility.

## Limits to nationalism

The end of the Cold War has removed the powerful cohering element of anti-communism. In its place, German politicians are beginning to preach a more open German nationalism. In his new year address, Kohl said that 'the German people have a fatherland once again', and called on God to protect it. Appeals such as these are invoking a powerful new response among the German people. As even the liberal *Der Spiegel* put it, 'German people don't want revenge, but they do want compensation for the injustices they had to suffer'.

But at the same time there is still resistance to German nationalism in its new more open and aggressive form. Within days of the recognition of Croatia, articles began to appear in the German press warning of the dangers of Germany going it alone. Even the president Richard von Weizsäcker made it clear that he was unhappy with Kohl's more assertive foreign policy. Because of the association of expansionist nationalism with Nazism there is a strong tradition in German society of what might be called 'little Germanism'. It was very evident during the Gulf War when hundreds of thousands took to the streets to

oppose German involvement. The opposition Social Democrats extended this sentiment after the war by complaining that Germany was paying too much to finance the American war effort.

The lack of consensus in German society over foreign involvement was demonstrated when Kohl had to rule out the possibility of German troops being used as part of any peace-keeping force in Yugoslavia. There is also a lot of grumbling among ordinary Germans about the enormous resources being diverted into the old East Germany and points further east.

However, 'little Germanism' is nothing for opponents of imperialism to get excited about. It presents an obstacle to a more aggressive foreign policy, but not an insuperable one. It is based on the argument that it is not good for Germany to be involved overseas. This reflects the attitudes that dominated German society in its recuperative postwar years. As long as the argument remains around the theme of 'what is good for Germany', then the expansionist German authorities will retain the upper hand. They need only demonstrate, for example, that it is both just and necessary for Germany to intervene more actively in Croatia, and the resistance will crumble.

The second, connected problem for the German ruling class is over the economy. During the period when overt German nationalism was considered undesirable it was replaced by a kind of economic nationalism. Pride in the strength of the economy was widespread among West German people in a way that appears utterly alien to the British. This sentiment persists today and is constantly exploited by German politicians. It is being used, for example, to argue for greater German involvement in the East so that the German economic miracle can be shared by others.

## Feeling the pinch

However Germany, for all its economic strength, is not proving to be immune from the world recession. A host of indicators at the end of 1991 suggested that Germany would feel the pinch in 1992. The recession comes at a time when the German economy is already committed to massive investments in the old GDR. The response of the German government has been to begin an offensive against its own workforce. German workers have been told to moderate wage demands, and the government is heading for a showdown over pay with state employees. The German social security system is also threatened with cuts, and government ministers have been making Thatcher-style attacks on the 'dependency culture'.

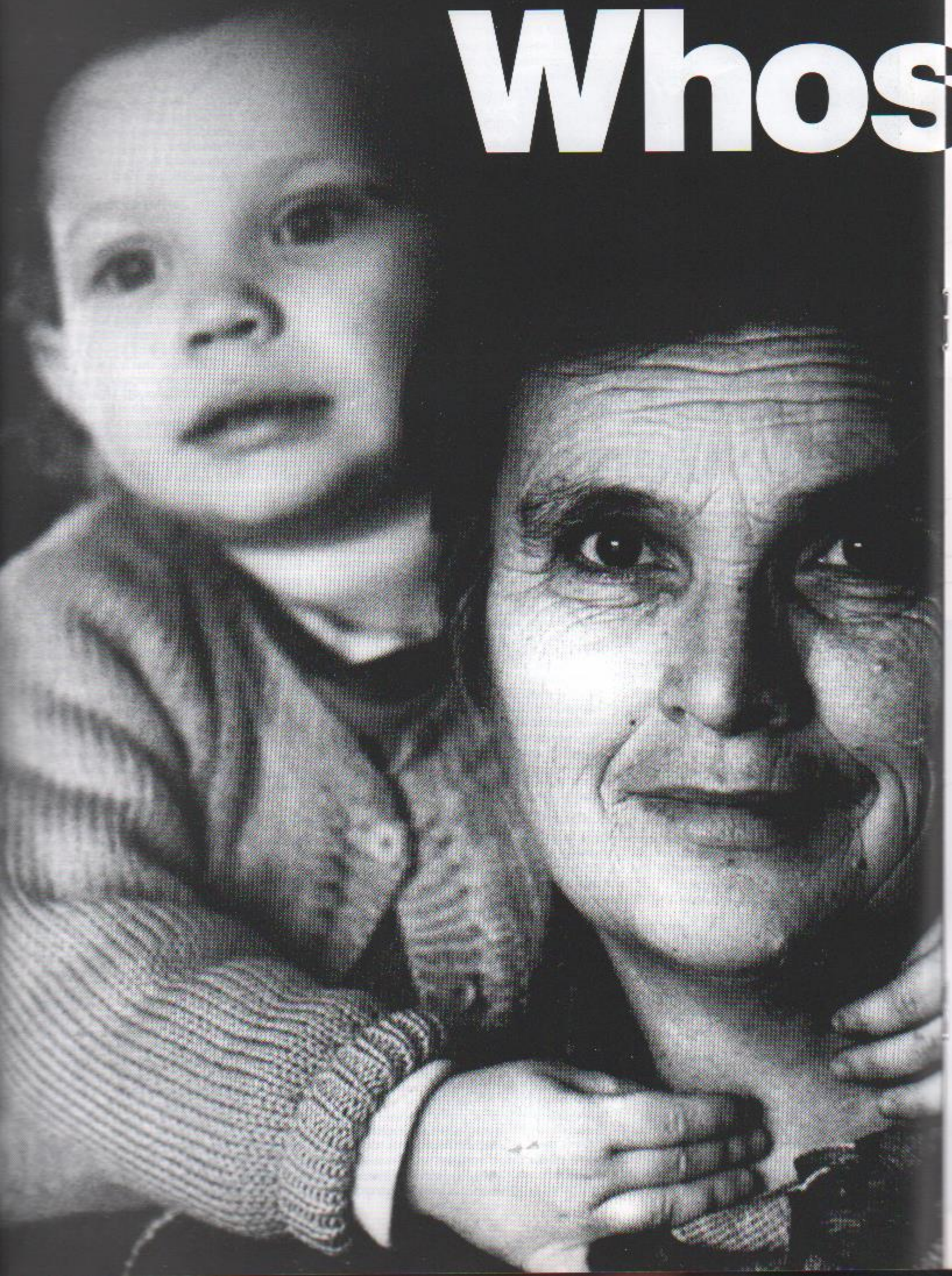
Economic pressures not only limit the ability of German capitalism to invest in the East. They also threaten to create political difficulties at home. The German establishment will find it harder to maintain pride in the German economy while it is attacking the living standards of German people.

The German government faces a potential crisis of legitimacy arising from the end of the Cold War and the onset of recession. There is a tremendous uneasiness within German society as the old certainties evaporate and a new, more uncertain future looms ahead.

The problem is that there is no opposition capable of turning this feeling of uncertainty into anything more. The insecurities remain submerged and unarticulated. The absence of opposition means that there is still no general recognition of the new role Germany is playing in the world. Most of those who oppose the government are still trying to tell themselves that not much has really changed, and seeking some sort of return to the passive prosperity of the postwar era in Germany.

As long as 'little Germanism' remains the prevailing mood among the critics of the new German imperialism, then the ruling class is likely to be able to negotiate its new problems.

# Whos





# Is the war in Croatia any way?

The European Community and the United Nations pose as peacemakers in Yugoslavia. But it was Western interference which exploded a local conflict there into a barbarous civil war. Joan Phillips reports from Zagreb in Croatia and Belgrade in Serbia. Photographs by Michael Kramer

It was four in the morning in the Sokol Klub, Zagreb's most expensive and exclusive nightclub, and the moneyed Croatian clientele were drinking, joking and dancing as if there was no tomorrow. For a moment you could forget that there was a war on; until you caught sight of a soldier in battle dress fondling the gun in his holster.

Zagreb is full of unsettling juxtapositions: black and white obituary notices for the war dead sharing walls with 'United Colours of Benetton' adverts; scruffy soldiers sitting in chic cafes; well-dressed mothers with khaki-clad kids in tow; rosary beads draped round a kalashnikov; patriotic music competing with Salt 'n' Pepa on the TV and radio; a Roman Catholic priest called Don Ljubo who wears army fatigues and rides a motorbike; the ludicrous mountains of sandbags piled outside the plush Hotel Intercontinental (they didn't have this many even in Baghdad).

The regulars at the Sokol Klub can keep up the pretence that the war is happening somewhere else, but for most of the city's inhabitants there is no escape. For six months, people

have been glued to their TV for news of the latest ceasefire violation and running up big bills phoning for news of their families after every bombardment. The wail of the air raid siren and the ritual of the blackout dominated the weeks leading up to New Year. Shops, offices and factories closed, people took to the shelters and the city plunged into blackness.

They say that you can get used to anything. In Zagreb, nobody bats an eyelid at the sound of gunfire. Almost everybody has a gun. Some people have grenades. Some even have anti-aircraft artillery. In the working class district of Spansko, locals raided the nearby barracks, abandoned in haste by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), and looted everything.

Every week somebody is killed in the street by a stray bullet or splattered against a kitchen wall by something worse. At night after a few drinks, soldiers and civilians get their guns out and go on a shooting spree. Clubbing has become a risky business. There are clubs in Britain where you can bump into drunken squaddies looking for a fight, but

they don't usually have their machine-guns with them.

Without the soldiers and sandbags, Zagreb could be any central European city: prosperous, fashionable, Westernised. Civil wars are supposed to happen in faraway places like Mogadishu and Lebanon. Not any more. But even more disconcerting than being in a war zone in the heart of Europe is being in the middle of a war which nobody can make sense of. Rarely has there been a war about which so little is understood, inside or outside the country.

The incomprehension is not helped by the propaganda war being waged by both sides. Coverage of the war focuses on the carnage. It says, look at this atrocity or that massacre—isn't it horrible? But who needs telling that this war is horrible? You only have to go to any frontline hospital to find soldiers with their legs blown off, casualties of a war which has left more than 10 000 dead, thousands maimed and half a million homeless.

## Media myths

By focusing constantly on the savagery of the war, the media removes the conflict from its wider context and obscures its underlying cause. Instead of analysis we are fed images of wanton violence and gruesome deaths. The effect is to encourage the idea that this is a tribal conflict fuelled by bloodlust. Ian Traynor's comment that 'On both sides there is a relish for the fight that has been welling up for generations' is typical of the prejudice that passes for informed commentary in the Western press (*Guardian*, 31 December 1991).

The idea that Serbs and Croats are a race apart, two peoples riven by

Victims of a war they did not want: Serbian refugees from Croatia in a former Pioneer camp in Belgrade

deep historical enmities and destined always to be at each other's throats is a popular one. Today it may appear that there is some truth in this assessment. The war has left deep divisions between the two communities and a legacy of bitterness that will not easily be overcome.

Yet to suggest that relations between Serbs and Croats were always like this is to rewrite history. It is all very well to say that this is a continuation of an ancient blood feud. But that does not explain why Serbs and Croats went to school together, were friends, married each other and lived together peacefully for the best part of half a century after the creation of Yugoslavia.

### Nation-building

Ethnic differences did not cause this war, but have been promoted retrospectively by nationalist politicians to justify their claims to nationhood. In particular, Croatian politicians have sought to construct a new national identity and legitimise their demand for sovereignty by projecting the existence of a separate culture back into the past.

The most transparently artificial

example of this is the invention of language. In order to bolster its claim that Serbo-Croatian is really two separate languages, the Croatian regime is making up a new vocabulary. The most enthusiastic exponent of this farce is president Franjo Tudjman, whose indigestible speeches have been made even worse by his gobbledygook newspeak. The Serbo-Croatian word for aeroplane (*avion*) has been replaced by *zrakoplov*. This translates as 'the thing which is suspended in the air'. The new word for bicycle translates as 'a vehicle which is motored by the feet'. In Belgrade, Serbs mock the Croats by inventing their own words. A belt is now *okolo trupuzhniy pantalon druzhat*, 'a circular thing supporting trousers'. A TV is a *quartskastiyy odashinach vesti*, 'a quadrangular conveyor of news'.

The invention of a Croatian national identity inevitably means the denigration of all things Serbian. Tudjman's government is removing Serbian street names. In Sibenik, the authorities are talking about changing the name of Nikola Tesla Street. Tesla was a famous scientist; but he was also a Serb and that is now justification enough for

banishing his name from history.

Once you start removing Serbian names, it is but a short step to removing Serbs. Since the start of the war, Western commentary has focused on the crimes of the Serbs against the Croats. Little mention has been made of Croat crimes against the Serbs. These started well before the onset of war, in the climate of intolerance and bigotry created by the new Croatian regime.

### The heat is on

After Tudjman won the elections, in March 1990, the heat was turned up on Serbs in Croatia. In Karlovac, a frontline town 40 minutes from Zagreb, where Serbs made up 24 per cent of the population before the war, many lost their jobs. Since the war, more than half of them have left town after their bars were bombed and their families threatened. And local rumour has it that the Serbian Orthodox church was destroyed not by federal army planes (as the official story goes) but by a bomb planted by local Croats.

Elsewhere, in the Dalmatian towns of Dubrovnik, Sibenik and Zadar for example, Serbs were told by their employers that they would

# Hawks and psychos

**T**he ginger-haired psychopath introduced himself as Branko. I thought that was strange because he had a West Coast American accent. Branko turned out to be Brian, a third generation Croat from California. He was six foot, 16-stone and scary, and wanted to show me his tattoos.

Brian told me proudly that his grandparents were from Hercegovina and had fought with the pro-Nazi Ustashe regime during the Second World War. They escaped to Argentina after the war (with Ustashe leader Ante Pavelic), and clearly had a great influence on young Brian. After moving to California, he bought a Harley Davidson and joined the local chapter of the Croatian Angels; now he was carrying on the family tradition of killing Serbs.

### Girls, girls, girls

When the war started Brian signed up to fight for HOS, the military wing of the far-right nationalist Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), in whose heavily guarded headquarters we met. He boasted of how many 'Chetniks' he had killed, and how he loved it at the front: you know, the guns, the killing, the camaraderie, the drugs. The only thing missing was girls, and that's why he was in Zagreb. He gave me his number in case I fancied a drink.

I was saved by the arrival of the hero of Vukovar, Mile Dedakovic-Jastreb (Jastreb means Hawk), who had commanded the

Croatian forces in that city until it fell. The Hawk blamed the government of Franjo Tudjman for the loss of Vukovar and other Croatian territory. He was mining a rich seam. In Zagreb they say 'The public transport system in Zagreb will soon cover the whole of Croatia'—an ironical reference to the shrinking homeland.

### Iron Lady

Dedakovic doesn't hide his political sympathies, hardly surprising since he was arrested along with HSP leader Dubrovslav Paraga and other HOS chiefs after the fall of Vukovar, for allegedly planning a putsch. 'I don't believe that the war is being waged properly by those in power in Croatia today. I do believe that if the HSP was in power things would be different.'

Dedakovic was scathing about the lack of bottle demonstrated by Western leaders, with one exception: 'Margaret Thatcher I hold in high esteem. She truly is an Iron Lady. She is one of the few Western politicians who is aware of the position of Croatia.'

In contrast to the Hawk's blunt politicking, HSP leader Dobroslav Paraga chooses his words carefully, sensitive to the accusations of extremism made against his party in the Western press. He sidestepped questions about his party's identification with the Hitlerite regime, except to say that the Ustashe had stood up for Croatia: 'In the Second World War we didn't lose our villages. The Ustashe regime had control over

lose their jobs if they did not sign an oath of loyalty to Croatia. In Zadar, many Serbs refused to sign and were sacked. In May, there occurred what became known as Zadar's *Kristallnacht* (night of the shattering glass), when mobs of Croats smashed up hundreds of Serbian shops and houses. Since the summer, more than 1000 Serbs have been burned out of their shops and homes there.

The Tudjman government has increased Serbian fears that their rights will not last long in an independent Croatian state. Last summer the regime introduced special taxes for Serbs owning

summer houses on the Adriatic coast. Many could not afford to pay and had to sell up, spreading suspicion that the government was bent on driving out Serbs. This Christmas, the Zagreb regime cut back the Orthodox church holidays from three days to one, while Croatian Catholic priests preached hatred against the Serbs.

The Croatian government may not have set up death camps for Serbs, like the fascist Ustashe regime did at Jasenovac during the Second World War. But the bigotry and pogroms they have faced over the past two years have convinced many

Serbs in Croatia that the past is about to repeat itself.

Even now, however, there is no relish for a fight. Contrary to media myth there is no gang-bro enthusiasm for this war among the populations of Serbia or Croatia, except for a minority of extreme nationalists on either side. 'They say we hate one another', said Sanja, a refugee from Dubrovnik living in Belgrade. 'But there are so many people on both sides who don't think like that.'

The war in Yugoslavia has less to do with conflicting national identities than with the conflicting international interests of regional politicians and global powers. The escalation of a local dispute into an international conflict cannot be understood by looking at internal developments alone, but only by examining the impact of external forces on domestic politics.

The first decisive factor in hastening the disintegration of Yugoslavia along regional and ultimately ethnic lines was the impact of the world market. The opening up of Yugoslavia to the world economy over recent decades had the effect of entrenching already existing inequalities between the republics. ▶



HOS bodyguard in the militia's headquarters in central Zagreb (not Brian)

Croatian territories. But today the Tudjman regime has no power. We've lost more territory than at any time in our history.'

Some of his supporters are less circumspect about revealing their allegiances. Ustashe emblems are everywhere in the HOS headquarters. A photograph of Ante Pavelic hangs on a wall outside Paraga's office. HOS fighters returning from the front have rosary beads on their epaulettes and swastikas on their belts. They boast about being in the Black Legion and other fascist bands.

### Unsated desire

Fascists from all over Europe are flocking to join HOS. On Paraga's desk there was a pile of letters from Britain. BJ from the Isle of Sheppey offered to 'supply a team of ex-military personnel'. Paul from Bullford was 'looking for interesting stuff. Dangerous work doesn't put me off'. Paul from Romford, an ex-Royal Marine commando, said he and his two friends had 'an unsated desire for job satisfaction'.

Many Croatians do not like the politics espoused by HOS. But HOS is no pariah organisation: people say it has the best fighters at the front, and that their success is due to uncompromising politics. At nine per cent, support for the politics of the far right is still marginal. But the fact that nobody is challenging nationalism in Croatia bodes ill for the future. ●

What began as an economic war over access to scarce resources ended in a political dogfight over the spoils of the Yugoslav federation.

Throughout the postwar years there was always competition among the Stalinists who ran the republics about access to economic resources. The richer republics of Slovenia and Croatia resented subsidising the poorer regions, accusing other republics of being good for nothing except stealing their hard-earned cash.

Yugoslavia's increasing exposure to the capitalist world market intensified these conflicts in the eighties, by accentuating the uneven economic development of the regions. Foreign investment was concentrated in the more prosperous republics which already had strong ties with the West. As the economic position of these republics improved, so too did their determination to

The Western powers initially adopted a united front of trying to hold the Yugoslav federation together, in order to isolate themselves from the fallout. But they soon went their separate ways, cynically manipulating the Yugoslav conflict to advance their own interests.

Germany seized the opportunity to throw its weight around in Europe and assert its political leadership by backing Croatia. For the first time in the postwar period, Bonn acted unilaterally in the foreign policy sphere. At every stage, Germany has raised the stakes and forced the other European states to fall into line behind its proposals to recognise Croatian independence.

By taking such a strong stand in support of Croatia, Bonn not only encouraged the disintegration of Yugoslavia, it also signalled that it was calling the shots in what it now regards as its backyard, Eastern

uniforms are a replica of the German tunic. The new car number plates bear an uncanny resemblance to the Austrian model. The new Croatian dinar is tied to the German deutschmark. And the German foreign minister, Hans Dietrich Genscher, has become something of a national hero. 'I believe in the pope and Genscher', declared one woman in Zagreb. A bar in Split owned by a former communist had been renamed Genscher Bar.

### German colony

Most people have few illusions about what is going on. 'I think that Croatia is going to be some kind of German colony', said Goran, who works for the Croatian Red Cross. 'But we'd rather be a colony of Germany than a colony of Serbia.' Branka thought that 'Germany sees a great opportunity for creating a new colony in Croatia'. Milan observed that 'It's normal for Germany, being an economic power, to want to play a bigger political role. And of course it has a geographic interest too. I'm not afraid of German influence, it can only bring us economic rewards'.

The Serbian regime, on the other hand, is looking to the Americans to obstruct the Germans. The US special envoy has been courted in Belgrade, where UN intervention is seen as a possible counter to German influence in the EC. The Serbian deputy foreign minister, Dobrosav Veizovic, is also keen to increase European uneasiness about German expansion. 'We are facing a time when a new German state with new powers would like to exercise them', he told me, 'Today, with Croatia and Slovenia. Tomorrow maybe with some European countries'. The Serbian government is trying hard to revive fears of the wartime alliance between the Nazi and Ustashe regimes, broadcasting endless documentaries about the genocide they carried out against the Serbs, Jews and Gypsies.

### Balkan blood-letting

The more you look at the unfolding of the conflict in Yugoslavia, the clearer it becomes that the Serbs and Croats are once again the victims of great power rivalries. The intervention of the Western powers, all acting according to their own global interests rather than out of any concern for the victims of the war, has served to polarise the situation and entrench the divisions between the republics. The emergence of imperialist rivalries and client statelets once again is an ominous sign of future blood-letting in the Balkans.

On the home front: a soldier from the Croatian National Guard has a smoke in a Zagreb cafe



establish greater control over their own resources.

It took only the collapse of the old Stalinist regimes in the republics, and the transformation into nationalist politicians of former party bosses desperate to secure their futures, to accelerate the process of disintegration inside Yugoslavia. The declarations of sovereignty issued by the new governments in Slovenia and Croatia last year expressed the squalid ambition of local politicians for control over economic resources rather than any genuine aspiration for national democratic rights.

The second decisive factor leading to the disintegration of Yugoslavia has been the role of the Western powers. Not only are they responsible for sponsoring the extension of market forces in Yugoslavia, but their self-interested intervention in the ensuing chaos has made things far worse.

Europe. The response of the old powers of America and Britain has been to try to slow down the process of change—not, as they will claim, to limit the conflict, but in an attempt to stymie Germany. They are fighting a losing battle.

German influence in Croatia is extensive. Not only has Bonn committed millions of deutschmarks to the Croatian government but food and medical aid is pouring in from all over Germany. At the headquarters of the militant right-wing Croatian Party of Rights, two young Germans from Hamburg had brought helmets and bandages for the party's military wing, HOS. Without embarrassment they explained why they were supporting HOS: 'We are German nationalists. In the Second World War, Croatia fought on our side. Now we are repaying our debts.'

The Croatian government is reciprocating. The new police

# Is Israel out?

The disintegration of Eastern Europe has led the USA to lose interest in the Middle East, argues Daniel Nassim

PHOTO: Simon Norfolk



The Middle East has been a major issue in superpower politics since the Second World War. As recently as October, George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev came together in a blaze of publicity to host the first ever direct and public negotiations between Israel and a Palestinian delegation. By the time the third round of those same talks began in January, however, everything had changed. Gorbachev had disappeared from the world stage. Bush was off being ill in the Far East, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had slipped a long way down the international agenda.

A year ago, as the Gulf War reached its climax, all eyes were on the Middle East. In the months that followed the conflict, US secretary of state James Baker shuttled endlessly back and forth, setting up the Arab-Israeli talks. Yet today the USA seems to have lost interest. The dramatic shift in America's priorities away from the Middle East cannot be attributed to simple boredom or frustration. It reflects the changes in world politics which have been catalysed by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The priority which the USA gave to the Middle East in general, and to Israel in particular, was largely a product of the Cold War. The region was a key area of East-West tension, and Washington sponsored Israel as its main bulwark against Soviet-backed Arab nationalism. The collapse of the Soviet Union has ended that superpower

rivalry, and created a new area of international instability in Eastern Europe. As a consequence the Middle East now seems a less pressing concern for US foreign policy; and within the Middle East, Israel appears a far less important US ally.

After the Second World War, the USSR played a key role in cohering opposition to the USA and the West in the Middle East. Radical regimes and nationalist movements recognised the possibility of gaining some support from Moscow. The very existence of the Soviet Union provided an alternative model to the Western system. Of course, the Stalinists who ran the Soviet Union sought to manipulate the Arab peoples for their own ends. Nevertheless, their intervention in the Middle East did give added impetus to anti-Western Arab nationalism. In the fifties and sixties, Egypt and other Arab states formed close alliances with the Soviets.

It was in this context that Israel became important for the USA. In contrast to the Arab countries, Israel could be relied upon as a pro-Western stalwart. As a colonial settler state built on the back of the Palestinian nation it would always play a conservative role for Washington.

Israel's victory over its Arab neighbours in the 1967 Six Day War confirmed its status as the USA's most reliable ally—a role it continued to perform through the seventies and eighties. In 1976 Israel became the largest annual recipient of US foreign assistance. In 1981 all US economic aid

became grants rather than loans—saving Israel the need to repay the money. In 1985 all military aid was transformed into grants. Since 1967, total US aid to Israel—adjusted for inflation—has totalled at least \$77 billion; that is \$16 500 for every Israeli citizen.

The end of the Cold War has transformed both the role of Israel and the broader relationship of the West to the Middle East. By 1989 Israel was already becoming more of a liability than an asset to the USA, as Soviet decline opened new opportunities for the West to reforge its relationship with the Arab regimes.

After the Gulf War, in March 1991, *Living Marxism* noted that 'for the first time since 1948 there is a possibility of the USA trying to control events in the Middle East without using Israel as a central pillar of its policy'. At the time this caused considerable controversy. The USA and Israel still seemed inseparable to many. But in the past year relations between the two have deteriorated badly.

## Upping the pressure

The main area of friction is over Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights. The Israeli government, responding to pressure from tens of thousands of settlers and their supporters, has defied Washington by continuing to fund these settlements in the occupied territories. Israel's 1992 budget includes a sizeable provision for expanding the settlements.

America is no supporter of Palestinian liberation. But the settlements controversy has threatened to upset the USA's post-Gulf bid to tighten its grip on the Middle East through a new alliance with the Arab regimes. America has responded by stepping up the economic and diplomatic pressure on Israel. President Bush has publicly linked a \$10 billion loan guarantee, which Israel desperately needs to support a new wave of Soviet Jewish immigrants, to a freeze on new settlements. The USA has also leaked official reports which cast doubt on Israel's ability to service its foreign debt, as a way of increasing the pressure on Israel to toe Washington's line.

The USA has used other means to lean on Israel. For example, Seymour Hersh's recently published *The Samson Option*, undoubtedly written with CIA backing, contains many allegations that could be damaging to Israel. In Britain, allegations that Robert Maxwell worked for Israeli intelligence received most attention. But the claim that Israel's prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir, passed on US intelligence documents to Moscow is likely to prove more damaging. Such revelations would never have been allowed by the US authorities during the heyday of their alliance with Israel.

## Political backwater

Israel's importance to the USA within the Middle East has been waning for a couple of years, as the Cold War came to an end. More recently, however, the American administration has downgraded the importance of Middle Eastern affairs altogether, as the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe brings fresh problems to the surface of international affairs. What was a crucial area of Western interest is now likely to become more of a political backwater.

The new focus of US foreign policy was clear by the time of the second round of Middle East talks in Washington in December. James Baker had spent months setting up these negotiations. Yet within a few days he had left the Arabs and Israelis to argue in a state department corridor, and jetted off to see Boris Yeltsin in Russia.

The shifting emphasis in US foreign policy confirms that the geopolitical considerations of American capitalism, rather than the Jewish lobby or any other incidental factor, will dictate what Washington does in the world. ●

# Carpet-bagging capitalism

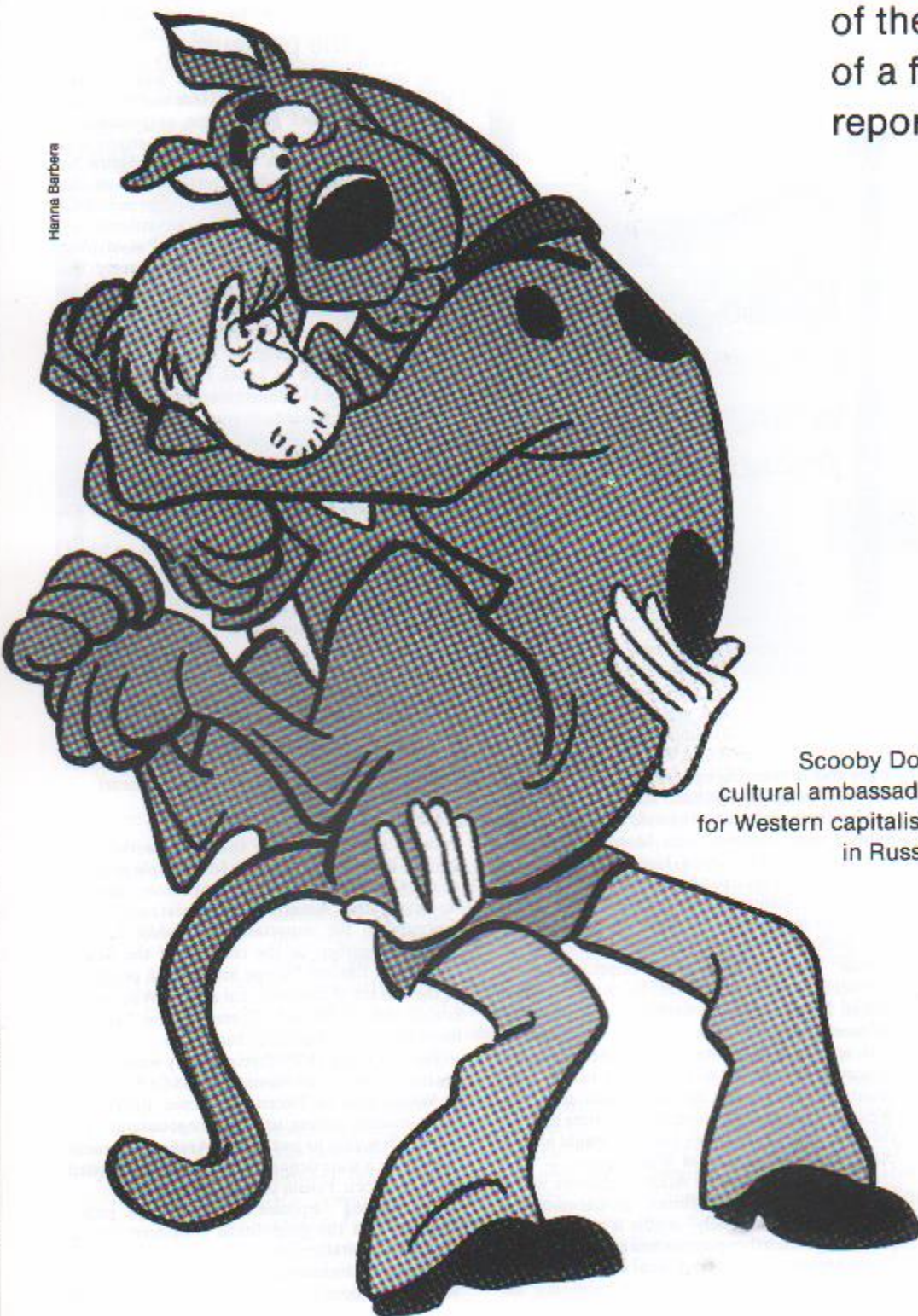
Entrepreneurs are travelling East to introduce the peoples of the region to the benefits of a free market economy, reports Kirsten Cale

In Hungary today, one of the best-selling magazines is a glossy monthly called *Private Profit*, full of stories of local entrepreneurs and whizz-kids. A recent edition featured the success stories of a man who started a mushroom-export company in an abandoned Soviet missile silo, and another who made key-chains and other gee-gaws for the Pope's visit. Pathetic? No more so than most Western enterprise in the region.

The fortnightly newsheet *Business Eastern Europe* lists the activities of Western entrepreneurs under the title 'What's New in Your Industry'. The list barely covers two pages and is liberally padded out with 'X is in talks with Y' stories. There's the occasional big deal (almost invariably with the Germans) but, on the whole, it shows how paltry is the West's contribution to market development in the region. We learn that 'OMV (Austria) has opened a gas station...at Rábafüzes [Hungary]'; 'BauMax (Austria) has opened a do-it-yourself shop in a department store in Prague', and that 'Reno Schuhe (Germany) has recently opened a shoe shop in Budapest' (*BEE*: 18 February; 14 October; 28 October 1991). Hardly the big-time enterprises promised to the people of the East after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Western entrepreneurs and carpet-baggers are trying to rip off the most lucrative East European assets, while investing little or nothing. There is the odd Pierre Cardin boutique and luxury car showroom for the benefit of the new capitalist elite in the East. But most long-suffering citizens of Eastern

Hanna Barbora



Scooby Doo:  
cultural ambassador  
for Western capitalism  
in Russia

Europe are experiencing the worst that Western capitalism has to offer.

In the food and drink department, Distillers have set up an East European subsidiary to market Smirnoff Vodka, Bailey's Irish Cream and Malibu. Whatever will the vodka-loving Poles make of Smirnoff, much less Malibu? The burger war has also travelled east: Burger King has opened a prime site restaurant in Budapest, much to the vexation of arch-rival McDonalds. Not to be outdone, McDonalds is negotiating for an outlet with the Executive Committee of Naberezhnyye Chelny in the distant Tartar Republic.

### A fast zloty

Western 'cultural' exports are, it's claimed, very popular in the East. *Reader's Digest* is trying to break into Eastern markets: no doubt the suburban homilies, tales of personal tragedy and reactionary political tracts will win a few converts among dentists in Szabolcs-Szatmár. Meanwhile, a deal between Russian officials and Worldvision Enterprises has resulted in non-stop primetime showings of *Scooby Doo*. 'We hope', said a Worldvision spokesman, 'that in some small way this arrangement will help to bring our cultures a little closer together' (*Eastern Europe Newsletter*, 27 May 1991).

Consultancy is the West's biggest 'business' in Eastern Europe today. Prague, Warsaw and Budapest are glutted with market researchers, advisers and consultants, all out to make a fast zloty from state firms going private. An executive from a British consultancy firm recalled flying back from Eastern Europe in an aircraft stuffed full of advisers. He looked for a real investor in vain: 'The entire aeroplane was full of consultants. I sometimes wonder if a census in Budapest would reveal more foreign advisers than locals.' (*East European Markets*, 31 May 1991)

### British parasites

The Czech finance minister has sharply criticised the Western advisers: 'We don't need these consultants. They are trying to import their ideas of privatisation and help push up the price. It's a disaster.' (*EEM*, 17 May 1991) The biggest culprits? British companies, such as Price Waterhouse and Coopers Lybrand Deloitte.

British businessmen are big in consultancy because they do not have the hard cash to invest themselves. If even powerful German capitalists cannot regenerate the Eastern economies, the Del Boys of British

enterprise have no chance. Last year, a Mr Potter from the Department of Trade and Industry urged British businessmen to think carefully before investing in backward Romania. He warned that when meeting with Romanians, entrepreneurs must not be 'swayed by their rhetoric, their Latin charm, or any charitable intentions' (*EEM*, 22 February 1991). Mr Potter need not have worried. The smoothest Romanian operator would have more chance of getting blood from a statue of Ceausescu than getting a decent investment out of a British capitalist. Instead, British entrepreneurs in the region concentrate on the most parasitic of economic activities, such as price-fixing, loan-sharking, and giving advice about what to do with other people's money.

British investment consultants Robert Fleming are setting up a joint-venture investment fund with the state-owned Czech Investicni Bank, which has had some success cornering the market in vouchers that can be transformed into shares in the soon-to-be privatised state industries.

*Private Eye* claims that rival investment funds have found that their licence applications keep getting 'lost' in the ministry of privatisation, and notes the coincidence that the official in charge of voucher privatisation and the official who approves applications to set up investment funds are both on the board of the Robert Fleming joint venture (3 January 1992).

### A word of advice

Last year, the Hungarian finance minister, Mihaly Kupa, had talks on privatisation with the former Tory trade secretary, Lord Young. For experienced counsel on asset-stripping, sweeteners, tax-breaks and privatisation deals, the Hungarian minister could not have gone to a better man.

Lord Young was the driving force behind the sale of the state-owned Royal Ordnance to British Aerospace at the knockdown price of £190m in 1987. The following year, he sold Rover to BAe for £150m. The subsequent scandal revealed that Young had tried to slip BAe an extra £400m by agreeing delayed payment, government financing and tax-breaks. After also initiating the privatisation of Cable and Wireless, he then joined the C&W board for an annual salary of £400 000.

Young's approach to privatising state industries has been enthusiastically endorsed by the Stalinists-turned-capitalists in the East. And if the cost of the mass unemployment caused by

privatisation is too high, they can always adopt Lord Young's other pioneering ideas about driving the jobless on to welfare schemes. Consultants from the British Department of Social Security have already visited several East European capitals to advise on setting up dilapidated offices.

### Dixon of Gdansk

Perhaps Britain's most valuable expertise lies in the art of social control. The British home office, the people who brought us the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four and the Tottenham Three, has sent a special team of experts to Romania to discuss 'community policing' and 'independent police work' with government officials (that is, former Securitate men). No doubt the issue of rebellious miners will be high on the agenda. British police officers have also been sent to advise the Polish and Czech forces on 'British policing methods'. The endemic corruption of the East European police, who are frequently accused of handling stolen goods, accepting bribes, falsifying evidence and framing the innocent, suggests that they would learn little even from the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad.

### European, anyone?

Robert Maxwell was the British businessman with the most extensive links to the former Soviet bloc. He is now condemned by the British press as a fraud and a cheat. Yet his business dealings in the East were entirely typical of what passes for Western enterprise in the region today.

In the eighties, Maxwell grovelled shamelessly to Stalinist dictators, publishing the now notorious *World Leaders* hagiographies of Gustav Husak, Todor Zhivkov and Nicolae Ceausescu. Today, Western politicians are equally prepared to embrace the ex-bureaucrats and former secret policemen who run many Eastern European states and former Soviet republics for the sake of a preferential stake in their assets.

Maxwell established, with great fanfare, The Maxwell Central and Eastern European Partnership. It later proved, like most Western enterprises in the East, to be a phantom trust. And when Maxwell did participate in East European publishing ventures, he did so at a price—usually an agreement to distribute vast piles of his *European* newspaper. Big Macs, *Scooby Doo* and the *European*; what more could they ask for? ●



# What did M Maastricht

The Tories were euphoric after their 'victory' at the Euro-summit in December. Then, says Helen Simons, the Germans raised interest rates by one half of one per cent and the gaffe was blown

**G**ame, set and match to Britain!' proclaimed British prime minister John Major as he left the negotiating table at the Maastricht Euro-summit last December. Next day, one official summed up the euphoric mood of the departing British team: 'This is extremely good for Britain. This is what we always wanted. It is the best of all possible worlds.'

As the details of the 'opt-out' deal done at Maastricht emerged, Tory ministers and backbenchers let out a collective sigh of relief. The feared public split in the Conservative Party failed to materialise, as almost all Tory MPs applauded the terms of the agreement. On their return to parliament, Major and Lamont were given a heroes' welcome. Most of the media seemed to share the Tories' upbeat assessment of the proceedings. 'There is no doubt', announced one influential editorial, 'that the agreement reached at Maastricht constitutes a personal triumph for John Major' (*Financial Times*, 12 December 1991).

But in what way was the deal struck at Maastricht such a tremendous British victory?

Major's team claimed to have won two coveted prizes from the 'hard-fought' negotiations at the summit table. First, an opt-out clause for the UK in the move towards full European monetary union. Second, exemption from the social policy chapter of the Maastricht accord.

## Best of what?

The agreement was sufficiently non-committal to mute backbench rancour in the Tory Party. Only the most hardened Euro-sceptics felt the need to argue against the government. So in one sense the Maastricht summit was not the pre-election nightmare that many Tories had feared. But, that said, the accord fell a long way short of the 'best of all possible worlds' for the British authorities.

For a start, in the 'best of all possible worlds' the British government would not have had to settle for the opt-out and exemption





# Major win at Maastricht?

clauses. The Maastricht summit was designed to finalise plans for European monetary union and to initiate the process of closer European political convergence. No doubt, given the choice, the Tories would have opted to delay both processes for as long as possible, not just for Britain but throughout the EC.

## A has-been

Slowing down the process of change within Europe makes real sense for the British establishment. Britain owes its position as a leading European power largely to a reputation based upon its past glories. Judged strictly on the reality of its present economic weakness, it would be in the second Euro-division. As long as the old arrangements hold, Britain can avoid facing the awful consequences of its own economic demise. The new Europe holds no enticements for British capitalism. It will be a product of the new world order where Germany is the emerging

economic and political giant, and Britain is something of a has-been.

From this perspective it is not hard to see through the Tory claims of triumph at Maastricht. In the real world of the summit horse-trading, Britain could do next to nothing to prevent European leaders agreeing on a fast-forward timetable to economic integration. In fact a closer look at the key issues of contention at Maastricht illustrates that Britain was humiliated rather than victorious at the December negotiations.

## America's sidekick

On the question of defence, for example, the British were adamant that nothing would undermine the role of Nato in Europe. Britain likes Nato because it is an institution of the old Cold War world, in which the USA was the unquestioned global power and the UK acted as America's assistant in Europe. But while Maastricht played lip-service to the continued importance of Nato, the agreement was also the first EC accord to spell out a distinct defence

role for the community. Any shift away from the Anglo-American institution of Nato towards a Franco-German dominated European defence system is a pointed rebuff to Britain; military matters are the one area in which it still ranks as a leading international player.

## Fast-forward

Another example of the lack of British influence came in the debate on the central issue of European monetary union (Emu). The British authorities understand that monetary union means extending the international influence of the deutschmark and bringing European economies further under German influence. The Tories would happily see Europe delay or shelve this policy. Failing that they have tried to prevent the creation of a 'two-tier' European monetary system in which some countries would press ahead to a single currency while less dynamic economies (like Britain) would be shut out and left behind.

To this end, British negotiators ►

have long argued for a two-pronged approach to Emu. They have insisted that Emu is taken a step at a time with each step reversible and with no fixed timetable. And they have demanded that tough economic conditions must be met by *all* EC states before *any* of them could embark upon monetary union.

Everything agreed at Maastricht flies in the face of these objectives. The conference set a quick and complete timetable towards monetary union, and all states except Britain and Denmark are now locked in to it. Although this process of unification seems unlikely to go as smoothly as some now assume, the timetable agreed to shows that Britain's objections carried no weight. In addition, the Maastricht deal means that only a minority of EC states have to meet the economic conditions before the single currency can be launched—leaving weaker states in the slow lane to fend for themselves. The end result is a 'fast-forward two-tier' monetary union—nothing short of the British nightmare scenario.

### Opt-out or in?

Britain's lack of influence in Europe was clear at Maastricht. British wishes were repeatedly put to one side, and the coveted opt-out clause was a thin veil to hide British embarrassment. Indeed, the opt-out clause would give Britain little chance of staying out were monetary union really to go ahead. 'It is scarcely conceivable that Britain will opt to be outside the single currency', said leading economist Samuel Brittan on reading the detail of the new treaty (*Financial Times*, 12 December 1991). Most serious economic commentators agree with him.

There is no serious prospect of Britain being able to detach itself from its dependence on Europe. Britain is now more economically integrated into Europe than ever before. In the last year British companies were squeezed further out of all non-European markets and forced to rely even more on European sales (see EIU, *United Kingdom Country Report*, November 1991.) What is more, the weakness of sterling as an international currency gives Britain little choice about following Germany in monetary affairs.

The opt-out clause simply allowed Major the privilege of registering a protest without causing much real disruption to the talks. The British government is rather like a child at the party trying to seek attention by sulking in the corner. The other 11 will tolerate the British tantrum, but only so long as it does not spoil what they are trying to do. Germany's

chancellor Kohl was said by aides to have seen his role in relation to Britain as a tolerant father bringing along a wayward son. And Kohl will not be afraid to give the boy a clip around the ear if necessary.

The economic events which followed Maastricht in December quickly exposed the Tories' triumphalist hype. Less than a week after all the euphoric talk of defending British sovereignty and seeing off the enemy, the dependence and weakness of the British economy in Europe was fully exposed.

### Panic waves

The train of events began in Germany. Worried by the prospect of excessive inflation in the German economy, the Bundesbank put up interest rates by one half of a percent. Within days every major European nation except Britain had followed the German lead and raised interest rates. In an attempt to put off a pre-election interest rate hike, the Tories tried to resist the trend. But against the backdrop of the British slump this was a high-risk strategy. The resultant pressure on sterling sent panic waves through the Tory Party.

Over Christmas and the New Year Conservative backbenchers and ministers squabbled about how to avoid a sterling crisis. While Lamont and Major tried to calm the markets by insisting they would not devalue sterling, other MPs including Margaret Thatcher rocked the markets with leaked calls for a major devaluation. A sterling crisis seemed imminent.

The episode exposed Britain's economic fragility in the starkest terms. The weakness of sterling reflected the weakness of the entire economy. The treasury was forced to admit that the recession would be longer and deeper than they had first predicted. In fact, with no prospect of economic recovery in the foreseeable future, the spectre of a sterling crash still looms.

### Inglorious performance

When a mere half percent rise in German interest rates can set off such a major chain of economic and political panic within the British establishment, Major's claim that Maastricht was 'Game, set and match to Britain!' can only be regarded as an absurd joke.

The Tory claims of victory at Maastricht, and the way in which these lies were repeated in the press, should come as no real surprise. What was truly extraordinary about Major's Maastricht humiliation was that nobody outside of the Tory establishment seemed able to make much out of the prime minister's

inglorious performance. Remarkably enough, the Tories' standing in the polls even rose in the immediate post-Maastricht period.

Neil Kinnock and the Labour Party could get little mileage out of Maastricht because they share many of the same assumptions as the government. When the Tories came home claiming to have fought Britain's corner and seen off the foreigners, Kinnock could only complain about the details of what Major had done. Labour is as fond of little Englander myths as the Tories.

### Labour's patriotism

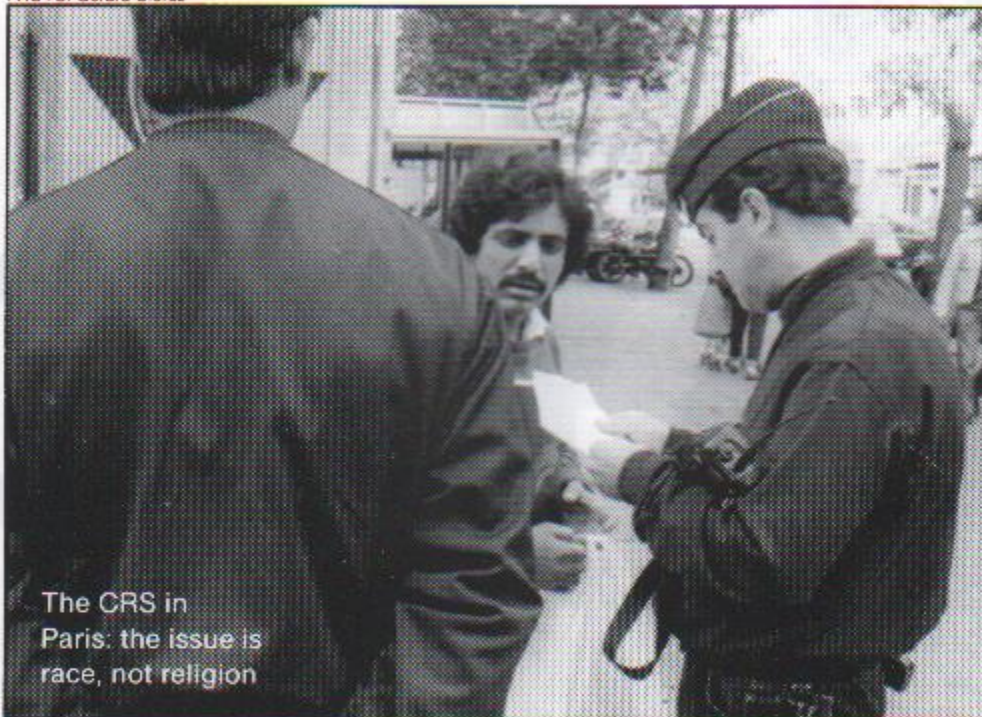
Kinnock's Labour Party is seeking to compete with the Conservatives to be the most respectable patriotic British party. Labour's pre-election campaign material is already covered in Union Jack symbols and commitments to fight for British business. Although Labour spokesmen sought to distinguish themselves after Maastricht by expressing support for the European social chapter which the Tories had rejected, European integration is hardly an electoral cause that the Labour Party feels able wholeheartedly to embrace. In fact during the pre-Maastricht parliamentary debate on Europe there were more Euro-sceptic dissenters among Labour MPs than Tories. Left wingers like Tony Benn lined up with right-wing mavericks like Norman Tebbit.

### Disadvantage Britain

Even when economic and political panic swept the Tory Party in the new year, Labour was unable to build up a clear lead in the polls. Lacking an alternative economic model with which to challenge the government's failed policies, Kinnock can do little more than heckle from the sidelines while the major political debates of the day take place within the shaky ranks of the Tory Party.

Major demonstrated a typically talentless British tennis performance when he declared 'Game, set and match' after Maastricht. In tennis these days, as in European economics, the real winners are German. Yet the Tories can draw some faint comfort from their ability to get away with the post-summit hype at home. The government enters the pre-election period in deep trouble, beset by an economic slump and under pressure from its European rivals. But, as the post-Maastricht debate revealed, the one thing which Major's ineffective Tories will not have to face is an effective challenge from the official opposition.

PHOTO: Gerard Uferas



The CRS in Paris: the issue is race, not religion

## 'Don't call us coons'

Richard Christiansen reports from Amiens on a racist clampdown disguised as concern about Islamic immigration

**W**hen 200 Harki Arab youths organised a demonstration for equal rights outside the local Prefecture in Amiens, northern France, last November, they got more of an official reception than they bargained for. The municipal police force charged them with truncheons drawn. When the protesters threw stones, the police lobbed tear-gas grenades and a running street battle ensued.

The next morning, residents of Le Pigeonnier, home to many of Amiens' Arab immigrants, awoke to find 250 of France's crack riot squad, the CRS, sealing off the roads to the estate. Throughout the day, anyone going in or out had their identity checked: many were body-searched and most abused. Local youth prepared for a showdown, but their attempts to build a barricade prompted the CRS to invade the estate. The evening papers screamed that conspiring Arabs had lured the police on to their 'home territory', the better to attack them. The truth is that the police had mounted an exercise in intimidation which culminated in an armed rampage through the streets of Le Pigeonnier.

### Immigration scare

The Amiens riot took place in the middle of the escalating anti-Islamic furore in France. As in other European countries, immigration is now a top issue in French politics. Here, the immigration scare focuses on the supposed threat to the French way of life posed by Islamic fundamentalist immigrants from North Africa. This anti-immigrant backlash has been fuelled by the fundamentalists' high-profile election campaign in Algeria.

However, a closer examination of the issue reveals that the source of the problem is not Islamic immigrants importing alien values, but the indigenous racist values of the French authorities. The events in Amiens show how the debate on Islam acts as a smokescreen for an officially sponsored racist offensive.

The Harkis do not conform to French stereotypes of the Arab immigrant. Their communities were established in France 30 years ago, so they could hardly be described as new arrivals. Nor do the Harkis conform to the anti-Western fundamentalist image: in fact they have a long tradition of support for French imperialism.

### 'We are French'

In the 1954-62 Algerian war they served as French colonial agents, fighting on the side of the colonial forces against the Algerian independence movement. In 1962, when Algeria achieved independence, the Harkis were repatriated to France along with the white *pieds noirs* settlers. Their history means that the Harkis consider themselves full French citizens. As one youth in Amiens put it, 'our parents fought for France. We are French. That gives us the same rights as other French'.

Yet, like all Arabs in France, the Harkis face harassment, ghettoisation and discrimination. This has caused considerable bitterness among Harkis who believe that they have earned the right to be treated like loyal Frenchmen. When the 1000-strong Harki community in the southern French city of Narbonne rioted last summer, they called for an end to official discrimination: 'We don't want to live in these ghettos, we don't want to be called "coons" and we want to be given our due.

The president of the Republic must officially rehabilitate the Harkis.' (*Nouvel Observateur*, 27 June 1991) But as far as the French authorities are concerned the Harkis are just dirty Arabs. Indeed, the experience of the Harki community in Amiens is entirely typical of that of immigrant communities throughout France.

The centre of Amiens is dominated by the towering thirteenth century cathedral and beautifully preserved Gothic architecture, encircled by wide, shady boulevards. The outer ring of the city is riddled with shabby, jerry-built housing blocks, home to most of the city's immigrant population. During the sixties boom, thousands of North African workers were brought to Amiens and dumped in this peripheral shanty town. The Harkis were housed in the notorious HLMs, the French answer to Britain's tower blocks. When economic crisis hit French industry in the seventies and eighties, they were the first to lose their jobs. Unemployment is now 50 per cent in the 4000-strong Harki community.

### Immigrant 'delinquents'

The second generation 'Harki children' have become increasingly vocal in their demands for equality. Most have had the experience of being told a job is taken as soon as they show their face for an interview; all have put up with racist abuse and police harassment. Many young Harkis point to the way the Arab estates are portrayed in the local rag, *Le Courrier de Picardie*. 'The way they talk about us', says Ahmed, 'you'd think the Medellin cartel had moved to Amiens'.

The press and police have vigorously promoted the myth of 'immigrant delinquency'. 'If two of us are walking down the street, as far as the police are concerned we're a gang', says Ahmed. And Sami remembers the 'holiday camps' set up by the French government after the race riots in 1981. 'They sent us away over the summer to try and keep us "out of trouble". We enjoyed ourselves, free holidays in the south of France and all that, but the police were out to prove that by moving us out, crime would drop.' And drop it did—the Amiens police had fewer young Arabs to frame.

### Beaten in cells

Mahoumet recounts a familiar story from a few weeks before. 'Two Arab guys had gone down to a nightclub in the town, but the bouncers didn't like the look of them and refused them entry. About four hours later, there was a fight between the manager and two white guys. The manager was hospitalised; the bouncers told the police it was the Arab guys. The next day the police came and found them here and charged them. They've got no evidence but as far as they are concerned their faces are proof enough.' And, as a few Harkis will tell you, a spell in the cells is no joke: the police are well known for beating up handcuffed Arabs.

Despite the Harkis' protestations that they are French, they get the same racist treatment as other Arabs in France. They may have fought for French colonialism, they may not fit the stereotypical image of the Islamic alien. But as far as the Prefecture, the police and Francois Mitterrand's socialist government are concerned, the Harkis are no different from the rest.

'The government don't want to acknowledge what they did in Algeria, how it treated its own soldiers', says Mahmoud. 'Remember, it was Mitterrand [as minister of defence] who ran that war. They can't respond to our demands, they can only repress them.' The Harkis have been caught in the French state's new anti-Islamic hysteria. Whatever their services to French imperialism, they will be treated like 'coons' in the racist climate of France today. ●

# Who's that

You've heard the Essex Girl jokes, read the books and seen the videos. So has Helen West and she's not laughing (much)

**Q.** What do you call an Essex Girl with one O-level?

**A.** Gifted

**Q.** What's the difference between Essex Girl and Essex Boy?

**A.** She has a higher sperm count

**Q.** What does Essex Girl know about the Green Belt?

**A.** You wear it with the pink dress

And there you have it: the three component parts of Essex Girl. She's stupid, sex-mad and has no style. You know Essex Girl; the unnatural blonde, white stilettos (a size too big), lycra-micro skirt (a size too small). She of the one syllable name—Shaz, Kaz, Trace—unless of course her name resembles something you can eat or drink—Sherry, Candy or Bacardi maybe. Or so we are led to believe.

## Brainless nymphos?

Let's look at each component. Essex Girl is stupid? Essex Girl has had no formal education. She is schooled in Tee-line (shorthand) and wpm (words per minute). Educational establishments include Pitmans and/or the University of Life.

Essex Girl is sex-mad? This follows on from the former component. Because Essex Girl is stupid she has yet to take on board the government's Victorian value package of morality and monogamy. Not only that, Essex Girl doesn't realise that sex isn't something one enjoys but something one endures in order to produce the necessary 2.4 heirs. Can't you just imagine the dreadful legal wrangles over who gets custody of the furry dice?

Essex Girl has no style? She is more Chelsea Girl than Chelsea, more Top Shop than top drawer, more High Street than high brow. The more money you throw at Essex Girl, the more things she'll find to Artex. Face it, here is a nineties girl who still wants a red and white kitchen.

So Essex Girl is a brainless nymphomaniac, perpetrator of all things naff. Sound familiar? It should. They say old jokes are the best. I first heard Essex Girl jokes about 10 years ago but then they were about girls from the Midlands or the north-east à la Fat Slags in Viz. Clearly,

Essex Girl jokes have got nothing to do with Essex. Change the location, and they could be about working class women anywhere.

The jokes may be old but they have moved a little with the times. Replace typewriter with word processor and Grimsby with Canvey Island and so on. However the changes are cosmetic, the content remains the same. It's simple. If you want a cheap laugh, have a go at working class people.

## 'Upstarts'

According to the middle class opinion-makers who invented Essex Girl, if there's one thing worse than someone who's working class, it's someone who's working class with a bit of money. In some ways the joke is as old as the British class system and its snobbish prejudice: 'upstarts'... 'they breed like rabbits'... 'they can't handle money', etc.

So why do working class people find them funny? Just about the only reason I can think of is that they sometimes touch on something which is recognisable from real life:

**Q.** What's the difference between Essex Girl and a supermarket trolley?

**A.** A supermarket trolley has a mind of its own

Or there's the one about the ironing board's legs being hard to open.

Also, whether or not it's funny depends very much on who's telling the joke. If it's someone inside, then fine, if it's some prick in a wine bar, well... To be honest I find a few of them funny, most of them boring and one or two offensive (Q. What's the difference between Essex Girl and a computer? A. You only have to punch information in once with a computer).

It's the underlying message that annoys rather than the joke. The message is that working class people are rubbish and that even if you give them jobs in City offices and little houses with gardens in Essex, they will still be rubbish. Now this is what gets me. Most things that are available to working class people—from the houses we live in and the clothes we wear to the food we eat and the pubs we drink in—are cheap and nasty. Yet they've got the cheek to suggest that working class people really like the tacky rubbish that

we have to put up with. We live in a tacky society. Period.

The reinvention of Essex Girl's opposite number—Knightsbridge Girl—doesn't do much for me either. Knightsbridge Girl jokes are the rejigging of old Sloane Ranger jokes which were a rejigging of jokes about working class women: change football team for polo team and chips for caviar, etc.

Knightsbridge Girl was reinvented at the end of last year when the *News of the World* became Essex Girl's champion—its editor, Pat Chapman, is a confirmed Essex Girl. The paper had a feature on Essex Girl, 'The Joy of EsSEX', in which *Loose Ends* interviewer Victoria Mather was quoted as saying 'Essex is just the place if you like shagpile and satellite dishes'.

## Yah, yah

The *News of the World* decided this was too much, so it ran a competition for readers who had to send in Knightsbridge Girl jokes: first prize, a week in Essex; second prize, you guessed it, two weeks in Essex. The winner:

**Q.** How does Knightsbridge Girl satisfy the man in her life?

**A.** She gives him an Essex Girl

Other funnies sent in included, Knightsbridge Girl: Where's the thingy to change the TV channel? Mummy: Sorry darling, it's thingy's day off. And how does Knightsbridge Girl wean her baby? She sacks the nanny. Oh yah.

What's interesting about Essex Girl joke merchandise is that the sales pitch tries to get Essex Girl herself in on the act. One joke book apologises in the opening credits, saying 'If you are offended by these cartoons, we were all on holiday when it was put together'. The video *Stand Up for Essex Girls* is presented as 'you the public' becoming stand-up comedians and 'Essex Girl fights back in a no holds barred confrontation with another form of life—Essex Man'. Then again, other 'joke' books are simply presented as 'you've seen the knickers...now read the book!'

Well, I read the book and still think if you want bimbos with no style, too much money and too little brains then you should do as I do and buy *Hello!* magazine.

# girl?



ILLUSTRATION: Gordon

## Seventies revival



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

# Naff naff nostalgia

Andrew Calcutt didn't think much of the seventies the first time around, never mind the second

**Clogs are back.** According to *i-D*, kids in the clubs are dancing the night away in footwear that could have been worn by Cat Stevens before his conversion to Islam. Truly the seventies revival is upon us.

There are other signs of the second coming. Vivienne Westwood's fashion models are clomping around in platform shoes. Disco queen Donna Summer received red-carpet treatment when she appeared on Channel 4's *The Word*. At least two other 'yoof' programmes have featured Barry White recalling the day he reached puberty. And every week in London's West End, punters are packing into a club named after the mid-seventies disco-track 'Carwash' (you won't want to know about the eponymous feature film from which it was originally taken).

### The morning after

When so much of today's musical output is about as innovative as an abacus, looking back to better days may seem like an excellent idea. The search for good times past has been largely confined to reworkings of the sixties and punk—until now. What's new in 92 is that we are being asked to relive the classic moments of the seventies. Trouble is, there weren't very many of them.

If the sixties felt like a night on amphetamine sulphate, the seventies were the morning after. In the adrenaline rush of sixties optimism, fashion designers were spontaneous and experimental. In the seventies, they made ludicrous attempts to prolong the experimental mood of the previous decade. The designs they came up with—ever-bigger platform heels, ever-huger collars, ever-more enormous flares—were an unwitting parody of innovation.

### A non-event

The seventies are now being marketed as 'The Sixties Volume Two'. But the *real* seventies were a stomach-churning comedown from the sixties. They must have been a non-event because this was the decade when many people started looking backwards instead of forwards. That is perhaps the biggest irony of all this: the seventies themselves were a nostalgic time of wistful thinking about the past.

Young musicians dressed in their fathers' drape jackets and played rockabilly tunes dating from the mid-fifties. Elvis came back into fashion. Jimmy Saville started the first golden oldies show on Radio One—the BBC station set up in the sixties because at that time young people refused to listen to anything out-of-date. But by 1973, out-of-date was very much in fashion. K-Tel began issuing compilations of 'Flashback greats of the 60s'. Among the top-selling albums of the year were 'The Beatles 1967-70' and 'The Beatles 1962-66'. With a new hairstyle described by *NME* journalist Charles Shaar Murray as '1966 Marquee pillpopper moddy cut', David Bowie released 'Pin Ups', a selection of classic sixties songs such as 'Here comes the night' and 'Friday on my mind'.

### Nostalgic for nostalgia

The very idea of a 'pop classic' was a seventies invention. In the sixties, hit records were disposable plastic which lasted as long as they were in the charts. This might seem like heresy now that the oldies on Capital Gold pull the biggest audience of any radio station in London. But in the sixties, old records were as valuable as yesterday's newspapers. The notion of a pop classic only came about in the

seventies because that was the time when reliving a moment of the past began to seem more attractive than living for the present. It can only mean that the current seventies revival is a sort of nostalgia for the onset of nostalgia.

The youth of the sixties knew they were on to something. In the seventies, we knew we'd missed it.

## Bag O'Nails

The best of the sixties groups were hi-energy and highly articulate. They produced dance music that could make you stop and think: little symphonies for almost-adults.

The music of the sixties appealed to a wide range of young people. Apart from a handful of rural throwbacks called 'rockers', everyone followed the same pop trends. Sixth-form girls and the CSE stream swooned before the Walker Brothers. Advertising copywriters and the nightshift at Ford's Dagenham popped the same pills and went to hear Jimi Hendrix at the Bag O'Nails in Soho. There was room for all on the Magic Bus.

## Totally tedious

The motor died with Hendrix. When the Voodoo Chile choked on his own vomit after the 1970 Isle of Wight festival, the days of all-inclusive, inventive pop were over. Pop music splintered into a range of opposing styles, all of them equally tedious.

Put yourself in the shoes of an adolescent guitar-player, standing on the brink of the seventies. Perhaps you had been inspired by ground-breaking singles of the late sixties such as 'Purple haze', the Pink Floyd's 'Arnold Layne', 'I can hear the grass grow' by The Move, or The Small Faces' 'Itchycoo Park'. Suddenly you were faced with a range of bland and uniformly inadequate musical styles.

But you had to choose one anyway, unless you were willing to turn your back on the whole teenage thing and hang out with the middle-aged 15-year olds who carried umbrellas and briefcases to school. So maybe you would have opted for 'progressive'—the most ambitious and overblown style of seventies music. Dressed in brushed denim jacket, embroidered loons and a drawstring vest—or perhaps an Indian scoopneck t-shirt, you might have modelled yourself on Jon Anderson, lead vocalist in Yes. While saving up for a Quadrophonic sound system, never-to-be-released Quadrio discs, and an ounce of Red Leb, you would chatter incessantly about your favourite concept album: 'Aqualung' by Jethro Tull.

## Axe-men and chicks

You might have chosen 'heavy rock'. For this you would require a centre-parting and long hair like a basset-hound's ears. Cowboy boots preferable, and references to 'chicks' mandatory. Any self-respecting heavy rock fan would fight to the death for his favourite guitar-hero. Choose from Eric 'God' Clapton, Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page (preference for 'Pagey' would get you known as a 'Zep freak'), or Alvin Lee from Ten Years After. If you were a real glutton for punishment you would champion the dual guitar sound of Wishbone Ash. It should be noted that guitar heroes won their exalted position by playing the maximum number of notes per minute for the maximum number of minutes (the only one worthy of the name was the Irish adolescent Gary Moore who, as part of a 'high-energy power trio' called Skid Row, outplayed all competition before he could vote). Audiences at gigs

(heavy rock) or concerts (progressive) were expected to sit cross-legged on the floor to appreciate guitar solos and, wait for it, drum solos.

Too much? Then you might have adopted the doleful songwriter's pose, as demonstrated by James Taylor, Joni Mitchell and Loudon Wainwright III. Too heavy? Perhaps you would have been comfortable in a satin bomber jacket, dancing at the youth club to Tony Orlando's Dawn, David Cassidy and The Osmonds. But no one could endure the horrors of teenybopperdom beyond the age of 16.

## Ballroom blitz

The seventies were the period when the intelligent aspects of sixties pop lapsed into pretentiousness (with ELP's keyboard player Keith Emerson as Malvolio-in-chief), and playful sexuality degenerated into the reiteration of crude stereotypes. What could a poor boy with a guitar do to escape?

There were only two plausible options. You could laugh at the world and your own role in it, or attempt to blank out the mediocrity of the seventies and pretend you were in another time, another place.

All the best bands (sixties groups, seventies bands) survived on a sense of self-mockery. They turned their images inside out. Former skinheads Slade camped-up aggression while The Sweet made camp aggressive. Working with The Faces, Rod Stewart won fame as a likeable loser. David Bowie invented a persona for himself—Ziggy Stardust, the post-apocalyptic mod—and flaunted its disposability. Until the persona took over and nearly disposed of him. Meanwhile Roxy Music remade and remodelled an appropriately sleazy expression of ironic detachment.

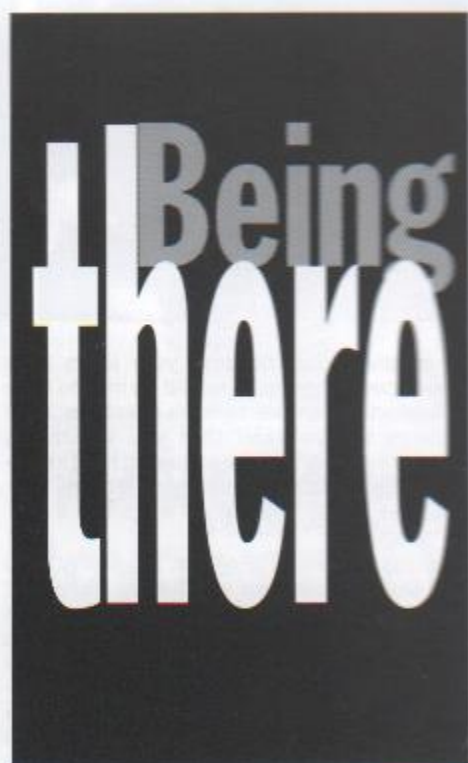
## Road to Wigan Casino

The second option was taken up by blues fans, the folk club crowd, and the northern soul scene. Recognising the worthlessness of early seventies rock, the blues boom-ers went in search of something more authentic. Unfortunately this involved hordes of spotty grammar schoolboys pretending to be Muddy Waters or BB King. Folkies like Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span went in for a kind of electrified morris dancing. Their fans preferred to think of themselves as swains and maidens from the Middle Ages.

The northern soul scene also turned its back on real time, but didn't delve quite so far into the past. Northern soul was really a bargain-basement continuation of sixties mod. Its existence depended on the club DJs who imported case after case of black American imitation-Tamla singles, all of them made in the sixties but previously unreleased in Britain. One aficionado recalls that 'Wigan Casino only ever played one seventies record—'I love music' by the O'Jays'. The northern soul scene of the seventies probably deserves some sort of accolade as the first of many sixties revivals.

## As low as you can go

In my book, the seventies revival is about as low as you can go. It's also oddly appropriate. If nostalgia is naff (as it is), and the seventies were naff (which they were), then seventies nostalgia must be naff naff. I only hope the punters at Carwash are getting a good laugh out of the two bad jokes they're paying through the nose for.



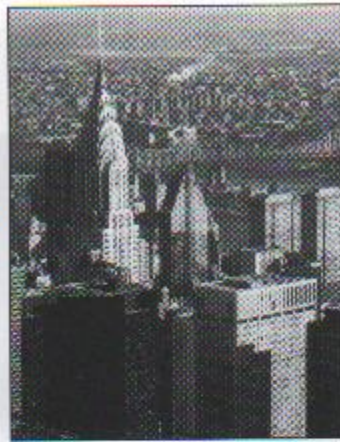
As winter-weary Britons plan their summer trips abroad, the well-travelled Australian Ian Bolas asks what we really get out of seeing how the other half lives

It happens all the time. You're making a point about the situation in Ireland (or anywhere else) and someone butts in with: 'How would you know? Ever been there?' He has, of course. You haven't and your credibility is out the window. You're just a theorist. He knows the facts—first hand.

It can really put you on the defensive, but how valid is the authority he's claiming? What can you actually learn about a place by visiting it? The short answer is not much; and not necessarily anything at all.

I'd like to believe otherwise. It would help me explain to friends and family why I'm spending the money I should save for my old age on yet another trip. And explain to myself why I'm about to indulge myself, yet again, in the sheer hedonism of trying to sleep in a second class couchette with three snorers and a drunk who farts like a sousaphone with halitosis. Or why I spend a large part of my time in strange places trying to find somewhere to eat and sleep when I don't know enough of the language to ask for either. It would also help me to avoid the suspicion that my real motive for travelling has less to do with the desire to be somewhere else than with the compulsion not to be where I am.

No matter how much you like travel, existential questions tend to pose themselves when you are wandering around, dazed and demented, trying to find the only launderette



HO

in an alien town because your jocks have developed gangrene. It would be nice to have a comfortable answer to those questions; to be able to tell yourself that you are doing something worthwhile—acquiring hard knowledge you couldn't get in any other way.

## Gorbachev vodka

I've just been to Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia and what have I brought back? The startling realisation that things are bad there, and getting worse. And the knowledge that in Prague you can buy Russian cigarettes called 'Gorbachev International'. They feature a gold silhouette of the Kremlin on a white packet and describe themselves as 'Luxury Filters'. The contents are foul, as you'd expect. There's also Gorbachev vodka and, frankly, I'm impressed. What greater commitment could the man have to the market than to show his willingness to transform himself into a range of dubious commodities?

Speaking of the market, there are now 25-30 000 prostitutes working in Prague. The entrepreneurs who run sex tours to Thailand and the Philippines are moving on to Czechoslovakia as a closer, cheaper alternative. A stroll around Wenceslaus Square at night alerts you to the employment opportunities the market has opened up for Czech youth.

I visited factories and talked to people on the street. I asked about incomes and checked out prices. I spoke with the remnants of the non-Stalinist left. But I can't claim to have acquired much more hard knowledge than I've got from reading *Living Marxism*. All the same, I'm looking forward to the next time some dickhead says 'ever been there?' while I'm arguing that capitalism can't answer the problems of the East.

## Tunnel vision

However hard you try, the range of experience you get while travelling is very limited. The views you form are necessarily personal and impressionistic. There are no self-evident, self-explanatory observable realities anywhere. The sense you make of what you see or hear depends entirely on the frame you're looking through. Those who imagine they are observing with an open mind are deluding themselves. They are looking through the frame of an ideology so deeply ingrained they don't even know it's there. Put that together with a plentiful lack of historical knowledge and you get some bizarre conclusions. I met Western tourists who came away from the East convinced that everything is getting better.

Everything unpleasant they'd seen—the poverty, the beggars with the unnaturally still children in their laps—was interpreted as a legacy of the Stalinist past. Anything good, like the fact that the public transport works better in Budapest than London, was attributed

to capitalist efficiency.

Their clinching argument was the range of consumer goods in the shops now. Anyone can see them. But you have to dig a bit deeper to discover that few can afford them. The Samsonite briefcase displayed in the window of the former Palace of Culture in Warsaw would cost a Polish teacher several months' salary.

My favourite impression was one expressed by the American who'd been to Dresden. 'Wasn't it terrible what the Russians did to that town', he said. It took a while for it to sink in that he was not referring to the Stalinist architecture. He was talking about the indelible marks left by the Brits on Dresden when they firebombed it during the Second World War.

## Mugged by reality

Yet sometimes the facts you observe have a stubborn certainty about them. Travelling through the West Bank, a couple of years ago, I saw the gleaming white settlements on the hilltops and the squalid refugee camps in the valleys. I watched the Israeli military bucketing through the camps, armed to the teeth, in vehicles with cages on the back. I saw boy soldiers with machine-guns in their laps 'guarding' peaceful and picturesque shopping streets in East Jerusalem. Later I took a short bus ride to the Israel Museum, and had the disorienting impression of stepping out of the third world into what looked like the better bits of Europe.

My gut feeling was that you couldn't go to that part of Israel without registering the inequalities, the overt racism and the stark realities of life under military occupation. My view was confirmed by fellow travellers. All who'd been to the West Bank had a distinctly modified impression of 'gallant little Israel'. I met a Texan who'd been 'mugged by reality'. He'd been strolling peacefully through the Damascus Gate where a Palestinian demonstration was taking place. Three Israeli cops grabbed him and beat him with riot sticks. How had the experience affected his view of the situation? 'I changed sides', he said.

## Postcard holidays

But most tourists don't go to the West Bank. They go for the winter sun in Eilat. The world they experience is like the one so wittily depicted on the posters in the London Underground. Or they pick oranges on a *kibbutz*, and come away with the impression that Israel is progressive and achieving great things, that the Arabs are inferior, and that the PLO is really motivated by malicious envy of the achievements of its betters.

If you're already a racist, you could probably make the same sense out of the scenes on the West Bank. Or find a racist explanation for the misery that capitalism has created in Eastern Europe.

Even if you don't flit from one flash hotel to

another (in which case you never actually leave the West) the experiences you have as a traveller are partial and limited. Your life as a visitor is quite different from those of the working people who live there. You're in a different economy for a start, spending money you earned at home. What's cheap for you is often prohibitively expensive for them. And you're not trying to make a living. So you're an outsider looking in, and what you see depends entirely on what's inside your head.

## Commies and Jews

You talk to the locals, of course, but that can be deceptive. Unless you speak their language you're restricted to those who speak yours, and they almost always come from a relatively privileged layer. Furthermore, they often lack the means to make sense of what they know. A young Polish guy I met in Warsaw was clear enough about what was wrong with his life but put the blame on the 'communists who pull Walesa's strings' and the 'Jews who own all the banks'.

So why bother travelling? Well, I enjoy it and, leaving aside the potentially embarrassing psychological explanations, I do think I get some value from the experience. I don't learn anything I couldn't learn more cheaply at home, but 'being there' puts flesh on the bones of what I already know.

In particular, my internationalist sentiments are strengthened by travel. Not because people are nice everywhere you go—they are not (let me tell you about my time in Tangiers when you've got an hour or two to spare). But rather because everywhere you go, you find the problems are essentially the same however different in degree or form. They spring from the same source, and the real enemy is always the same.

When you encounter something really nasty, it's rarely difficult to spot the villain. Yet while it's one thing to know this intellectually, it's another to experience it directly.

## Two tons of hair

I've been to Auschwitz. I've seen the barracks at Birkenau and the crematoria. So when they start telling us that it really wasn't that bad (or it didn't really happen, or that the gulag was worse), I'm going to be even harder to convince because I've seen two tons of human hair shaved from the heads of victims before they were gassed. And when they say that this barbarity was an aberration and nothing to do with capitalism, I'll point to the cloth and furniture fabric made from that hair—a cheap resource for German industry recovered from those too weak and infirm to have more labour extracted from them.

But it isn't really necessary to have been there. Take a tip from me. The next time some smart Alec asks you, 'ever been there?', say yes, even if you haven't, confident in the knowledge that you know more about it than they do.



# Comic revisionism

A battle is being waged for the soul of the Saturday Night Variety line-up. On the one hand, the old guard of the London Palladium—the players of pro-celebrity golf, the wearers of v-neck sweaters and ill-fitting toupees; on the other the new establishment of the Comic Strip, the dames and knights of the next Labour administration. And who is the world historic hero, the Yeltsin, the Napoleon, the Trotsky of this struggle? Benny Hill.

Hill has just been the subject of an *Omnibus* documentary which presented him unabashedly as a genius, not just a comic genius—a proper fully paid-up tortured genius, sitting on the Left Bank at the Deux Maggots, speaking French, just like Sartre or living alone like a Teddington Van Gogh.

At one point the documentary compared Benny Hill to Laurel and Hardy and he was granted the main qualification of all geniuses—having been Wronged By Society. His show was dropped by Thames TV when it was still high in the ratings and Benny has never got over it. The implication is that Hill was dropped because of the new Political Puritanism brought into comedy by the Comic Strip—the once alternative comedians who have now made sure there is no alternative.

The idea that Thames (makers of *Beadle's About*) would drop a successful show for reasons of ideological purity was the only actually funny thing on the programme. The documentary was followed, however, by a spate of quality press profiles, all taking the same line. Hill was a genius and *The Young Ones* nobbled him. Well, if Benny Hill is the new Stan Laurel, then Ankeka Rice is the new Marie Curie. It is obvious, however, that he has become the test-case of a kind of comedy revisionism that began with the rehabilitation of Frankie Howerd and Ken Dodd and reached its extreme in this magazine with a paean to Bernard Manning.

It seems inevitable now that Hill will get his show back and that this will be seen as a victory for the innocent, populist fun of dirty mags in parks and the craftsmanship and timing of Hill's famous 'patting a short old man on the head' joke, as opposed to the more cerebral and elitist botty and fart remarks of Mr Ben Elton. You may wonder who would be the next forgotten genius to be lovingly restored? Reg Varney? Dickie Henderson? Wonder no more. *Are You Being Served?*, famous for homophobia and the oddly seedy Molly Sugden, is back as *Grace and Favour*. Opening joke: Mrs Slocombe: 'Help! I can't get me leg over!' Alexei Sayle once said that music hall did not die out because of TV; music hall died out because it was crap. Well, the old mainstream comedy did not die out because of Ben Elton.

Hill was the first British comic to really understand TV. He used sound-effects, clever cutting, trick camera work where others merely

reiterated their stage acts to camera. He more or less created a whole grammar of TV comedy. If he nicked most of this from Laurel and Hardy one can only admire his taste. It is important to understand what a challenge TV presents to comedians. In the days of music hall, Vesta Tilley span a solid and lucrative career out of one song; in the days of cinema, Chaplin was considered prolific for two or three hours worth of new material a year. A successful TV comedian faces the prospect of coming up with 12 or even 24 hours worth of new material a year. It is a horrible thought. Making up a new joke is about as easy as making up a new colour. Most comedians fail miserably.

Hill was the first to rise to the challenge. Apart from the visual innovations, he took to what then seemed the limit the number of catchphrases and trade marks a comedian could have. Jokes that get better the more you repeat them. This art was perfected—depending on your point of view—either by Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer, or by Morecambe and Wise. *Vic Reeves' Big Night Out* is surely the *reductio ad absurdum* of the art of the catchphrase. You can probably write half of tomorrow night's episode now. You would not let it lie, would you? 'What's on the end of your stick Vic? Look at the size of that sausage! Some see this as a sadly atrophied remnant of a great tradition; others as a clever postmodern reworking of the same. Most move from the former to the latter category after a couple of pints.

It is interesting in the light of comic revisionism that Reeves tends to position himself a long way from Monty Python and right-on varsity wits and more in the English nonsense tradition of Will Hay, Ken Dodd and Morecambe and Wise (similarly Gerry Sadowitz on BBC2 seems to be positioning himself as the new Bernard Manning). Certainly you could write half a Morecambe and Wise show, the same as you could a *Big Night Out*. You can't see the join/short fat hairy legs/What do you think of the show so far? Rubbish!/a play what I have wrote.

There is a difference between these lines and Vic's; they are funnier. Partly this is for a technical reason. Most of them could come out of the blue. 'You would not let it lie' has to be worked up to and relies on the audience wanting to collaborate in the work up. Sometimes, on the other hand, Ernie would be making what appeared to be a straight speech about a special guest and Eric's eyes would glaze over, refocus on Ernie's hairline and he would say, 'You can't see the join, you know. It's one of your best, is that.' The effect was like a goal scored straight off a free kick. You were hoping for one soon but you're surprised.

All the gags revolved around the idea that Ernie was a smoothie, a star, but with his dreams of cutting a dash hampered by the presence of useless



## Frank Cottrell-Boyce on TV

If Benny Hill is the new Stan Laurel, then Ankeka Rice is the new Marie Curie

Eric, a joke that gets more poignant everytime you see Ernie on his own. Frustrated dreams have been the substance of great comedy from Quixote to Bilko. They are there in Eric and Ernie and Benny Hill. They aren't really there in Vic. He has the moves but not the substance. That's the difference between a real comic and a smart arse.

The claims that *Omnibus* made for Benny however put him way beyond Eric and Ernie and next to Stan and Olly. Hal Roach, Stan and Olly's producer, agreed but said, 'I do wish he would clean up his act though'. And it is around this issue that the debate is really raging. For both sides the Political Incorrectness of the material seems to matter a lot more than whether it is funny or not (it's not). Hill's right as a 'genius' to be Incorrect is defended with the line—this material is traditional English post-card humour. The (particularly hagiographic) article in the *Independent* bracketed it with Donald McGill, beloved of George Orwell but also not very funny. Another Etonian—the English ambassador to France—was also trotted out to defend Benny. And this is the crux. It is the *Englishness* of the humour rather than its sexism which the revisionists are defending.

We are back in the realms of Pop Larkin and the Great Patriotic Toilet and Breast Fixation. Perhaps there is some room for compromise on the toilet issue—nobody is more amused by a bottom than Ben Elton (though he thinks breasts are very serious). On the Englishness, it is worth noting that Vic is with Benny. He favours Saville Row suits, a Velocette bike and Matt Munroe to Perry Como. In the face of growing federalism, the English (not the British) seem to be frantically trying to cobble together some sort of national cultural identity. Such is the poverty of English culture that it turns out Benny Hill really is their only answer to Marie Curie.

# new left review

## NLR 189 THE LEFT AFTER COMMUNISM

**ROY MEDVEDEV**, 'Politics after the Coup'; **LEWIS SIEGELBAUM**, 'Before Stalinism'; **ERNEST GELLNER**, 'Nationalism after Empire'; in their vivid account of guerrilla commodification, **NANCY CONDEE** and **VLADIMIR PADUNOV** explain why astrology, detective fiction and pornography now loom so large in Russian culture; **RONALD SUNY** examines the break-up of the Union, arguing that the emergence of national communities is inseparable from the experience of modernity; **JOSEPH McCARNEY** examines Marxist philosophy in the light of the collapse of Communism; **LUCIO MAGRI** argues for a reconstruction of the Left, needed more than ever today as a rallying point of resistance to the emerging New World Order; **ROBIN BLACKBURN** argues that Russia's leaders should study China's experience with the market economy; **GIOVANNI ARRIGHI**'s study of world economic patterns reveals the limits of nationalism and Communist development in an age of globalization.

## NLR 190—THE CLAIMS OF EQUALITY

*G.A. Cohen* The Future of a Disillusion  
*Paul Cammack* Brazil: Old Politics, New Forces  
*Tony Benn* The Menace of the Secret State  
*Roger Taylor* Surviving the Thatcher Years  
*Elizabeth Wilson* Feminism Without Illusions?  
*Julian Stallabrass* Snapshots of Prague and Berlin  
*Terry Bloomfield* Rock Against the Commodity  
Also: *Kiernan and Kyrtatas* on Religion;  
*Magaš* on Gellner

### SUBSCRIPTION ADDRESS

New Left Review,  
120-126 Lavender Avenue,  
Mitcham,  
Surrey CR4 3HP,  
UK

### FORTHCOMING

**ELIZABETH WILSON**  
*Return of the Flâneur*  
**PIERRE BOURDIEU/  
TERRY EAGLETON**  
*Symbolic Power and Ideology*  
**BIANCA BECCALI**  
*The Italian Women's Movement*  
**STUART HALL**  
*Caribbean Identity*

**SPECIAL OFFER** Subscribe now and receive **NLR189** FREE, 20% discount on all Verso books; **NLR** back issues at a reduced rate.

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

(6 issues) Individuals: UK £22.50;  
Overseas £26/US\$42/Can\$50;  
Airmail £34/US\$54/Can\$65.

Send either cheque payable to *New Left Review* or credit card type, number and expiry date (Visa/Access/Mastercard/Eurocard/AmEx accepted).

Or ring our **CREDIT CARD HOTLINE** now:  
**081-685 0301**

# SPORTSPAGES

THE SPECIALIST SPORTS BOOKSHOP

*For the best range of football books and fanzines in London, plus books and videos on all other sports, from basketball to boxing, from cricket to canoeing, from golf to greyhound racing, come to the specialists:*

## SPORTSPAGES

Caxton Walk,  
94-96 Charing Cross Road,  
London WC2H 0JG

Open 9.30am to 7.00pm  
Monday to Saturday

Telephone:  
071-240 9604

ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED

## THE WOBURN PRESS

### TEACHING THE HUMANITIES

*edited by Peter Gordon*

ISBN 0 7130 01801 1 cloth £30.00

ISBN 0 7130 4017 3 paper £16.00

### EDUCATION AND POLICY IN ENGLAND IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

*Peter Gordon, Richard Aldrich and Dennis Dean*

ISBN 0 7130 0181 X cloth £35.00

ISBN 0 7130 4016 5 paper £19.50

### DICTIONARY OF BRITISH EDUCATIONISTS

*Richard Aldrich and Peter Gordon*

ISBN 0 7130 0177 1 cloth £25.00

ISBN 0 7130 4011 4 paper £12.50

### THE PRIVATE SCHOOLING OF GIRLS

*Past and Present*

*Geoffrey Walford*

ISBN 0 7130 0186 0 cloth £27.00

Gainsborough House, 11 Gainsborough Road, London E11 1RS  
Tel: 081-530 4226 Fax: 081-530 7795

# MARXIST

## REVIEW OF BOOKS

History has always stood at the centre of political conflict in Ireland. Mark Reilly charts the dramatic changes in Irish historiography and the rise of revisionism

### New myths for old in Irish history

Books discussed in this article include:

**Labour and Partition: The Belfast Working Class 1905-23**, Austen Morgan, Pluto Press, £25 hbk

**Modern Ireland 1600-1972**, RF Foster, Penguin Books, £8.99 pbk

**Ireland 1912-85: Politics and Society**, JJ Lee, Cambridge University Press £55 hbk, £14.95 pbk

**The Narrow Ground: The Roots of Conflict in Ulster**, ATQ Stewart, Faber & Faber, £4.99 pbk

**States of Mind: Two Centuries of Anglo-Irish Conflict 1780-1980**, Oliver MacDonagh, Century, £6 pbk

**The Revolution in Ireland 1879-1923**, DG Boyce (ed), Macmillan, £10.99 pbk

Shadowing the eclipse of the republican tradition in Irish politics is the historical revisionism of the intelligentsia. The aim of revisionist history is to destroy republicanism in theory, and to provide the Southern Irish state with fresh historical legitimacy. The consequence is to ratify the British presence. Nearly every book published today on Irish history makes more or less the same point—that the root of the Irish problem lies not in the colonial link with Britain, but in some deeper sphere of inter-communal conflict.

Revisionism itself is nothing new. Since the Second World War, the dominant view in Irish historiography ran against the idealised nationalist view of the past on which the Twenty-six County state was founded. Historians like TW Moody, Desmond Williams and FSL Lyons criticised obliquely the anti-British bias in popular perceptions of the past. Historians stressed the role of constitutional nationalists (and members of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy) like Isaac Butt and Charles Stewart Parnell as a counter to the popularity of the tradition of physical-force republicanism. However, under the relaxed political conditions of pre-1969 Ireland, there was little point of conflict between the old-style revisionists and the popular view of history. The two views could coexist peacefully in an Irish state which paid homage to a republican past while doing Britain's bidding in the present.

The snug coexistence of nationalist and anti-nationalist views of history fell apart with the outbreak of war in the North in 1969. The war threatened the existence of the two states in Ireland and the views of the intelligentsia on both sides of the Border. By the mid-seventies a growing body of academic opinion was moving towards a more strident repudiation of the nationalist past. To the extent that nationalist history still existed, it did so more in the popu-

lar imagination than in the writings of any historian. The nationalist view of history had a fairly brief lifespan, roughly from 1890 to 1930. A few historians such as Peter Beresford Ellis and C Desmond Greaves could only be called nationalist in the loose sense that they were sympathetic to the republican tradition from a left-wing point of view. From the beginning, the post-1969 revisionists were attacking the nationalist aspirations of the Irish people rather than any coherent body of academic thought.

The backlash against republicanism started in earnest in 1972. In that year two books appeared, *States of Ireland* by Conor Cruise O'Brien and *Towards a New Ireland* by Garrett Fitzgerald. Both men argued that Ireland was not one single nation, but consisted of two 'traditions', nationalist and Unionist. The existence of these traditions was given in history, and any attempt to incorporate the Unionist tradition into a united Ireland was doomed to failure. While the old nationalist historians argued that there was just one national essence, O'Brien and Fitzgerald held that there were two, which could only be reconciled within a two-state structure.

This view was developed by ATQ Stewart in his seminal work *The Narrow Ground*, first published in 1977. Influenced no doubt by the growing feeling that the war in the North was intractable, Stewart maintained that not only were the two traditions irreconcilable but that their animosity for each other could never be overcome, only contained.

Stewart broke new ground with his irrational interpretation of Irish history, an interpretation which would permeate the whole of revisionist history. Borrowing an analysis from the Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung, Stewart argued that the collective folk-memory of the two traditions with their violent hatred for each other could ►

never be overcome through political solutions, that in fact such solutions only inflamed the situation. For Stewart, and this is one of the key arguments of revisionism, the form and course of the conflict are determined by patterns concealed in the past rather than by those visible in the present. In essence there is no difference between the massacres of 1641 and the conflict which broke out in 1969. All that has happened is that the same pattern of sectarian hatred has revealed itself once again. In this happy view, real living beings confronted with new problems are little more than automata through which the old unchanging patterns go on asserting themselves.

Stewart was only reflecting the experience of the British establishment, ensnared in a war which they could neither win nor disengage from. His was also a simple theorising on popular prejudices about the Irish. All the same Stewart's thesis has had a huge impact. It would be no exaggeration to say that the whole body of right-wing revisionism derived from it. Oliver MacDonagh, regarded as one of the key figures of the new revisionism, offers a variation on Stewart in his popular book *States of Mind*:

'Such a phrase as 'the solution' or 'a solution' to the Northern Ireland question has little meaning or promise to either [nationalist or Unionist]. They are committed too deeply to ancient roles and modes of interpreting the historical flow, and the patterns they perceive in—or if you will, impose upon—the past, are at once a cause of the present crisis, and a force making for its continuance.' (p14)

Here it is more a case of the historical subject being a prisoner of his own delusions, than these delusions having a real existence. But the message is the same—no escape from the patterns of the past.

## Where the revisionists see the working out of sectarian revelation, the old nationalists saw the working out of a national one

Ironically, in this more than anything else, revisionist history is a mirror image of the old nationalist school. For the nationalists, the Irish nation always existed. All that changed was the national consciousness of the people. Sometimes they had an acute awareness of their national identity, sometimes not. This ahistorical presentation of the concept, taking an idea thrown up by contemporary conflict and projecting its existence into the past, is designed to confer some legitimacy on a political position. So, where the revisionists see the working out of sectarian revelation, the old nationalists saw the working out of a national one. Roy Foster, reflecting on the outbreak of the war in 1969, finds it all *déjà vu*:

'And though riots, ambushes, shootings and kidnappings now took place in raw new suburbs and tenement apartment blocks, the village names and urban shatter-zones were those of ancient confrontations: Forkhill, Crossmaglen, the Shankill Road, had been familiar to observers of Ulster conflict since the seventeenth century.' (p592)

Here again, the modern human subject is reduced to a

medium for the continuation of 'ancient confrontations'.

The left republican tradition has also fallen into this ahistorical trap. Unfortunately James Connolly set a bad example in his *Labour in Irish History*, where he begins the history of the working class in Celtic tribal society. The concept of the working class, the specific product of capitalist society, can have little meaning if it is to be found both among primitive tribes and in modern industry. Peter Beresford Ellis, the last of the left republican historians makes the same mistake. In an attack on revisionism (*Revisionism in Irish Historical Writing*, Connolly Association, 1989), he foolishly takes up the revisionists for claiming that Irish nationalism only evolved in the eighteenth century. For once the revisionists are right, although only because they want to reduce nationalism to an episodic moment of history. Beresford Ellis points to a remonstrance from one Donal O'Neill to Pope John XXII in 1317 AD which, he says, 'makes it quite clear that the Irish had a concept of a united nation fighting for the restoration of national rights, political, social, cultural and economic, from the interference of an imperial power' (p6). Beresford Ellis would need to explain what any of these categories could possibly mean in a pre-capitalist society without any basis for, or concept of, equality. This ahistorical approach undermines Beresford Ellis' whole critique which otherwise contains some valid points.

What might be called right-wing revisionism was always limited in its appeal and too overtly sycophantic to reach a wide audience. Another revisionism from the left emerged slightly later but became a vital ingredient in the creation of a coherent anti-republican history by the late eighties. By its very nature, right-wing historiography had a limited appeal. It was too openly apologetic for partition, and too closely associated with the established order. Conor Cruise O'Brien, the most outspoken opponent of republicanism through the seventies, and closely identified with revisionism, was forced out of politics for his views. It was the intellectual collapse of the left and its belated conversion to revisionism which gave the latter its universal appeal.

Left-wing interpretations of Irish history did not set out to debunk republicanism. Initially they were quite sympathetic to the republican approach. *Saothar*, the journal of the Irish Labour History Society, started publication in 1975. It included on its board later revisionist luminaries such as Henry Patterson and Austen Morgan, but also left republicans such as Miriam Daly, shot dead by a Loyalist gang in 1981 because of her support for republican hunger-strikers. Traditionally, the Irish left has attacked republicanism for its neglect of social issues. This is not a critique as such, more a request for a place in Irish politics. The left historians took up this approach and set about unearthing the hidden social history of the ordinary people. Undoubtedly there were diverse motives in all this. Some of the historians simply wanted to enrich traditional narratives with a social angle. Others wished to show that behind the republican rhetoric lay the grinding struggle of ordinary people, little interested in high-falutin' ideals.

Whatever the motives, the left historians' project led to the fragmentation of history. In place of the traditional historical narrative (whether pro- or anti-republican), the left discovered a profusion of sub-histories. By delving into parish records, and other local sources, historians discovered that the real history of the ordinary people was far removed from the dazzling lights of Anglo-Irish

conflict. Not only were most workers and small farmers concerned only with the bread and butter issues of everyday life, but more often than not the issues themselves were peculiar to their own locality, and therefore without broader implications for the rest of society.

The emphasis on the local and the particular came to the fore in the eighties as the mainstream assimilated the work of the radical historians. Writers like Paul Bew, Henry Patterson and David Fitzpatrick emphasised the patchwork nature of what was previously considered a unified national aspiration. The episode most often lined up for this demolition job is the national struggle of

## The revisionists are desperate to find any alternative patterns of history which skirt the Anglo-Irish conflict

1919-23. The real class conflicts of the period, between a middle class Sinn Fein leadership with limited aims and a tendency to compromise with British imperialism, and the mass of the people in need of the fullest emancipation, are reinterpreted as a farcical mismatch between the 'exalted imagination' of republicans and the base motives of workers, landless labourers and small farmers.

Foster's book can be considered the first genuine synthesis of left and right revisionism. Politically inclined towards a venomous anti-republicanism in the mould of Conor Cruise O'Brien, he has nevertheless absorbed much of the methodology of the left. Writing of the Tan War, he observes:

'Local studies indicate a greater degree of fragmentation (and ineffectuality) than propaganda—or memoirs—allow. Civil disruption and local feuds provided as much gratification as actual military enterprises. Many marginalised and rootless people found a *raison d'être*; and many would cling to it by electing to fight against the Treaty in 1922.' (p501)

There is an interesting new role-cast in Foster's scheme. It is the middle classes, distinguished through modern history for their narrow-mindedness, whom he casts as the windy idealists, while the 'men of no property', concerned above all with the most far-reaching change, he casts as little more than petty thieves. This is how the radical worship of parochialism has been appropriated by right-wing historians.

The few attacks on revisionism which have taken place in recent years miss this point completely. Kevin Whelan, writing in the new radical paper the *Irish Reporter* last year, berates the revisionists for their Anglo-centric obsession and 'obliviousness to class'. He contrasts this narrow view with the pioneering work of French historians in 'recreating the popular mind as it evolved in all its diversity'. For a start, revisionists such as Foster and Marianne Elliott openly acknowledge their debt to historians such as Francois Furet in helping them develop their new approach. In fact the consequences of the radical exhumation of local histories is even more stark in the French case. During the bicentenary celebrations of the French Revolution in 1989 revisionist historians reinterpreted the event as a collection of disparate local squabbles, land-grabbing and private feuds with not a shred of idealism or world view. As a result of

the project of constructing a new bottom-up history and focusing on the regional diversity of French life, an epoch-making upheaval was reduced to a squalid punch-up between rival individuals and groups with nothing in common but pure greed. The Irish revisionists did indeed learn a lot from France.

It is also incorrect to say that the revisionists are oblivious to class. The revisionists adopted many of the left's ideas and much of its phraseology. They enthusiastically adopted the radical notion that minimal economic and social issues should be the only concern of the working class. Morgan's book, *Labour and Partition*, takes this approach, developing many of the themes he put forward in his earlier biography of the labour leader, James Connolly. Morgan blames the republicans for stirring up the sectarian hatred which swept Belfast with increasing violence until 1923. He is particularly contemptuous of Connolly for what he considers to be his capitulation to nationalism after 1914. If Connolly had stuck to the social issues which he championed until then, Ireland, according to Morgan, would have been spared much of the sectarian bloodshed which followed. Morgan is making the point that the working class should stick to its own issues and not assume responsibility for the future of society as a whole. It was Connolly's lasting contribution that he recognised the need for the working class to go beyond its own particular interests and take control over the rest of society. Once it did that, it came into conflict with the other power in the land—Britain.

Far from suffering from an 'Anglo-centric obsession' the revisionists are desperate to find alternative patterns of history which skirt or downgrade the Anglo-Irish conflict. Anything will do—sectarian hatred, regional difference or class allegiance. Once Britain is taken out of the game, or at least made a very minor player, the apologetic aim is achieved.

The problem with rubbing Britain out of the picture is that it makes the historical narrative terribly incoherent, an incoherence made worse the more alternative patterns are added. Irish history and Irish nationalism have little meaning outside of the struggle with Britain. In fact, because of the peculiar relationship between the two countries as a result of the Act of Union, shifts in British domestic politics often have an immediate and unexpected effect in Ireland. The rise of imperialism and the fluidity of British politics at the end of the nineteenth century, for example, made it impossible for Britain to grant Ireland home rule, a fact which polarised opinion in Ireland and led to the uprising of Easter 1916.

The revisionists, looking at the same period, emphasise what they call 'indigenous impulses'. *The Revolution in Ireland 1873-1923* is a collection of essays by leading revisionists, all with their own pet theory for the rise of militant republicanism. All the writers neglect the political dimension of the conflict with the empire, and focus instead on sociological or psychological motives. Most of them locate the rise of nationalism in the emergence of a significant middle class with the solution of the land question at the turn of the century, or as a hangover of agrarian radicalism.

Tom Garvin goes one better, using the vulgar psycho-analysis pioneered by Erich Fromm in his treatment of fascism. 'Revolutionary leaders', according to Garvin, 'are to be found neither in the hovels of the poor nor in the palaces of the rich but rather among 'overeducated out-groups' (*The Revolution in Ireland 1879-1923*, p96). ▶

These 'outgroups' consist of teachers, poorly paid civil servants and the like, all bitter little men with big gripes. By drawing an analogy with European fascism, this crude analysis supports a popular theme in British propaganda against Irish republicanism. Sociological analyses may be interesting in themselves, but they can never explain why groups opt for one political approach as opposed to another in particular circumstances. They wrongly presume a mechanistic relation between social position and political attitudes.

## Behind the attacks on republicanism, that would go down well in any London drawing-room, lurks a call to accept the dictatorship of the past

Because the revisionists reject the traditional forms of Irish nationalism, they are wrongly described as anti-nationalist. Revisionism is the historiography of a failed nationalism, but a nationalist historiography all the same. Many of the revisionist historians are quite open in their search for a new national identity which can transcend the limits set down by the Anglo-Irish conflict; in other words, a national identity which avoids the real national question. Their obsessive concern with the Irish mentality, which they think explains the persistence of the conflict, inevitably leads them to the question of what this mentality really is. The flood of literature in recent years on Irish culture also points to the same moral vacuum. The vast corpus of such writing aims to carve out a chunk of human experience which can be described as uniquely Irish.

The inclusive identity is the one in vogue at the moment. The argument is that the national identity of the past, that of an exclusive, Gaelic, Catholic Ireland, was the source of sectarian conflict and brought the country to its present sorry state. An inclusive identity would seek to accommodate the diverse traditions which form Ireland's cultural ensemble. It is the Irish equivalent of multiculturalism, and in line with its methodological pluralism, concocts regional and parochial identities in order to show the relative character of the old national identity. It also seeks to weave Ireland into the broader tapestry of European culture. Foster ends his book in this vein:

'Irish history in the long period since the completion of the Elizabethan conquest concerned a great deal more than the definition of Irishness against Britishness.... But that sense of difference comes strongly through, though its expression was conditioned by altering circumstances, and adapted for different interest groups, as the years passed. If the claims of cultural maturity and a new European identity advanced by the 1970s can be substantiated, it may be by the hope of a more relaxed and inclusive definition of Irishness, and a less constricted view of Irish history.' (*Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, p596)

In fact, an inclusive national identity is an absurd contradiction. If you want to distil the essence of Irishness, then for logical consistency, you must define it as something exclusive to the Irish character, something with a transcendental quality. Otherwise the Irish are nothing more than a cultural palimpsest on whom diverse and

chaotic influences are inscribed. In theory, this view of identity is what the writer Vincent Buckley considers Ireland to be: 'a nothing—a no-thing—an interesting nothing, to be sure, composed of colourful parts, a nothing-mosaic.' (Quoted in JJ Lee, *Ireland 1912-85*, p661) Foster's intention is rather more prosaic. He simply wants his readers to accept the 'sense of difference' as it is, where the rival sects each have their own fiefdom in which to indulge their atavistic urges.

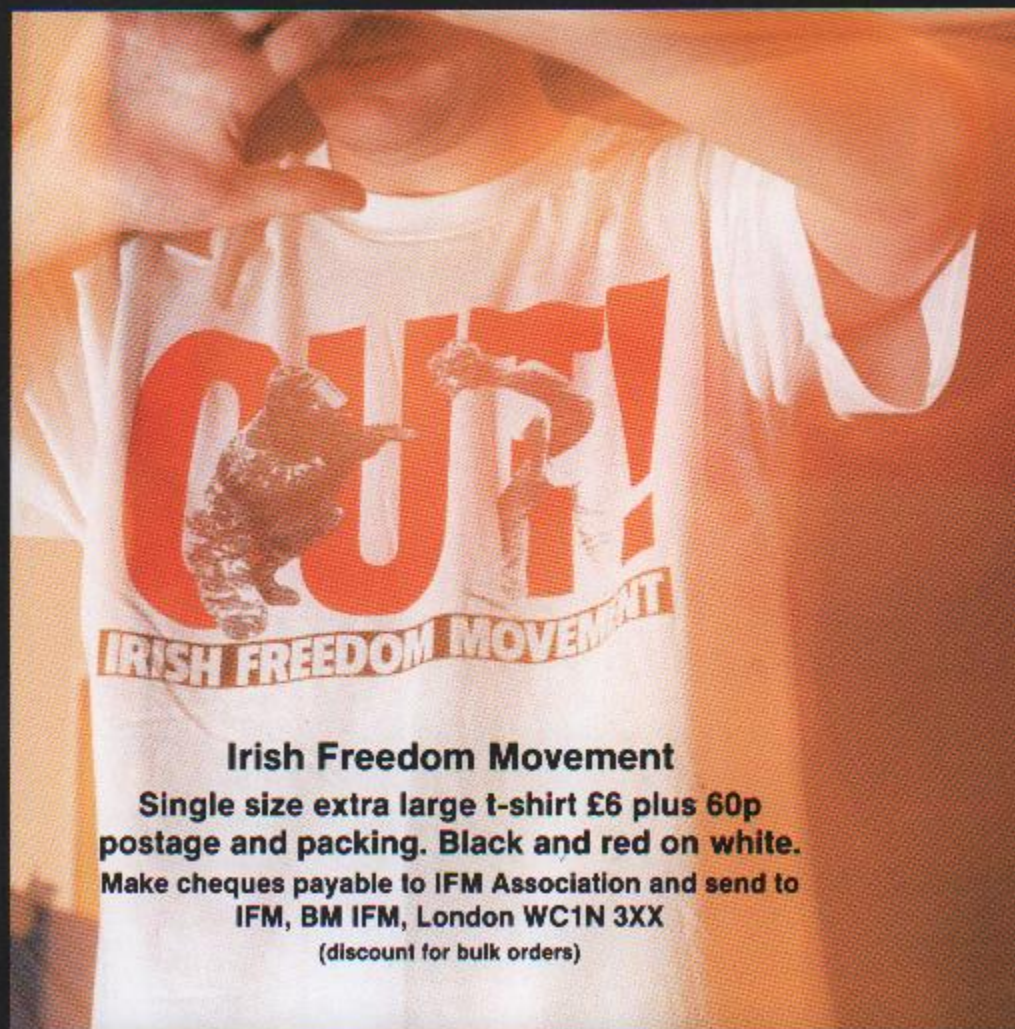
A more intriguing doctrine of identity comes from the historian JJ Lee, Professor of Modern History at University College Cork. In common with other revisionists, Lee fetishises what he calls the 'history of *mentalité*'. However he also realises the limitations of the inclusivist doctrine. For Lee, the Irish mind was formed by centuries of British domination, a domination now inscribed on the psyche. He criticises the early revisionists for their neglect of the concept of *mentalité* which they considered too closely associated with nationalism. Lee sees the triumph of the slave mentality as the prime cause of Southern Ireland's poor showing since 'independence'. Central to his concern is the abandonment of the Irish language:

'It may be that there is an Irish emotional reality which is silenced in English. It may be too that many Irish no longer experience that emotional reality, that it has been parched out of them, that a particular stream of Irish consciousness has dried up with the decay of the language.' (JJ Lee, *Ireland 1912-85*, p668).

He wonders too 'whether the loss of the language may not have affected the national personality by fostering further the inferiority complex that required as a reflex compensating mechanism an exaggerated Anglophobia, leading, as Douglas Hyde sardonically observed, to the Hibernian habit of denouncing England while imitating everything English' (p669). Lee is arguing that if the Irish had a truly respectful attitude towards their tradition (a linguistic one in this case), there would be little need for nationalist posturing. His analysis is both a yearning to be anchored in a mythical national past, and a put-down of genuine aspirations for national freedom as 'exaggerated Anglophobia'.

Lee draws out the conservative content of revisionism. Behind the fashionable attacks on republicanism, that would go down well in any London drawing-room, lurks a call to accept the dictatorship of the past, whether this be the 'two traditions' or the identity conferred by a dead language. In *Ulysses*, Joyce has Stephen Dedalus observe that 'history is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake'. For the revisionists, the nightmare is the ineluctable spirit of history.

Revisionism is today the official history of the Twenty-six Counties. It is a fitting end for a state brought into existence by the defeat of those who fought for national liberation. For 70 years the state lived off its bogus association with 1916. Now that link is an embarrassment. Revisionism is the Irish intelligentsia pondering its own future and working out how the state can continue to justify its existence. With society in the South falling apart, corruption rife, and respect for the state almost non-existent, any solution offers hope. Even the slowest track of the European circuit will do if it will keep the Gadarene swine from the precipice. At the close of the twentieth century, the potential of the Irish to make their own history afresh, without reference to the revisionists' sacred patterns, remains undiminished.



### Irish Freedom Movement

Single size extra large t-shirt £6 plus 60p postage and packing. Black and red on white. Make cheques payable to IFM Association and send to IFM, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX (discount for bulk orders)

## LIVING MARXISM

## back issues

### No35 ● September 1991 Realising the human potential;

Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union join the third world; BCCI and the myth of the free market; South Africa after Inkathagate.

### No36 ● October 1991 Soviet special—exposing the lies;

The truth about the Soviet 'coup'; The Good West and the Evil East; Blacks under siege in Fortress Europe; Militant and Labour.

### No37 ● November 1991 The silent race war;

Why the West lost the East; Croatia: rewriting the Second World War; The 'underclass': a race apart?

### No38 ● December 1991 Sex, lies and more lies;

The truth about the Aids panic; Germany: the right's new racist agenda; *The Lovers' Guide*.

### No39 ● January 1992 Frontier War—Europe's new East-West divide;

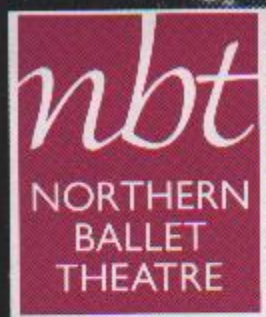
Immigration controls cause racism; Croatian fascism; Economy in slump.

£2.50 includes postage and packing

## binders

The best way to keep your magazines safe from the perils of everyday life is to get into binding. New, improved *Living Marxism* embossed binders with optional 1988/89, 1990 or 1991 stickers for just £7 plus 80p postage and packing, two for £14 post free. Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX

S  
W  
A  
N  
L  
A  
K  
E



Artistic Director  
Christopher Gable

W  
O  
R  
L  
D  
  
P  
R  
E  
M  
I  
E  
R  
E



Box Office  
0532 459351/  
0532 440971

SAT 8 - SAT 15  
FEBRUARY  
1992.

And on tour throughout the UK.  
Please contact the Marketing  
Department for further details:  
0422-380420