

LIVING

MARXISM

Irish Freedom
March

Saturday 8 August

(see centre pages)

US \$5 DM7 FF25
UK £2 August 1992 No46

**The
Irish**

**The
Iraqis**

**The
Serbs**

Who will the west

XXXXXX

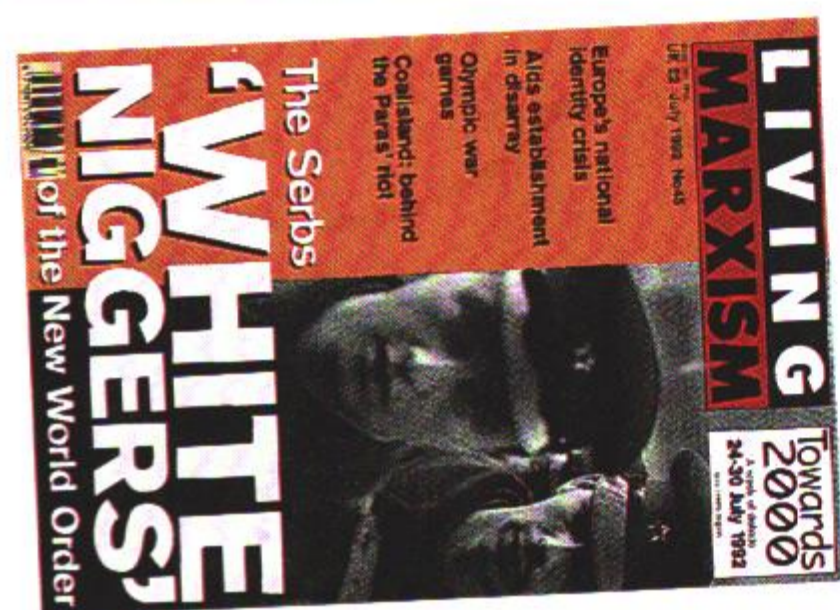
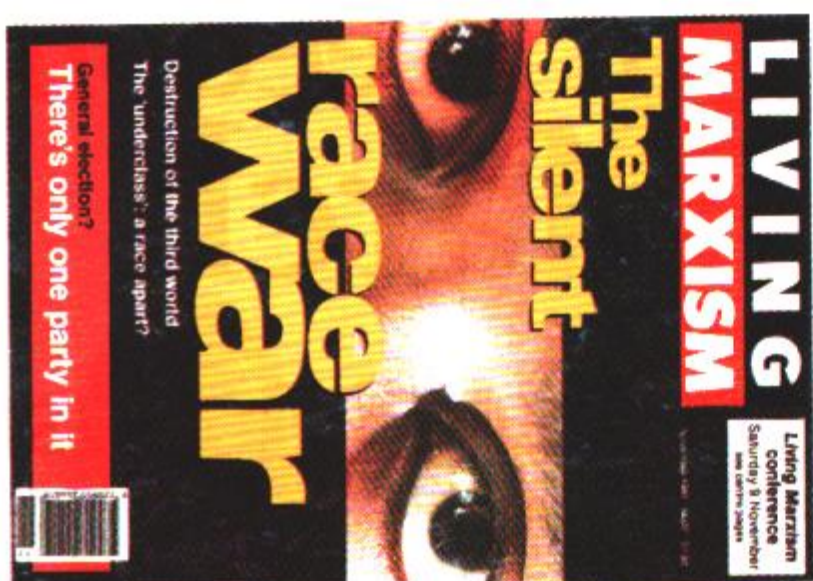
next



The truth about the Birmingham Aids panic

Irving and Goebbels • Police and public order • Chippendales and cricket

Subscribers



●
A subscription to *Living Marxism* is now better value than ever; at £19.50 for a year, it saves you almost 20 per cent on the cover price. Write to *Living Marxism* Subscriptions (46), BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX or phone (071) 375 1485 (ansaphone)

contents

- 4 **Editorial**
- 6 Letters
- 10 **An incoherent rage**
Frank Richards
- 13 Irving and Goebbels *Sharon Clarke*
- 14 **Yugoslavia: Who's to blame?**
Joan Phillips
- 18 Inside the ex-Soviet Union
Rob Matthews
- 19 Ann Bradley
- 20 **The truth about the Birmingham Aids panic**
Dr Michael Fitzpatrick and Ian Scott
- 24 March for Irish freedom
- 26 The Irish War in the New World
Order Phil Murphy
- 29 Toby Banks
- 30 The law on trial *John Fitzpatrick*
- 34 Coventry's anti-youth culture
Andrew Calcutt
- 37 Policing the public *Tessa Myer*
- 38 **Living:** Chippendales; *Maus*; Walter Mosley; Cricket and racism
- 43 Frank Cottrell-Boyce on TV
- 44 **The Marxist Review of Books**



PHOTO: Michael Kramer

Serbs demonstrate in London in July

Hands Off the Balkans Committee

As the Western powers prepare to step up their intervention in Bosnia, there is a growing consensus in Britain that this is the only way to 'save those people from themselves'. Yet the reality is that, as argued in this issue of *Living Marxism*, Western interference has already exploded the conflict among the former Yugoslav republics, and further intervention can only make things worse.

To counter Western propaganda of the sort which has tried to demonise the Serbs, and to oppose any moves to send in outside forces, *Living Marxism* has backed the setting up of a Hands Off the Balkans Committee in London. It is open to all those who want to take a stand against the Western powers' New World Order, which has already destroyed Iraq and is now targeting the peoples of the Balkans.

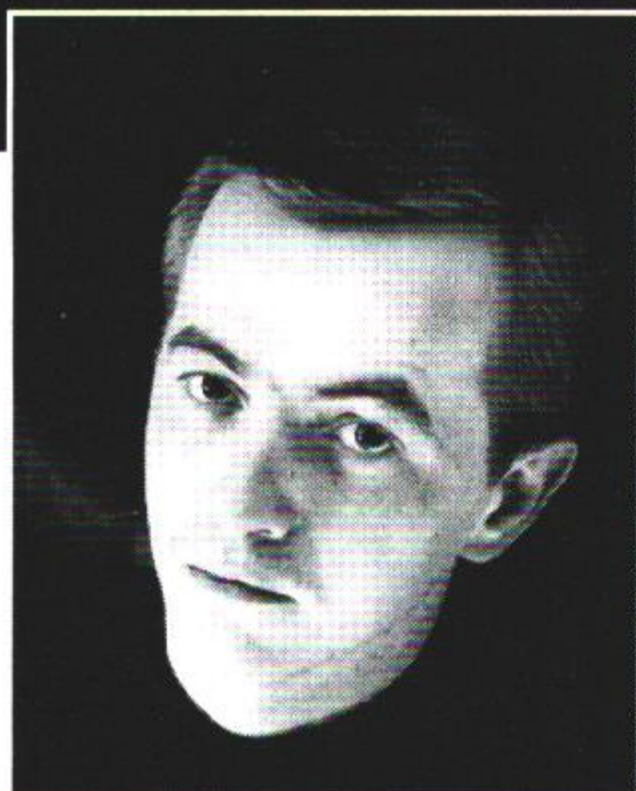
For further information about the Committee's work and planned events, contact Hands Off the Balkans Committee, c/o BM WAR, London WC1N 3XX or telephone (071) 375 1702.

Editor: **Mick Hume** ● Assistant Editor: **Joan Phillips**
Editorial Assistant: **Tessa Myer** ● International Editor: **Daniel Nassim**
News: **Andrew Calcutt** ● Living section: **John Fitzpatrick**
Design: **Richard Stead, Charles Longford**
Production: **Michael Kramer, Peter Ray**
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 in the UK by Comag Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE; Phone: West Drayton (0895) 444 055; Fax (0895) 445 255; Telex 881 3787 ● Distributed in the USA by Bernhard DeBoer Inc, 113 East Centre Street, Nutley, New Jersey 07110, USA; Phone (201) 667 9300 ● Typeset by Junius Publications (TU) © copyright Revolutionary Communist Party
Printed by Russell Press (TU), Nottingham ● ISSN 0955-2448 August 1992. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but can only be returned if an SAE is enclosed



mick hume

Who's next?

Imagine the reaction of the British government if Russia announced that Northern Ireland peace talks were to be held in Moscow, and chaired by ex-Soviet foreign minister Shevardnadze. Yet Britain thinks it right and proper for talks on the future of the former Yugoslav republics to be held in London, under the supervision of ex-Tory foreign secretary Lord Carrington.

Or think what the French government would have done if the president of, say, Romania had flown uninvited into Paris in June, and declared that he would bring in his troops to break the blockade by French lorry drivers. Yet France believes that its president Mitterrand was perfectly within his rights when he helicoptered into Sarajevo in Bosnia, and threatened to bring in French helicopter gunships to break the blockade of the airport.

In the New World Order, it seems that the Western powers have the unquestioned right to interfere as they see fit in the affairs of all other nations and peoples. The West can treat the entire third world and the old Soviet bloc as corners of its own backyard, and treat the billions who live there as pet dogs to be given a bone or a big stick, depending on how they behave.

The casual assumption that the West must know what's best for Bosnia or anywhere else is both arrogant and dangerous. Bush, Major, Mitterrand and Kohl are not social workers or reconciliation counsellors. They are hard-nosed capitalist

statesmen. So ask yourself this. What motives do their governments have for wanting to poke their noses (and their guns) into other people's business? And who benefits when they do so?

Western governments have constantly assured us that their intentions towards Bosnia are purely 'humanitarian', while the media has bombarded us with images of orphans and invalids who must be saved. Nobody could object to the provision of humanitarian relief. But since when were the Western powers concerned about saving children and rescuing refugees?

The 'humanitarian' argument with which the West has justified its intervention in Yugoslavia sounds suspiciously like the line used to legitimise previous foreign invasions. The Western powers' humane concerns have never been what they seem.

Remember the plight of the Kuwaiti babies torn from incubators and left to die by Iraqi troops? That was a key emotive issue used by politicians and the press on both sides of the Atlantic to whip up support for the Gulf War. A year after the war, the New York-based human rights organisation Middle East Watch had to concede that the incubator story was untrue, and that the 'eye-witness' used to broadcast it in the West was in fact a member of the Kuwaiti royal family. In the meantime, the US-British military had killed many Iraqi children and orphaned countless more. And the children of Iraq are still suffering

today as a consequence of the West's continuing economic sanctions.

Then there were the desperate Kurds who cried out for Western protection at the end of the Gulf War—just as some in Bosnia cry out to the West today. The Americans and the British launched a 'humanitarian' mission to save the Kurds from Saddam Hussein, by occupying northern Iraq and creating military 'safe havens' for Kurdish refugees. Before long those safe havens had been turned into killing fields, as Turkey—a close Nato ally of the West—bombed the Kurds within them. The humanitarians of Washington and Whitehall seemed to think that was fair enough.

Now they tell us that their intervention in Bosnia has been to stop Serbian aggression. The Serbs have been paraded across the Western press as apes and murderers, condemned as 'barbaric' by American and European leaders, subjected to sanctions and threatened with worse. While the ire of the West has been directed against the creation of a 'Greater Serbia', few seem to have noticed the fact that a 'Greater Croatia' has been carved out with just as much force.

The Croats have had 50 000 troops in Bosnia—the same number as the Serbs. They have set up their own regional government, imposed their own laws and currency, and held talks with the Serbian leadership about partitioning the republic at the expense of the Muslims. Yet by the middle of July, when the Serbs had been

heavily pilloried and punished by the Western powers, Croatia had received one small diplomatic wrist-slap from the United Nations. Reports of that were tucked well away inside the same papers which carried banner headlines about Serbia's crimes.

Humanitarianism, stopping aggression, saving the world: these are all causes which the Western powers will use and abuse as it suits them. The manipulation of such issues and images provides the West with a pretext for pursuing its own decidedly non-humanitarian and aggressive interests in somewhere like Yugoslavia.

So what has the West been up to in Croatia and Bosnia behind this smoke-screen? The Western nations have not really been all that concerned about who does what to whom in the local conflicts. Instead, the Germans, the Americans, the French and the British have been cynically using the battlefields as a bloody chess board on which to play a power game against one another. The pawns in this game—and the biggest losers by far—have been the ordinary Serbs, Muslims and Croats of the former Yugoslav republics.

As Joan Phillips explains elsewhere in this issue, the current tensions among the ethnic groups in Yugoslavia were created by the uneven impact of the Western-backed market economy. And those tensions were exploded into war by the political intervention of one after another of the Western governments: first the Germans and French, then the Americans and British, all trying to put one over on the rest (see pages 14-17).

The Western powers did not want to get involved in a messy conflict like the Yugoslav war. They would probably rather

have built a wall around it and let the combatants kill each other. But each of the major capitalist nations has been pushed in by the dynamic of international competition, and the fear that if they didn't intervene, their Western rivals would monopolise the issue.

The change in America's attitude best illustrates this process. In an interview with the *New York Times* in June, the last American ambassador to Belgrade explained how he had at first advised the republics of Slovenia and Croatia to remain within Yugoslavia. So why did the USA then flip-flop and become a supporter of the breakaways? Because, said the ambassador, of 'the German initiative' in getting the EC to recognise Croatia and Slovenia.

In other words, America came to back the fragmentation of Yugoslavia not because of any belief in the national rights of Croatia, but because it wanted to keep up with the pace of Germany's international crusade against Serbia. Next thing you know, the USA had become the loudest critic of Serb 'barbarism' in Bosnia, in a bid to get ahead of Germany in the global anti-Serbian stakes.

These West-West rivalries are the decisive factor in shaping conflicts from the Gulf to the Balkans today. Economic disputes over trade and interest rates are matched by rows over political and military matters. The battle is on to gain the highest position possible in the New World (pecking) Order. The people of places like Yugoslavia are getting caught in the crossfire.

Gone are the days of the Cold War, when the USA could call the shots in international diplomacy through Nato and the United Nations. Now there are many institutions, different ones favoured by

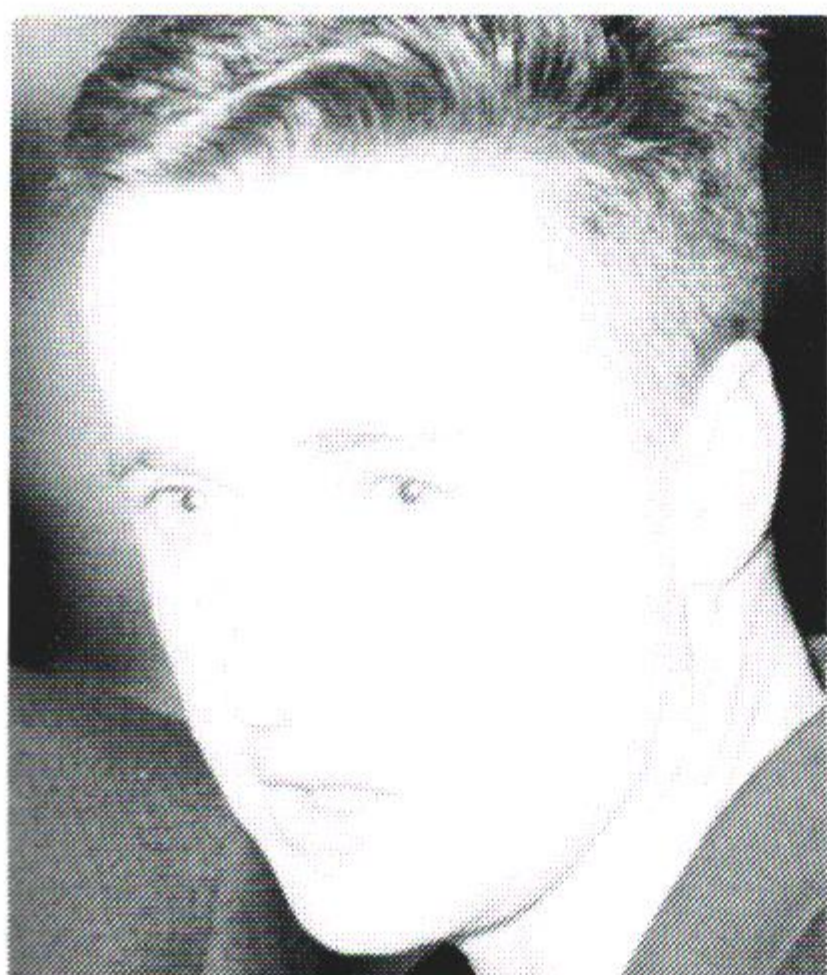
rival powers, all vying to be Number One. That was why the West's diplomatic manoeuvres over Bosnia descended into a round of summitry among a bewildering array of acronyms: the G7, the CSCE, Nato, the UN, the EC, the WEU, all of them trying to outdo one another with threats and counter-threats of military action. You could almost hear the fault-lines give way as the Western Alliance fractured.

As the contest among the capitalist powers comes to dominate world affairs, it is establishing a pattern of militarised international relations. One group of people after another is being demonised and set up as a target against which Western powers can demonstrate their authority.

Last year the Iraqis were used as a convenient whipping post for America's attempt to prove that it is still on top of things. Now the Serbs have found themselves turned into the punch-bag for a test of strength among the Germans, French, Americans and British. So who's next? The Muslims of Bosnia? The people of some former Soviet republic? Another Arab nation?

Whoever it is, they will face an increasingly formidable display of military might. Despite all the talk of peace dividends and defence cuts, the Western powers are acquiring a new generation of weapons said to be 'better suited to post-Cold War conditions'. That means weapons for rapid and incisive displays of force against small countries, rather than for a long, sterile stand-off with the Soviet Union. The USA is even reported to be 'planning a new kind of nuclear weapon for specific use in the third world' (*Guardian*, 2 July 1992).

Welcome to the New World Order.



Nigel Lewis

Nigel Lewis, one of the leading supporters of *Living Marxism*, died on Wednesday 15 July after suffering a brain haemorrhage. He was 29. Nigel had been a member of the Political Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, an organiser of RCP branches in the Midlands and London, and, most recently, leader of the national Workers Against Racism campaign.

The sudden death of somebody of Nigel's age and talents is truly a tragedy. But at least he did something worthwhile with the time that he had. He spent his adult life fighting against injustice and for freedom. Nigel was a real revolutionary, a tough comrade, and a good bloke. We send our deepest condolences to all of his family and friends.

Aids, lies and Africa

The recent bout of media scare stories surrounding the Birmingham Aids case is evidence of the impact of a government-sponsored Aids panic that has lost little of its momentum ('Aids panic in disarray', July). It has also highlighted the eagerness with which sections of the establishment will condemn the 'irresponsibility' and general 'amoralism' of sections of the working class—not only drug users, but the 'promiscuous' club-going youth of inner cities.

The state has a much broader agenda. This is to promote the moral values of the family and monogamy; a project which may sometimes require the systematic distortion and suppression of facts. However there are shortcomings with the strategy of a mere recital of statistics to 'expose the lies' of the state and its lackeys. It allows the moral campaigners to cite the containment of the spread as justification for the nature and 'success' of their campaigning. It can only encourage the scapegoating of particular sections of society in the context of a widely shared blame-the-victim ideology. This approach is based on the notion that the state itself has as its primary role the deception of the exploited sections of society into a belief in the legitimacy of class rule.

Although this propagandist approach is perhaps the only feasible one for an organisation of the RCP's size and influence, it sometimes encourages a shallow analysis of the actual forces and structures within society that condition the generation of particular kinds of ideology. By talking in terms of 'lies' it also denies the fact that all but the most cynical members of the ruling class tend to believe in their own ideology—not least politicians themselves.

Stephanie Pride Southampton

I agree with Dr Michael Fitzpatrick's assertions that the threat of Aids has been grossly overestimated and abused for moral propaganda, bureaucratic growth and general scientific fudge. I am slightly concerned about his ambiguous statements on the heterosexual spread of Aids in Africa. This cannot be adequately explained by lack of either contraception or education, as the lack of contraception use in the UK would have also led to 'rapid heterosexual spread facilitated by other sexually transmitted diseases and prostitution'.

Any real answers? The actual ways in which the disease is spread do not change in Asia or Africa. Even that bastion of radicalism the *Sunday Times* in the article by Neville Hodgkinson pointed out that the World Health Organisation's figures that there are six million HIV-positive Africans are not matched (thankfully) by an explosion of Aids. African people

suffering from diseases usually associated with malnourishment are, according to Hodgkinson being rediagnosed as Aids victims 'because virus hunters can point to the presence of HIV'. Yet the connection between HIV and Aids is to say the least blurred.

RC Chirumuuta and RJ Chirumuuta pointed out extensively in their book *Aids, Africa and Racism* in 1987 how unsafe 'scientific assumptions' were in reference to African infection. A history involving a series of scientific studies to 'prove' that Aids originated in Africa, that it spread from rural areas to cities and that life in Africa is 'one endless orgy'. As they point out science can 'prove' that there 'are fairies in the bottom of the garden'. As we have clearly seen with the Aids panic in Britain. I would like more evidence placed before me before I can categorise sub-Saharan Africa as high-risk any more than Canterbury. If Dr Fitzpatrick has the facts, can we please be a party to them?

Kieron Smith Dorset

'Homophobia': myths and realities

I take Peter Ray's point about the use of 'homophobia' ('The Myth of homophobia', June). It used to explain the criminalisation of lesbians and gays it can be totally misleading. I believe that the lesbian and gay movement do not use 'homophobia' in the way Ray suggests. For example in a recent article in the *Guardian*, a spokesman from OutRage argued that 'the "new queer" politics is about public sex, it's about cruising, it's about orgiastic sex, it's about being seen by society as a threat'. In other words, sex outside of the 'norms' of heterosexuality, procreation and monogamous relations is not natural and therefore a threat. It is under this context that 'homophobia' is used.

I agree with Ray's argument that the issue of discrimination against lesbians and gays, if couched in terms of the individual would not fully address the underlying cause of this discrimination and would be apolitical. However I think it is dangerous to suggest, as Ray does implicitly, that political change through legislation will automatically lead to decriminalisation. We only have to look at the Equal Pay Act for example to see that for most women this has no effect on their wage packet at the end of the day.

D O'Donovan West London

Congratulations to Peter Ray for taking two pages to correctly point out a literal grammatical error that we make when using the word 'homophobia.' Yes, homophobia does mean 'fear of...' as my arachnophobia means I have an irrational fear of seeing/being near spiders (however big and butch or small and camp!).

This article on homophobia would be more aptly placed in a literary magazine, as Peter offers us no political or social analysis whatever of 'anti-homosexual bigotry' (his phrase not mine) or heterosexism (mine, not his, but I stand to be corrected on the grammatical not political correctness of it!). It's nice to know that while some of us are fighting the prejudice, you still have the time and space to play English teacher.

Alison Groombridge Sheffield

After Los Angeles

I am glad to see you are incorporating American issues into your coverage but I found Linda Ryan's commentary on the Los Angeles riots ('Racism: the issue of our times', June) overly simplistic.

Ryan says that Americans 'no longer feel guilty about racism'. Poor, working class and so-called 'middle class' people who make up the bulk of the American population, are losing their jobs and homes in droves. They do not have the resources, let alone any idea, of what to do for blacks, beyond volunteer work. (The rich ruling minority, of course, don't care). Many whites feel guilty and try to do their best within the narrow scope of their abilities. I wonder if the writer is getting her ideas of how Americans live from watching Dallas and other execrable television exports. In any case, guilt is just a feeling, not an action.

If one hopeful truth came out of the LA riots, it is that the problem is of class as much as race. The riots are a clear sign that the present system is not working. The competing presidential candidates have no choice but to address this crisis. The loss of educational, day-care and work-training programs disbanded during the Reagan-Bush administrations most hurt those in the bottom strata of the economic pyramid—many of whom were black. But they hurt a lot of whites too. Reinstating such programs will benefit all.

For all my criticisms, I think you run an excellent publication. It is a joy to read a constant stream of well-written, intelligent articles without the intrusion of advertising. I am glad to hear you have begun publishing in the States, and will look out for your magazine on the newsstands.

Christina Gombar, New York

If you are dissatisfied with your position and place in society, you do something positive about it. Whether black or white it's of no importance. What matters is that the means to achieve it is not through a barrel of a gun, nor through chaos and destruction. The Los Angeles riots were instigated by those unscrupulous people who used the protest in

order to further their own gains. The protest was supposed to be about values, injustices, inhumanity and social equality. Instead those who were supposedly crying out for mercy from a system they deem biased, were in fact contradicting themselves by warring on an even lesser minority, the Asians.

Talk about racism! If there is a nation who could be excused for rioting with tension and anger it is the Brazilians who dwell in *favelas* with no sanitation, no healthcare, no welfare even. Do they riot? Well no, because they have more dignity, more discipline. The riots in LA were a joke. Rodney King himself deplored the violence and he was the only victim. Violence is violence and the guilty should be treated as such.

Anne Owens *Liverpool*

Tyson v Kennedy Smith

Ronald Kieve is wrong on several points when criticising Emmanuel Oliver's article 'The rape of black America' (letters, June). It is useful to compare the Kennedy Smith trial to the Tyson one. The former was white, middle-class and well-connected. Tyson was from a poor family, a New York ghetto and black. No surprises as to who went down....That is racism.

Secondly even if Kennedy Smith had been convicted, women would not be better off. Rape has nothing to do with men's lust and everything to do with women's secondary position in society. Rape is an expression of their lack of power. This is what needs challenging. No-one is upholding black rights over women's rights. What Emmanuel Oliver explained was the way the US establishment used feminist rhetoric as a way of criminalising black people. Ronald Kieve's letter shows that opposition to the US government has further fragmented into the particularisms of gender and ethnicity respectively.

Mark Arnold *Haringey, London*

Post-revolutionary societies

Living Marxism's recognition that the post-World War Two world order is finished and that a fundamental reconstruction of revolutionary politics is therefore required (Editorial, July), is welcome for its realism and honesty. However assuming that a new revolutionary critique has been successfully put together, showing workers that capitalism is crap and should be sacked by force, how can we show that the system that will replace it will be better? Simply put, *Living Marxism* is not even beginning to address the question 'what will a post-revolutionary society look like?'

It should for two reasons. Firstly there has been a tendency in much Marxist thought to

neglect questions of the future and focus exclusively on building for revolution. There seems to be a naive faith in things sorting themselves out once the workers have assumed control over the means of production. Secondly, post-revolutionary societies are overwhelmingly associated in the popular consciousness with low material standards of living and political repression.

I'm not arguing for some utopian blueprint of the ideal Marxist society. It is merely my contention that addressing the problem of the post-revolutionary future constitutes an integral part of the reconstitution of revolutionary Marxism. Lest my concern be dismissed as distracting from the struggle, utopian or worse remember—a convincing better future for the working class under communism is the best propaganda revolutionary Marxists can have.

Steve Ely *West Yorkshire*

Socialists against Serbs

Three cheers for *Living Marxism's* courageous stand on Serbia. At last some proletarian internationalism has seen its way into print. Sadly it is not only in the official media that a totally distorted picture of the Yugoslavian conflict has been presented.

On the *New Left Review* editorial board Branka Magas and Quentin Hoare have been allowed to develop their own peculiar views. Scores of letters have appeared in the press by this unsavoury pair, all of them rabidly anti-Serbian. In demonising the Serbs these 'leftists' have slipped into the crude racism so popular among German intellectuals and French professional anti-communists such as Bernard Henri-Levy. It is a continual source of amazement on my part that these people are not driven away from any socialist platform.

Andrew Coates *Suffolk*

Capitalists and kings

The complaints from Ben Brack and Nick Underwood (letters, July) about Mick Hume's article on the monarchy miss the point. They say that the abolition of the monarchy 'does not necessarily lead to the clarification of class divisions'. Fair enough; but then, *Living Marxism* never said that it 'necessarily' did. The intervention (or not) of revolutionary politics is always decisive.

Brack and Underwood ignore the basic Marxist proposition that the more democratic and 'open' a system of government is, the more opportunities there are for revolutionaries to expose the inherently undemocratic and oppressive character of a society which remains dominated by the capitalist class. As the article indicates, it is in this spirit of

demystification that communists support the abolition of the monarchy, along with universal suffrage and even proportional representation—even though none of these measures change anything important in themselves.

Brack and Underwood also underestimate the importance of what the article calls the 'culture of deference' towards the monarchy, not as the cause of stagnation and conservatism in Britain, but as a symbol of that problem in British politics. Their choice of Germany as a country which has been just as stable without a monarch is rather bizarre. After all, the fall of the Kaiser was followed in quick succession by three attempted working class revolutions, a failed fascist putsch, a national collapse, and Hitlerism.

The nub of Brack and Underwood's argument seems to be that *Living Marxism* should not have articles on things like the monarchy, but should stick to attacking 'the parasites in pinstripes'. The implication of that is that every front-page headline should say 'Smash capitalism', and that every article should say that the problem is the falling rate of profit. If that is what they want, I'm sure they can still find some brain-dead sect churning out such exciting material. I hope that *Living Marxism* will stick to its very different approach of dealing with the issues of the moment (such as the royals) from a revolutionary perspective. That seems to me to be the best way to make Marxism come alive today.

Pete Kearney *London*

It is right to suggest that current attention regarding royal disputes reflects wider disquiet with the monarchy ('Abolish the Monarchy', June). But the key factors in Britain's constitutional crisis have not resulted from socialist pressure, but rather from transformative dynamics within capitalism itself—something that obsessed Marx but has since been rather neglected.

Monarchies are essentially not institutions of capitalism but rather of feudalism. In the age of Western Europe's empires they survived because they acted as figureheads for establishing new markets that were vital to capitalism's progress. Now in the context of falling long-term profit rates, 'big business' views the monarchy as something hindering the establishment of a truly free European market, something that encourages petty British nationalism which is no longer backed by Britain's economic abilities.

The return to 'real' free market capitalism during the 1980s took the economy out of the control of the established state bureaucracy and placed it in the hands of the capitalist upper middle class. These knights of ►

Thatcherism wanted to run everything like a business (which is what they were used to doing) whether it was a civil service department, the health service, a bus route or the water supply. For them there are no sacred cows, not even the monarchy: profit alone determines survival. This type of middle class 'revolution' against the monarchy is not without precedent—look no further than 1789. What is unique is the simultaneous collapse of public confidence in the judiciary and the territorial 'integrity' of the United Kingdom.

Simon Kyte *Berkshire*

Don't exaggerate French racism

Kenan Malik's article 'Is France going fascist?' (May) correctly identifies the trend here towards a racist consensus embracing all the major political parties. Nevertheless, he is considerably overstating the case when he maintains that almost every one of the measures in Le Pen's anti-immigrant charter of last November has already been advocated or implemented by mainstream politicians. The examples he cites in substantiation of this claim tend to be either of a localised character (a few racist mayors acting largely on their own initiative) or of a demagogic nature with little practical consequence (Cresson's charter planes, Giscard's 'blood rather than birth' criterion for French nationality).

It is notable that one recent law brought in by the Socialist government which really did correspond to a measure in the FN's 50 point anti-immigrant programme—the setting up of 'transit zones' for possible illegal immigrants—had to be overturned by the Constitutional Council, under pressure from anti-racist street protests. It is thus a considerable exaggeration to suggest that the French ruling class is either willing or able to implement, on a substantial scale, the kind of measures which Le Pen has been advocating.

Voices have been raised within the FN itself against the 50 point programme. The leading Moonie representative in the FN has criticised the programme as a vote loser while others have expressed concern at the way in which their movement has been cordoned off from the political mainstream.

It is true that racism is a powerful and growing factor in French politics. However the kind of systematic racism which Kenan Malik's article suggests as being already the reality in France could not be implemented without rehabilitating the pioneers of this approach, namely Pétain and the Vichy state. But that is a skeleton which the French establishment is not too eager to exhume.

Louis Ryan *Paris*

Essex is no worse than Glasgow

Joe M Kane (letters, July) makes the serious accusation that *Living Marxism's* articles on Scotland 'are deliberately distorted in order to apologise for your beloved "Essex Man", to excuse his reactionary tendencies to vote Tory'. He also claims it is strange that *Living Marxism* should support a united Ireland, when the Irish Republic is so conservative, 'yet reject the idea of an independent Scotland which would certainly be strongly socialist'. That is all tosh.

If there is distortion being done it's by those who claim that Scotland is a fortress of socialism besieged by the right-wing English. Living in Essex doesn't make you any more right-wing (or left-wing, come to that) than living in Glasgow. Certainly, there are some prevalent 'reactionary tendencies' down here, especially where immigrants and black people are concerned. Just as there are strong 'reactionary tendencies' in Scotland: Orange sectarianism, racism, attempts to stop women getting abortions, etc.

So far as the election goes, why should voting for Neil Kinnock's Labour Party or Alex Salmond's SNP be thought of as any better than supporting John Major's Tory Party? Certainly many Scots seem to have concluded that it would make no difference, since both Labour and the SNP fell back on election day.

As for the Irish/Scottish comparisons which often seem to appear in letters to *Living Marxism*, so far as I can see the creed of Irish nationalism is just as narrow-minded as the Scottish version. They are both weighed down by the same parochial, backward-looking politics and culture. I would not want to live under the Catholic constitution of the Irish Republic any more than the Presbyterian pettiness of the Scottish Highlands and Islands.

There is a difference, however, in the relationship of Irish and Scottish nationalism to the British government. Irish nationalists endure military occupation by a foreign power, Britain, and the denial of every basic right. The struggle against that oppression is one that should be supported. The 'struggle' to open a branch office of parliament in Edinburgh is not quite the same thing.

Tony Stokes *Essex*

Ancient Basques and angry Scots

I would like you to cancel my subscription to *Living Marxism* as I have just realised how dreadful it is. Andy Clarkson states in his article on the Basque group Eta ('Eta is not Spain's IRA', July) that they claim 'the Basque people have a long history'. Well in fact Andy they do

have a long history and it goes a lot further back than 1882 (which you may have decided would spoil your article). The Basque language, to quote a source, 'predates the migrations from the East which brought the Indo-European languages into Europe some 3000 years ago'. The Basques enter written records with the arrival of the Romans.

As for the Scots nationalist groups 'inventing their own mythology'—another typical swipe at the Scots for having the guts to do something about the present system. The Scots were on the streets, protesting, paying no poll tax and throwing out a Tory minority for a fourth consecutive time. So while we're up here inventing our own myths, you just keep on with the utopian rhetoric. I don't support Eta but at least I take the time to check up a few facts. Pity Andy Clarkson couldn't do the same.

Vincent Hunter *Glasgow*

I shall leave it to others to object to Andy Clarkson's wild generalisation that nationalist groups 'from Scotland to the Ukraine' have invented a mythical national past.

I will, however, protest strongly at his bald assertion that the Basques are not, and have never been oppressed by Spain. Mr Clarkson evidently researched his article using a tourist guide published in Madrid. Without doubt, he has never been to the Basque Country or talked to a Basque. If he had, he would know that as late as the 1970's, seven-year old school children, whose only language was Euskera were routinely beaten by teachers who insisted they speak in Spanish, and that it was forbidden to write in Euskera, or even speak it in the street. There is a story, perhaps apocryphal but nevertheless illustrative, of two Czechs who were beaten up by Bilbao police who mistakenly thought they were speaking in Basque. Expressions of Basque culture were stamped out, and discrimination by the Guardia Civil was commonplace.

Mr Clarkson also mentions the role of the Basque police, the Ertzantza: this force is detested by many Basques—not only nationalists—for its brutality and because it is seen as being in the pocket of the central government.

No, Mr Clarkson has not been to the Basque Country, and I do not advise him to go there. The Basques are a warm and friendly people, but they would not take kindly to such a level of wilful ignorance.

John R MacWilliam *Edinburgh*

Francis: saving his Bacon

Josie from Essex writes that 'by painting nudes in the unflattering light cast by an electric light-bulb, Bacon captures alienating social conditions' (letters, July). This is all fair enough,

but what is really interesting in artistic terms is the way in which Bacon, despite all his butchery and special effects, succeeds much less in capturing alienating social conditions and gets much less close to the bone than a much more normative artist such as Lucian Freud.

I think that far from capturing alienating social conditions, Bacon was captivated by them. Since the turn of the century, a fundamental problem has been overlooked: the problem of creating a method of formalisation capable of embodying all the attributes of modern life and which could claim to represent reality as a whole.

If we look at Bacon's pictures the most noticeable thing is the gulf that exists between his figures (all dynamism) and their surroundings (purely static). The fact that he makes absolutely no attempt to resolve this pictorial paradox is indicative of his surrender to objective conditions and his abandonment to his own purely subjective reflexes. Bacon has failed as an artist and as a man to face up to the fundamental challenge of his age. Faced with so much inhumanity he lost all sense of his own. He surrendered to bourgeois social reality. He gave up the ghost.

M Hughes *Essex*

Is Ann Bradley Bob Geldof?

Ann Bradley rightly points out (July) that 'public attitudes to terms, words and phrases simply reflect the way society views what they describe'. In her view, the use of the term 'the South' by concerned Londoners as an attempt at admitting a common humanity with people in the third world is 'ridiculous and reactionary'.

At the same time she herself falls into the Buerk/Geldof/media trap of equating underdevelopment with the images of starving Ethiopians used in the 1980s to elicit charitable responses. Moving away from this image (which sadly raised awareness but not understanding) holds the possibility of moving the debate forward. Perhaps the Brixtonian middle classes have a point in trying to move from economic disdain to more neutral ground. They might find it possible to have a useful dialogue on equal terms with say, a Ghanaian poet, a Nigerian academic or a Kenyan street

sweeper (or even a 'starving Ethiopian') by refusing to be confined by Ms Bradley's narrow image of underdevelopment.

The future of all is threatened by the hubris of the west/north which not only refuses to allow the actual denizens of the third world a part in their own debate but also casts the whole of the third world, as A Bradley does, in the role of helpless victim. It is this attitude which reflects the way most people outside Brixton perceive the third world and is most accurately summed up by Kipling's ridiculous and reactionary old phrase: 'White Man's burden.' *Plus ca change....*

Maggy Hendry *Kent*

Experiment on humans?

Having read Ann Bradley's challenging article 'Origins of a speciesist' I started thinking to myself. I must logically accept that the human ability to deal with language, reason and abstract thought sets us apart from animals and we are therefore justified in using them to develop solutions to our problems. However I might point out that there are, in fact, some humans who cannot exercise a high level of consciousness. Due to a birth defect or subsequent brain damage, many individuals exist who will never progress beyond a mental age of two or less. Leaving sentiment aside, may I presume that Ann Bradley would therefore advocate their use in experiments, especially since a human body would be a more reliable specimen than a rat's where research purposes are concerned?

RM Robinson *Tunbridge Wells*

Behind the Lega Lombarda

I would agree with Alan Harding's assessment of the electoral success of the Lega Lombarda as representing a reactionary force within Italian politics, but only at the end of the day with several qualifications ('Viva Italia?', July).

The 'Lega' may be a racist and separatist movement calling for regional autonomy, but this phenomenon should not be explained away in the attempt to provide a neat macro-analysis of European politics and of the right-wing wind blowing over Europe as the result of economic recession. I believe that the wide support

received by the 'Lega' was not simply the result of a reactionary ideology dogmatically endorsed. It was also the expression of a protest vote against government corruption, and a rejection of party politics along traditional ideological lines, from which Italian people have always felt excluded.

Of course, it would have been preferable if this protest vote had gone left. The fact that it didn't seems to indicate not only a dissatisfaction with the age-old quadripartito led by the Christian Democrats, and its affiliations with the church, but also with the statist, paternalistic, bureaucratic orientation of the left and its affiliations with the trade unions.

Perhaps it is because it is not just the right, but also the left, that has failed Italy, that people voted against both, in the hopeless attempt to locate themselves outside the ideological spectrum. It is this rejection of the old ideologies which, I believe, differentiates many 'Lega' voters from, let's say, Le Pen's followers in France.

Josie D'Oro *Genoa*

Darwin was a Christian

In reply to the article 'God and the Big Bang' (June) I would like to correct the idea that Darwinism still poses problems for theologians. It is a historical fact that just shortly before his death Darwin converted to Christianity and renounced the idea of evolution discrediting the Genesis account of special creation recorded in the Old Testament. He believed in fact that his ideas were purely speculative and that people had turned speculative theory into a religion or ideology itself.

What disturbs me most about this article was the fact that it appeared to be saying that belief in a personal creator is a sign of a degenerative society or person. Why not have the courage of your convictions and follow through the logical conclusions of your atheistic cosmology, ie, 'if there is no God then everything is permitted' (as the ex-Marxist revolutionary and convert to the Russian Orthodox faith Dostoyevski said). Such a nihilistic cosmology has no basis for morality or concepts of good and evil and therefore of economic justice.

Wayne John Brighton

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

If people are now prepared to bring a major country to a halt in a dispute over motoring penalty points, who knows what will happen next? Frank Richards sees the French lorry drivers' strike as a sign of the crisis facing capitalist societies

Everybody sensed that there was something novel about the recent strike by French lorry drivers. But of course it is easy to get carried away with novelty. The past decade has seen a lot of novel ideas come and go.

Not so long ago it was fashionable to talk about Thatcherism. Many left-wing intellectuals announced the victory of an authoritarian populism which disposed ordinary people to right-wing ideas. Others got carried away with the notion of popular capitalism. Everybody was meant to have become converted to the joys of share ownership and the love of the free market. Earlier this year Scottish nationalism was the flavour of the month. We were assured that this time the growing constituency for Scottish nationalism was definitely going to put independence on to the political agenda.

So it is best to be circumspect before taking the leap and declaring that some event represents a new development.

But having taken the precaution of pondering for a few days on the issue, it is difficult to resist the temptation. The French lorry drivers strike does represent something new. Of course it did not drop out of the sky. Rather it should be seen as the culmination of a protracted process, extensively covered in *Living Marxism*, which has involved the erosion of the postwar political culture across Europe. But what marked out the French lorry drivers' strike as an obvious departure from the previous pattern was the strike's lack of any relationship with that old political culture.

Political malaise

Throughout the strike, none of the traditional structures and parties seemed to have any capacity to engage the situation. None of the old ways seemed relevant. It was as if the strike exposed the profound mismatch between people's lives today and the political system. The strike brought to the surface many of the



uncomfortable realities which are associated with Europe's contemporary political malaise.

You do not need tremendous powers of analytical insight to grasp that the publicly stated cause of the strike, the new penalty points system for lorry drivers, was merely the excuse for action. People do not tend to organise nationwide militant action, involving road-blocks and confrontations with the riot police, because of a new system of regulating road safety. The anger and bitterness which the drivers expressed over this issue indicated that they had been waiting for an excuse to have a go.

What was most interesting about the strike was not the actions of the drivers themselves. It was the reaction of the public. Under normal circumstances, you might expect the public to become angry against a group of militant drivers, who were causing them considerable inconvenience and threatening to ruin their summer holidays. By all accounts France's

Socialist government was waiting for precisely such a public backlash. Curiously, however, the backlash against the drivers was largely restricted to the British media. In France the public seemed to be genuinely supportive of the strikers who were making their lives difficult.

If we were to rely on the traditional political categories, then the reaction of the French public to this dispute would make little sense. Normally you would expect provincial petit-bourgeois people to feel threatened by the closure of the transport system. Instead, the strike seemed to be greeted with a mass sigh of relief that finally someone had done something.

It seems that wider sections of society were also looking for an excuse to have a go. The way in which the public provided food and entertainment for the pickets indicated that people seemed to feel more in common with the strikers than with government officials.

The desire to have a go in this way is motivated by a heightened sense of powerlessness—something which the French seem to share with others in Europe. It is this sentiment which drives people to make uncharacteristic two-fingered displays of defiance against the powers that be.

Two fingers

In this sense, the French events are very much in the same vein as the rejection of Maastricht by the Danish electorate. The anti-Maastricht vote in Denmark had little to do with the finer points of the debate about the institutions of Europe. It was an inarticulate attempt by people to assert themselves by rejecting the policy of the government and telling the political establishment where to get off.

One day it is a referendum over Maastricht, the next it is a new system for penalising poor driving. What will it be next? There is no answer to this question. For the predominant feature of European politics is a sullen, ►

An inarticulate RAGE

PHOTO: The Guardian





inarticulate bitterness about the direction in which society is heading.

This inarticulate response is the consequence of the collapse of the old political parties and organisations which used to provide some sort of voice for protest. In particular, the disintegration of the European labour movement and left-wing political parties has left a vacuum which has yet to be filled. In the absence of organised radicalism, traditional forms of protest have been displaced. As a result, how and when people will react, and over what issues, cannot be determined in advance.

To put it crudely, if people will bring the country to a standstill over a system of penalty points for drivers, they are liable to act on anything. Where in the past workers used to strike for better money, now people react over unpredictable issues through which they feel they can strike a blow against authority.

Some sociologists would characterise this response as post-materialist, since action does

People are not so much fighting *for* themselves as reacting *against* authority

not always seem to have a direct economic motive. Such an assessment misses the point. People remain very materialistic. What has changed is that, in the confused political climate of today, people are not able to articulate what they ought to fight for. Instead, an inarticulate rage comes to the surface from time to time, disturbing the status quo. Paradoxically, this means that people are not so much fighting *for* themselves as they are reacting *against* authority.

Because of its inarticulate character, the French government found it difficult to know how to handle the lorry drivers' strike. This was a strike where there were no unions, institutions or even recognised negotiators. The old unions attempted to muscle in on the dispute; the government welcomed them with open arms, the only problem was that the drivers did not want to have anything to do with them. The government was genuinely stumped. It is used to dealing with mediators, negotiators and official representatives. With professional mediators around, a deal is always possible. The trouble this time was that the deal-makers did not exist.

The weakening of the old institutions meant that there was no organisation which could be relied upon to control the strikers. In the past in France, even so-called communist

unions like the CGT could be relied on to control their membership. Today, the prevailing institutional paralysis means that there was nobody who had the authority to get the strikers to act in a more restrained fashion. This indicates that the stagnation of French institutions of government and the decay of the old political culture has deprived the state of its ability to gauge public attitudes. When the authorities are so out of touch, and so lacking routine methods of regulation, ordinary protests over apparently minor issues can easily run out of control.

Sclerosis and decay

Since the end of the Second World War, the states of Western Europe have built up a sophisticated system of social control. In most instances of protest, the political system has not had to rely upon state repression. Through their own institutions and those of civil society, the authorities have been able to absorb most forms of dissent. Over the past decade, this postwar stability had been undermined by an apparent epidemic of institutional sclerosis. The symptoms include corruption scandals in high places, the political fragmentation of both left and right-wing parties, the emergence of regional, racist and other new political movements, and the general sense of intellectual decay.

These symptoms should be a matter of consternation for anybody concerned with the project of human liberation. Although European capitalism is experiencing its greatest depression this century, there is little in the way of a critical response. Anti-capitalist forces are exhausted. Instead of any sense of solidarity and collective opposition to capitalism, there is a deeply felt but highly individuated sense of impotence and blind rage. It is a response which is entirely out of control. One day it can lead to providing food for striking lorry drivers, the next it could mean turning on helpless immigrants.

Casual contempt

The present political balance is obviously frustrating for readers of *Living Marxism*. But the all-pervasive undercurrent of rage represents no less of a problem for the ruling classes of European society.

The events surrounding the lorry drivers' dispute demonstrated that significant sections of the French public hold their own state in contempt. The almost casual attitude towards law-breaking starkly exposed the popular rejection of the state. And this is a problem which does not stop at the French borders.

Of course many would argue that law-breaking is a peculiarly French phenomenon, and that here in Britain

the authorities are held in much higher regard. No doubt Britain is more stable than France. But think of the permanent mini-riots on Britain's estates. And after the recent revelations of major frame-ups and a string of corruption trials, the British police and the judges certainly seem less secure about their authority than they used to be.

The crisis of legitimacy confronting Europe's governmental institutions raises the all-important question: how is society to be held together? Until recently the problem of social cohesion was not an issue in Europe. But with nations breaking up and new regional parties demanding more local autonomy, the survival of European societies as they are now constituted is no longer unproblematic.

Dark foreboding

At the very least, recent events have revealed a widespread lack of positive identification with society. This development raises serious questions about how society is to survive. The French media was deeply disturbed by the events surrounding the drivers' strike. What it found disturbing was not any specific act, but the revelation that nobody seemed to be in control. Worse still, nobody seemed to accept the established rules of the game.

A major statement on the strike by Bruno Frappat in *Le Monde* warned of the dire consequences of a situation where 'every man was for himself'. This sense of dark foreboding that society had broken down under the weight of conflicting interests is to some extent an overreaction. But it is an overreaction more widely shared in the media. It is an overreaction that also contains a rational insight.

Bad conscience

Where Frappat is right is in his recognition of the potential problem posed for the authorities by the inarticulate rage of millions. It is a rage which lacks political coherence, and so does not in itself threaten capitalist society. But it is a reaction which is alienated from the status quo, and which reinforces the prevailing sense of social malaise. Seeing such a rage in action cannot but reinforce the bad conscience of sections of the French and European ruling classes about the state of their system.

The inarticulate rage of millions is also potentially more. It is an explosive force which need not remain inarticulate indefinitely. It is a force that is waiting to be activated by a political alternative; an alternative which can give shape to the aspiration to settle scores with authority, and give to those now alienated confidence in their collective power to change things for the better. ●



PHOTO: David Irving by Renée Gayde/Norfolk

Secret of the Goebbels diaries

Exclusive: Sharon Clarke reveals how the row about the Goebbels diaries will end up making the European right look more respectable, and the left look more ridiculous

All the fuss about the publication of Josef Goebbels' diaries in the *Sunday Times* has been misdirected. Attention has focused on the involvement of right-wing historian David Irving, who calls himself a 'mild fascist' and denies that the Holocaust took place. People have worried about whether Irving is translating the diaries correctly—as if the Murdoch press needs any help from him to distort the truth.

Irving is a pathetic figure of no consequence who has been babbling away about his crank theories for years. The significant thing about the debate surrounding the Goebbels diaries is not what he says or does. It is the fact that Irving's school of historical revisionism, which has previously been exiled to the academic fringe, is now being incorporated more into mainstream discussion.

'Amateur Nazi'

Some prominent historians have been at pains to point out that, while they disagree with Irving's political views, he is really only an 'amateur Nazi' (interesting concept, that) and a fine historian of facts. The tone of this discussion reveals a lot about the way in which the wind is blowing in historical debate today. Which is why it is possible to say with some confidence that, whatever the Goebbels diaries do or don't say, the affair will eventually end up making the record of the European right look a little better.

It is not worth concentrating too much on the actual content of the Goebbels diaries. They seem unlikely to reveal anything much that is very new or interesting. Irving's major 'revelation' from the first extracts was that, contrary to his own prior opinion, Adolf Hitler did in fact know about the plans for an anti-Jewish pogrom on *Kristallnacht* in 1938. This is about as shocking as saying that Margaret Thatcher knew about the Falklands War.

The important thing is not the content of the Goebbels diaries themselves, but the wider political context in which the debate is taking place. A key theme of intellectual discussion in Europe today is the attempt to revise the history of the Second World War. The aim is to rehabilitate the right, which was badly discredited by its association with fascism.

Fascism and communism

Few historians or other experts are prepared to go so far as Irving in trying to present Nazism as normal. Instead, the fashion is to try to *relativise* the fascist experience: depicting Nazism as an over-zealous response to the dire threat which communism posed to the West, and shifting more of the blame for the horrors of the twentieth century on to the Soviet Union.

This revisionist trend is strongest in Germany and in France (where the right wants to rehabilitate the pro-Nazi Vichy regime). In Britain, it is offset slightly by the establishment's fondness for going on about evil Nazis in order to stoke up anti-German sentiment. Yet here too the same drift of opinion is evident. Even the *Sunday Times* television adverts for the Goebbels extracts began with pictures of a toppling statue of Lenin, not Hitler, and a voice-over about the diaries being hidden in the heart of the old Soviet empire, immediately making the revisionists' favourite link between fascism and communism.

More than academic

The revision of the history of the Second World War is more than an academic matter. It has very practical consequences. Take the example of the pro-Nazi Ustashe regime in Croatia, which sent Serbs, Jews and Gypsies to death camps during the Second World War. A lot of effort has recently been put into rewriting history, so as to present this gang of war criminals as anti-Soviet

resistance fighters. This has played its part in legitimising German and Western support for Croatia in the Yugoslav conflict.

The worst thing is that the old left, while screaming about an idiot like David Irving, has gone along with much of this more mainstream school of revisionism. Leading radical intellectuals may not have embraced the Ustashe; but they have accepted the basic framework of Croatian nationalist history, and backed Croatia against the Serbs. As a result, left wingers have been wasting their time standing on the pavement outside Irving's home, while the Western powers have been making war plans for the Balkans.

Even worse is the way in which the left has seized upon the Goebbels diaries affair to raise new demands for David Irving's work to be censored, and for his books to be banned from the shops. This is the height of stupidity.

Calling for censorship in a capitalist society can only work to the benefit of the ruling elite. Censorship of 'unacceptable' or 'extreme' political views is already on the increase in Britain. The real targets of this campaign are the left, Irish republicans, black groups, gay publications, etc. But the authorities are happy to use demands for the suppression of fringe far-right views to legitimise wider repression.

What's offensive?

Tower Hamlets council in east London was applauded by some on the left for winning a case against the British National Party for flyposting during the general election. Nobody seems to have noticed that this case is one of the first successes in a national crackdown by councils on *all* flyposting. And in the very week that left wingers were calling for more censorship to protect the public from Irving's 'offensive' views, the police tried to stop some *Living Marxism* supporters from selling the July issue of the magazine—on the grounds that it was 'offensive' to the public. The state will decide what is offensive and should be censored on the basis of protecting its own authority, not public sensibilities.

Let's forget about Irving and his boring Goebbels diaries, and get on with exposing the way in which the Western authorities are revising the past in order to justify their crimes in the present. ●

Who's to blame?

Western intervention is the problem in Yugoslavia not the solution, argues Joan Phillips

Almost everybody agrees that Western intervention is the only way to sort out the mess in Sarajevo (and sort out the Serbs). This misses the point about what is happening in the dismembered land that was once Yugoslavia. The West has been intervening in Yugoslavia for the past year and the Western powers are responsible for causing the conflagration that is now engulfing Bosnia. Any further interference from them in the affairs of the Balkans can only make matters worse.

Haunted Balkans

History has been landed with a lot of the blame for what has happened in Yugoslavia. In response to the siege of Sarajevo, an editorial in the *Economist* once again rehearsed the argument that history has returned to haunt the Balkans:

'The people of the Balkans are fired by hatreds that go back centuries. Roman Catholics have been fighting Orthodox Christians there since 1221; Serbs remember their defeat at the hands of the Turks in 1389 as though

it were yesterday. Though the tribes are intermingled, and sometimes intermarried, the intensity of ethnic and religious rivalry has not diminished, nor has the ferocity with which it is expressed.'
(4 July 1992)

According to this view, history is one long continuum in which the patterns of the past simply repeat themselves over and over again.

Is it really the case that Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs are fighting each other today because of a religious schism seven centuries ago? Did the civil war start in 1221 or 1991? The stupidity of trying to explain the dynamics of a late twentieth-century conflict with reference to something that happened in the early thirteenth century should be readily apparent.

Why now?

The popular emphasis on the recurrence of past problems in the present begs another question which nobody has so far answered. Why now? The supporters of the 'history is happening all over again' thesis

never explain why it is happening *now*. If these nationalist enmities have always existed, why have they suddenly erupted into bloodshed today after half a century of lying dormant? Why did Yugoslavia fall apart in 1991 and not 1951?

Cold storage

The only thing we have been offered by way of an explanation is the fact that communism has collapsed. Since the end of the Cold War, we are told, nationalism has been taken out of cold storage and old ethnic hatreds have been rekindled to set the Balkans aflame once again. What magical powers were possessed by the old Stalinists who ruled Eastern Europe which meant that they could suppress emotions which, we are told, are demonically strong?

In reality, the crisis in Yugoslavia has got very little to do with the distant past. On the contrary, it is rooted in present-day realities. Before the war started, most historians of the Balkans saw this as rather obvious. Christopher Cviic stated back in May 1991 that 'what is tearing Yugoslavia apart is



Carnage at Karlovac, Croatia

the clash over present interests rather than over ancient ethnic and religious prejudices. The past matters, but the present matters more' (*Independent*, 15 May 1991). An understanding of the origins of this contemporary conflict is crucial to understanding part of the dynamic behind Yugoslavia's disintegration.

In so far as there was a local factor which contributed to the Balkanisation of Yugoslavia it was economic competition and not ethnic conflict. This competition for resources was turned into ethnic conflict by nationalist politicians in the competing Yugoslav republics. In turn this ethnic conflict exploded into all-out civil war only after the intervention of outside powers.

Competing claims

Under the Stalinists, Yugoslavia suffered from a scarcity of economic resources. Inevitably this generated competition since there was never enough to go round. As a result, Yugoslavia was characterised by profound social inequalities between the classes. In addition, competition over resources took a regional form

because of the profound economic differentiation between the Yugoslav republics.

It is ironic that today the myth has grown that Croatia and Slovenia had a really hard time in the old Yugoslavia, and that is why they wanted to leave. In fact, they were the most privileged republics in Yugoslavia. They had the highest living standards and the lowest unemployment, the biggest share of national wealth and the best connections with the Western market economies.

Slovenia contained only eight per cent of Yugoslavia's population, yet accounted for 25 per cent of its gross national product. Meanwhile the underdeveloped southern republics suffered at the other extreme. While just two per cent of Slovenia's workforce was unemployed, in Kosovo the figure was 56 per cent, Macedonia 27 per cent, Montenegro 25 per cent, Bosnia 24 per cent and Serbia 18 per cent (H Lydall, *Yugoslavia in Crisis*).

Yugoslavia's increasing exposure to the world market, and its closer relations with the Western market

economies, had the effect of widening regional divisions. The cumulative introduction of market reforms by the old Stalinist bureaucracy over a period of several decades benefited the minority of better-off republics but brought few gains for the badly off majority.

Unequal gains

Slovenia came to be known as 'Little Austria', while Croatia cemented ties with Germany. The other republics languished in economic backwardness. This was not because the Stalinist leaders of the poorer republics were committed centralists as some have suggested. Indeed, the bureaucracy was united in its support for market reforms. The problem was that there were unequal gains to be made from the market by the republics.

The reforms had the effect of increasing regional differentiation and fuelling economic tensions. In this sense the market made a big contribution to the fragmentation of Yugoslavia along regional lines. The basis for a civil war between the rich north and the poor south ►



German sponsorship was a big boost for Croatian nationalism

had been laid long before Western intervention triggered the conflict between Croatia and Serbia.

As regional disparities became entrenched, the richer republics began to resent subsidising the poorer ones. They complained about having to redistribute their resources to Serbia and the others in the form of development aid, budgetary supplements, federal projects, national defence and natural disaster relief.

Accusing other republics of being backward and lazy, Slovenia and Croatia began to implement protectionist measures to keep revenues and investment at home. Trade wars between the republics became more frequent as the regional bureaucracies organised 'buy national' campaigns and boycotts of 'foreign' goods.

Slovenia and Croatia sought greater autonomy within the federation so that they could hold on to their own earnings and prevent them being redistributed elsewhere. They began to insist that they should have sovereign control over their own budgets, legislation and defence forces. By the late eighties they were threatening to secede unless they got a confederal constitution that gave

them full sovereignty. Finally, on 25 June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia both made a unilateral declaration of independence.

The fragmentation of Yugoslavia gathered pace under the impact of the market economy. The celebrated Western market system was no more capable of establishing a viable national economy in Yugoslavia than was Stalinism before it. In fact, with a little help from the Western powers, the market ended up taking Yugoslavia apart.

They started it

The arrival of the market in Yugoslavia did not simply deepen the economic divisions between the republics, it also encouraged the growth of national particularism in the richer republics. Today Serbian nationalism is blamed for the destruction of Yugoslavia. But the rise of nationalism in recent years began in the more privileged republics of Slovenia and Croatia, those with the closest links with the West and the world market.

Slovenia's former Communist Party leader, Milan Kucan, was the first politician to wrap himself in the national flag and demand national autonomy. He was followed by

Croatian party leaders who also began to beat the nationalist drum and demand national sovereignty.

While the turn to nationalism in Slovenia and Croatia was a ploy by former Stalinist bureaucrats to secure their futures, it was strongly encouraged by the regionalisation of Yugoslavia under the impact of the market. For politicians in the north, the demand for national independence was seen as the best way to protect the privileged position of their republics. On the other hand, the nationalism espoused by Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic, while it was also designed to save his skin, was that of the economic underdog in response to the increasing assertiveness of the richer republics.

By early 1991 relations between the republics had reached a low-point, with Slovenia and Croatia both threatening to secede. But even at this late stage, civil war was not considered a possibility. In retrospect it is debateable whether the two were serious about seceding; there still seemed to be a desire to negotiate some sort of confederal arrangement.

If the leaders of the republics were still not sure about going the whole hog, their people certainly were not enthusiastic about secession. Opinion

polls in the summer of 1991 showed that 50 per cent of people in Croatia favoured immediate secession while 45 per cent wanted more negotiations; in Slovenia the figures were 44 per cent for and 34 per cent against. There was clearly a considerable body of opinion in both republics which was not persuaded by the arguments of the secessionists.

What was decisive in polarising the divisions inside Yugoslavia was the intervention of the Western powers. Until that fateful summer they were united in calling for Yugoslavia to stay together. What they feared more than anything was the destabilising consequences for the rest of Europe of the disintegration of the federation. They realised that once the internal borders of Yugoslavia were called into question then the entire postwar settlement could unravel.

A nod and a wink

By coming out in support of independence for the two republics, Germany ensured that Yugoslavia would come apart. Bonn's commitment to Croatia and Slovenia meant that compromise was no longer an option. If the two republics had had second thoughts about going it alone, these were dispelled by the support they received from Helmut Kohl's government. There is little doubt that Zagreb only went ahead with its independence declaration once it had got the nod from Bonn. In the space of a month a fluid situation was transformed into a rigid stand-off between Croatia and Serbia.

Germany's intervention did not simply polarise the divisions within Yugoslavia, however. It also made the Balkans the focus of competition within the Western camp, which in turn had even more divisive consequences for the region. As soon as Germany decided that this was the issue upon which it would assert its leadership role in Europe, it was inevitable that Yugoslavia would become the victim of rivalries among the imperialist powers (see pages 4 and 5).

Split asunder

The first calamitous effect of Western intervention was to split Croatia in two. The secession of Croatia from the Yugoslav federation left the 600 000-strong Serbian minority stranded in a state which had already signalled its contempt for their rights.

The Serbs in Croatia had become increasingly alienated and angry as a result of the nationalist policies pursued by Franjo Tudjman's Croatian regime since it had taken power in March 1990. The response of the Serbs in Krajina and elsewhere to the secessionist moves in Zagreb was to declare their own regions autonomous.

The fate of the Serbian minority proved to be an emotive issue for the Belgrade regime in justifying its intervention in Croatia.

Next Yugoslavia itself was split down the middle. A civil war between Croatia and Serbia was an inevitability once Germany began to push for recognition. With the knowledge that it had the backing of the most powerful state in Europe, Croatia refused to make any concessions.

Blame Belgrade

Having set the two republics at each other's throats, Germany proceeded to blame Serbia. Bonn began to present the conflict as a frontier war. On one side stood Croatia, Western, democratic, Catholic, civilised; on the other side stood Serbia, Eastern, communist, Orthodox, barbaric. Emphasising the Balkan character of the civil war, the other Western powers went along with this demonisation of Serbia.

The third consequence of Western intervention was to split Bosnia Hercegovina in three, between the Serbs, Croats and Muslims. The recognition of Slovenia and Croatia by Europe and America acted as a spur to Bosnia to announce its secession from Yugoslavia. This in turn led to increasing tensions between the various ethnic groups in a republic which for 40 years had maintained its reputation for harmonious cooperation between the nationalities.

One-upmanship

The green light for the eruption of hostilities in Bosnia was America's recognition of the breakaway republic on 7 April 1992. America's sudden conversion to the anti-Serbian cause had nothing to do with events in Bosnia. It was an act of diplomatic one-upmanship, with the sole purpose of establishing America's leadership role at the expense of Germany.

The spread of the civil war to Bosnia looks like it could end with the partition of the republic between Serbia and Croatia. Both sides have had about 50 000 troops fighting there, although, given the flurry of Western injunctions against Serbia alone, you might be forgiven for thinking that Croatian forces haven't set foot inside the republic. Both sides have declared their own autonomous regions inside Bosnia as the prelude to formalising the partition.

A clean partition is the solution favoured by Zagreb and Belgrade. But Bosnia could easily end up splintering into a myriad of tiny ethnic fiefdoms. The European Community's plan to cantonise Bosnia—divide the republic into ever smaller ethnic units—expresses the logic of the disintegrative process which started

with Western support for the secession of Slovenia and Croatia.

Western intervention has incited ethnic conflicts throughout the length and breadth of Yugoslavia and indeed across the Balkans. After Bosnia the conflict could spread to embroil Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and of course Kosovo, where Muslim groups have already declared their own autonomous regions and signalled their desire to link up in a federation. This ethnic hot potato could easily spill over the borders of Yugoslavia and involve Albania in yet more bloodshed.

Balkan powder-keg

Macedonia meanwhile is still awaiting Western recognition, delayed because of the vituperative opposition of Greece. Athens fears that Skopje has irredentist claims on its territory and that recognition will inflame relations with its own Macedonian minority. The combustible Macedonian question could easily lead to explosive developments throughout the Balkans, involving Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey and Albania. Apart from the possibility of major ructions in these places, the fate of the Hungarian minority in the Serbian-controlled province of Vojvodina is also a cause for concern in Budapest.

Where will it all end? One thing's for sure, if the West has anything to do with it, it will end only with the whole of the Balkans being torn asunder. At every stage of the Yugoslav crisis, Western intervention has served to polarise regional conflicts and inflame ethnic divisions. Even if the West refused to have anything more to do with Yugoslavia, it has already done enough to guarantee the Balkanisation of the whole country.

Some nerve

In this it has been greatly aided by the radical intelligentsia in the West. Today every British liberal is opposing the cantonisation of Bosnia on the grounds that it will create still more minorities within still smaller ethnic homelands. They haven't got a leg to stand on. The implosion of Bosnia is the end result of a policy which they sanctioned.

The British left supported the disintegration of Yugoslavia. This is what they put their names to when they signed up to support Croatia. They were happy to see Yugoslavia go down the tube then. But now that disintegration has reached the grotesque proportions of cantonisation in Bosnia, they hold up their hands in horror and say it has all got to stop.

If Serbia is bombed into oblivion and Bosnia is divided into bits, or if the whole of the Balkans goes up in flames, British liberals will have only themselves to blame.

Sea changes on the Caspian coast

One year on from the coup that led to its collapse, what's changed in the former Soviet Union? Rob Matthews reports from Baku in Azerbaijan



Earning nine kopeks (about 0.045 pence) per hand-made brick, 17-year old Misha will soon be a millionaire

Most production still happens in state-owned enterprises, but that doesn't alter the fact that at least 50 per cent of Baku's industrial capacity has been shut down. The state may still control the price of bread but it is, nonetheless, 10 times more expensive than it was six months ago. The big shops may still be in state hands, but they supply less and less of the population's needs. Roubles may still be legal tender, but there is a shortage of cash which means some state employees have not been paid for months.

Back in business

All the same, the factories still belong to the state, so you can't have capitalism...or can you? In Baku they've found a way. The Montin plant produces equipment for oil extraction. The state still owns it and pays all the bills, but private enterprise is back in business inside the plant. A small enterprise has been set up by some managers, and has taken over production of the most modern component produced by Montin: valves which are cast in stainless steel and suitable for production in the giant Tengiz oilfield in neighbouring Kazakhstan. The new enterprise intends to produce about 30 000 units, worth several million roubles.

The new workforce is made up of skilled workers who already work for Montin. The machinery they use belongs to the plant and so does the electricity. The small enterprise's taxable income will be close to zero, thanks to the accounting methods developed by Montin, which mean that the new firm's existence will be concealed in Montin's financial returns. Montin is using its contacts to supply raw materials to the small enterprise. In return, the small enterprise will turn over half of its production to Montin. The rest it will probably sell through one of the many new commodity exchanges which now operate across the former Soviet Union.

Inside out

From outside the Montin plant no changes are visible, but inside everything has been transformed. The same thing has happened at the radio and computer plants, which are still officially state enterprises, but where private enterprise has taken over production, and changed the product. Since they were military plants, their inputs were fairly sophisticated, and came from outside of Azerbaijan, normally from Russia. Now those components are unavailable or unaffordable, so the radio plant is turning out egg incubators instead of military hardware.

Other private enterprises are more independent. I visited a brick-making plant which had been set up by three academics. They were paying three workers by the brick, made by hand with a crude press. All their raw materials are supplied by state enterprises, mostly at fairly low

fixed prices. Their biggest customers are also state-owned.

As in industry, so in agriculture. In rural Azerbaijan the land still belongs to the state, and produce from collective farms is still centralised to Baku. In the past, some of it disappeared on to the black market; now most of it disappears. So what's changed? In the past, shops were stocked with food produced in Azerbaijan because that's what the plan demanded. Now the shops are empty because the plan has been abolished and farm managers are using their control over resources to exploit the demand for food in areas outside Azerbaijan where prices are higher. Meat from Azerbaijan is more likely to be on sale in Moscow than in Baku.

Public and private

Demands for the land to be handed out to the rural population have so far gone unanswered. In the long run there seems little doubt that it will be handed out. But just as the best plants in industry have a head start in making it under the market, those state farms which pulled the right strings to get resources or produced valuable crops like tobacco are more likely to survive than new private entrepreneurs.

Although the tiny private agricultural sector was always far more productive than the state sector, it did well only because it got its inputs from the state on the cheap. Now that the state no longer funds inefficient farms, the private farmers will find the going tougher. The bigger, more efficient former state farms, with access to large stocks of machinery and big tracts of land, are likely to mop up.

What about the people of Azerbaijan? People in Baku still look the same as they did before the Soviet Union collapsed. But if the collapse of the state sector continues as it is, it may not be all that long before some people start to look a bit scruffier. Families with several incomes have so far coped with rising prices, although some have stopped buying clothes so that they can continue eating normally.

Bombay beggars

Many people who live in self-built areas of Baku, named Shanghai or Bombay after third world shanty towns, used to survive on the unofficial incomes available in the shadier sections of the old system. That was all very well while it was still running. But now hunger is rife in Baku and women with children are begging in subways.

This all points to the growing importance of what used to be subsidiary incomes. The old men tending their six sheep in a Baku housing complex have always depended on the extra income to subsidise their derisory pensions. Now a monthly pension will buy less than a kilo of mutton and owning a sheep has become a life and death matter for some elderly Baku residents.

In the past, food grown on your private plot was a bonus. It meant you had some vegetables or fruit, which the state system couldn't provide. Now food grown on the same plot means you have something to sell on a street corner. Workers often used to double their incomes by growing fruit and veg for sale. If industry continues to close down it may be the only income left for too many in Baku. ●

As Boris Yeltsin's empty-handed departure from the G7 summit in July confirmed, the former Soviet republics tend to get short shrift in the West. Until things really start to change, say the Western capitalist leaders, no cash will be forthcoming to ease the transition to the market.

Walking round the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, it does indeed seem as if nothing has changed. Everything looks pretty much the same as it always did. But that impression is only surface deep. Azerbaijan may not have been sold off to the highest bidder, but, behind the scenes, it's all change on the Caspian coast.



The price of saving J

The dangers of 'common-sense' solutions were well illustrated by the recent debate over a 16-year old's right to starve. The girl, 'J', suffering from the 'slimmer's disease' anorexia nervosa, went to the appeal court in a bid to win the right to refuse life-saving treatment. Common sense screamed that she should be forced to have the treatment.

The case of 'J' was particularly awful. Her father died from a brain tumour, her mother died from cancer and she suffered 'unfortunate experiences in foster care'. She began to lose weight two years ago after the death of a much-loved grandfather. Finally, anorexia was diagnosed. Last year, when doctors decided that her condition was life threatening, she was force-fed through a nasal tube with her arms encased in plaster to stop her removing it. But after her sixteenth birthday she demanded the legal right to make her own decisions on treatment.

Anorexia is a particularly tragic condition. Most of its sufferers are girls in their teens. Doctors claim that the disease, characterised by a relentless search for thinness through self-starvation, affects as many as one in a hundred young women. There are conflicting theories about why girls become anorexic, but there is a consensus that its roots are psychological, and that its victims need help to come to terms with their lives as well as their condition.

Recent research suggests that one in five anorexia sufferers will eventually starve themselves to death. The recovery rate for those treated early is between 75 and 90 per cent. But once anorexia takes hold the prognosis is far worse. A girl aged 18 suffering from anorexia for a year would lose 20 per cent of the density of her bones, making them as fragile as those of a 60-year old. Specialist centres treat anorexia by forcing the girls to eat and trying to address the reasons for the self-starvation.

'J's case was that she wished to remain living where she was in council care, and did not want to be removed to a specialist medical centre. Those responsible for her feared that unless she received specialist treatment she would die. 'J', on the other hand, argued that she did not want to get better, that she wished to remain in control of her life, and that she would cure herself when she decided it was right to do so.

If 'J' had been over 18 there would have been no legal case to argue about. Adults have the right to refuse medical treatment, even if the result is certain death. Jehovah's Witnesses routinely refuse blood transfusions because it is against their beliefs, and any doctor violating an adult's consent could be sued for assault and battery.

In J's case, doctors and social workers felt they could not stand back and 'watch a child die' knowing that she suffered a psychological problem and there was a strong likelihood that if she was given help

she would live and, in time, thank them. The voice of common sense demanded intervention and the Court of Appeal, to the relief of everybody who had followed the case through the papers, complied. Who could doubt that in this case the doctors knew best?

The Court of Appeal ruling, that doctors could carry out treatment against the girl's will, was greeted as a victory for common sense. And so it seemed, especially when 'J' then backed down and agreed that she had no alternative but to cooperate, and enter the specialist residential centre.

However, common sense is not necessarily the best standard by which to judge a problem or its solution. Far from being the natural font of wisdom which its name implies, common sense is in fact a loaded term reflecting the dominant political mood of the times. And its application can often do more harm than good.

In the case of 'J', common sense may have helped to save one young woman's life. But at a potentially tremendous cost to many others.

Through their apparently common-sense attitude to the case of 'J', the authorities have established a further right to interfere in the private life of the individual. This is not just a matter of high principle, it has immediate practical consequences, especially for young people.

Until now, for example, young people have had the right to obtain contraceptive advice, whether or not their parents know or approve. Since the late 1960s the law has accepted that 16 and 17-year olds have the same rights as adults regarding medical consent. The House of Lords ruling against moral crusader Victoria Gillick in 1985 extended this right to under-16s who are capable of understanding the treat-

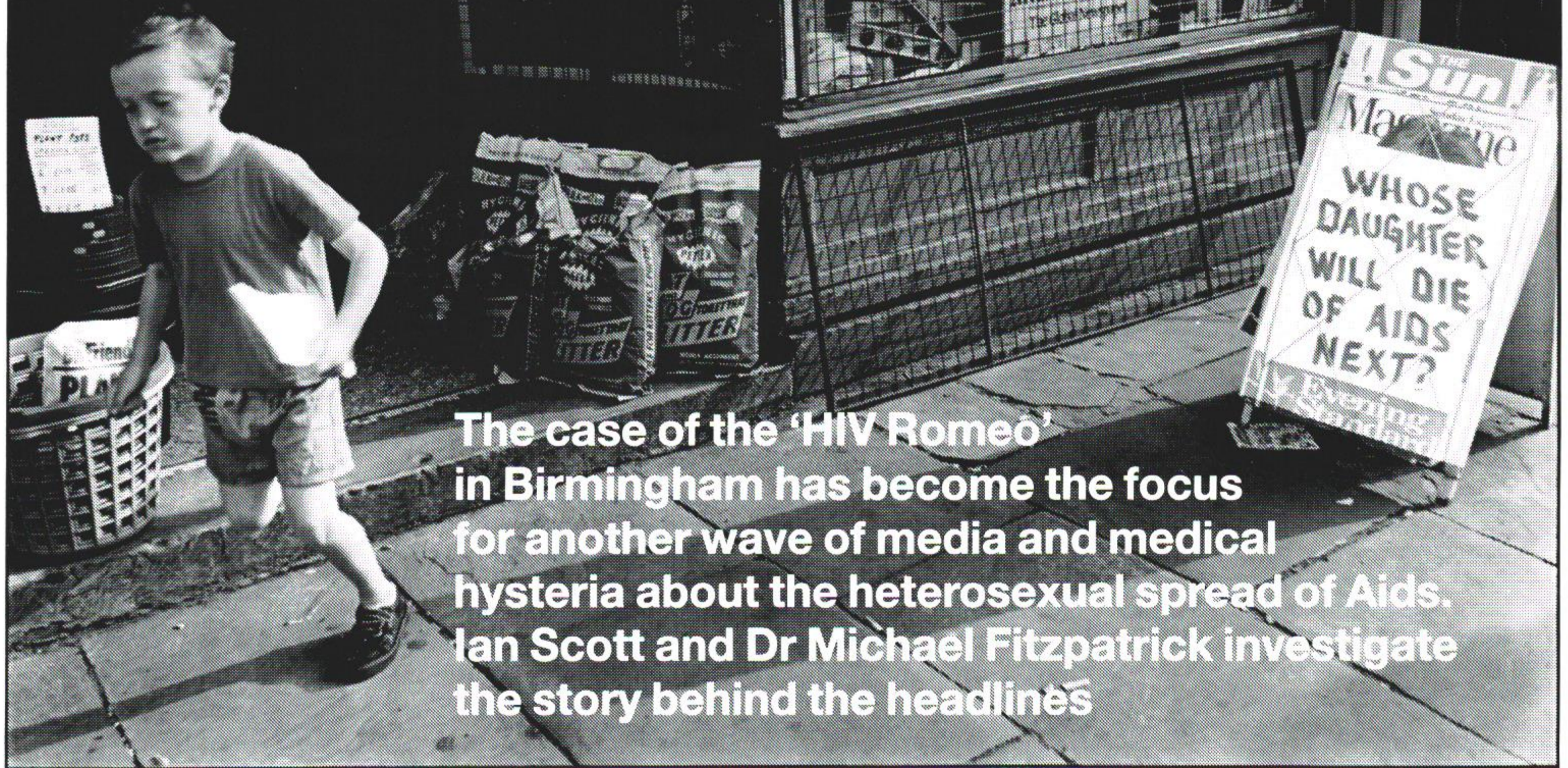
ment proposed. Where does the 'J' ruling leave this? Ian Kennedy, Professor of Medical Law and Ethics at Kings College, London has stated that it could give Gillick just the legal precedent she needs to mount another attack on young people's right to contraceptives.

In recent years we have seen the law systematically used to erode areas of individual rights. Of course the authorities never say that this is their intention. The police and judges are only ever given new powers in order to 'combat crime' or 'protect the public' in some way. But the state is always pursuing its own agenda of extending control over our lives. The authorities are particularly keen on using emotive issues—like child abuse, rape or the 'J' affair—to win public approval for 'common-sense' new powers. When cases like 'J' come up, the political consequences of legal precedents tend to get lost in a fog of humanity.

The day 'J' lost at the Court of Appeal was paradoxically a good one for her. But it may well turn out to have been another bad one for the rest of us. ●

The authorities have established a further right to interfere in private life

The truth about the Birmingham Aids panic



The case of the 'HIV Romeo' in Birmingham has become the focus for another wave of media and medical hysteria about the heterosexual spread of Aids. Ian Scott and Dr Michael Fitzpatrick investigate the story behind the headlines

Doctors at the centre of the case of the Birmingham man alleged to have infected four women with the Aids virus have consistently emphasised their refusal to confirm his identity and their commitment to confidentiality. Representatives of the South Birmingham health authority and the Birmingham Aidsline have also maintained a posture of aloofness from the tabloid furor. Condemnations of the Birmingham Aids authorities for their refusal to publicise the man's name or to initiate legal action against him have reinforced the impression that the whole affair was whipped up by the media and that the medical role was merely reactive and defensive.

Betrayal of trust

Closer investigation of the Birmingham story reveals that the impression that the lead came from the media is a myth. This myth conveniently disguises the betrayal of trust by doctors and others in the Birmingham Aids team that really launched the outbreak of Aids hysteria. Some of the Birmingham doctors may have been embarrassed by the intensity of the national response, and by the prurience of the tabloid coverage. Yet there can be little doubt

that, on balance, the Birmingham Aids authorities judged the whole affair successful in terms of raising awareness of HIV.

In their response to the case, the local Aids authorities were influenced by a number of overlapping concerns. Those workers in closest contact with the individual at the centre of the controversy were preoccupied by the question of how to deal with him. Following the death from Aids of a 20-year old woman in the city in early May, doctors came to suspect a chain of infection linked to a 24-year old haemophiliac. He had been HIV positive for seven years, since receiving a contaminated transfusion. However, it seemed that he had consistently refused to accept 'safe sex' counselling. Indeed he was already so notorious that his case was discussed in general terms at a training session for local GPs last year. The prevailing sentiment among Aids workers was summed up by one 'source close to the case' who declared that 'something must be done to stop this bastard' (*Birmingham Post*, 22 June).

Somebody in the Birmingham Aids team, with privileged access to the confidential details of the case, decided that the only way to stop

him was to expose him in the press. They contacted Jason Lewis of the *Birmingham Post* and provided him with the full story.

The more senior figures in the Aids establishment in Birmingham saw the case in a wider regional context. There is evidence from a number of sources that, long before the recent furor, they were concerned that the limited spread of HIV infection in the West Midlands was undermining their efforts to maintain a high level of public concern around the issue.

'Not a major problem'

In its internal report to the Department of Health in 1991, the West Midlands regional health authority, which includes South Birmingham, noted that 'the "slow" development of the epidemic in many districts means that in the forthcoming years particular work will need to be done to address the special problems of sustaining preventative work in areas of low prevalence'. The West Midlands was one of the authorities which underspent its 1990 Aids budget (by £2.8m) because of the relatively small number of local cases.

As recently as March of this year, the director of social services

acknowledged in a special report that 'Birmingham, unlike London or Edinburgh, has a significant, but not a major problem with HIV infection and Aids'. He also noted that 'surveys of the West Midlands population suggest that the level of knowledge of HIV issues is low and that safer sex is not being widely practised'. He emphasised that it was 'important to take advantage' of the 'limited breathing space' resulting from the slow spread of the disease 'to further develop prevention and care services'.

Growing scepticism

It seems that the Birmingham Aids authorities decided that it was important to take advantage of the recent case to raise the profile of HIV prevention in the area.

Another set of concerns united Birmingham Aids workers and members of the national Aids establishment: all were alarmed at the growing public scepticism about the real extent of the risk of heterosexual Aids in Britain. As official figures have appeared to contradict earlier forecasts, and future projections have been scaled down, various critics of the scare have begun to get a wider hearing (see Dr M Fitzpatrick 'Aids panic in disarray', *Living Marxism*, July). Both Peter Bellamy, local HIV services manager, and Dr Bernard Crump, director of public health, condemned what they described as 'irresponsible' press reports in recent months which had played down the risks of heterosexual spread (*Observer*, 28 June). Dr Patrick Dixon of Aids Care Education and Training, one of the key government-sponsored Aids organisations, also complained about 'months of nonsense in the press about Aids', quoting claims that "promiscuity may be safe" and that "the threat of Aids to heterosexuals is a myth" (*Sunday Times*, 28 June).

Dr Dixon wrote that, for him, the Birmingham case was 'no surprise', meaning that he was not surprised that people were now ignoring 'health messages' and acquiring HIV infection. Yet the Birmingham case was no surprise in another sense: it provided the Aids authorities, locally and nationally, with what they badly wanted—a focus around which to challenge what they regarded as mounting complacency about Aids. When Dr Surinder Bakhshi, Birmingham's infectious diseases consultant, declared that 'this is the kind of nightmare scenario we have all feared', he seemed to relish the opportunity it provided to revive the Aids scare. Local Aids specialist Dr Sue Drake said that she was 'quite happy' that the case demonstrated 'very clearly that heterosexual Aids is alive and well and being transmitted in Birmingham' (*Daily Mail*, 24 June). Health authority spokesman Paul Castle eagerly struck a familiar note of alarm when he insisted that the Birmingham case was 'just the tip of an iceberg' (*Observer*, 28 June).

Medical mole

Hence it was not surprising that when Lewis contacted the health authorities for an official response to his scoop, he found them ready to confirm every detail, apart from the man's name. Thus the story broke, on Monday 22 June, without the name. However, the *Post's* sensational front-page story provoked one of the man's alleged contacts into confirming his identity. The way was now clear to name him in Wednesday's paper, without implicating the 'medical mole', thus enabling the authorities to preserve a fig leaf of confidentiality. The Birmingham Aids panic was under way.

Though health authorities are not known for skilful media management, the Birmingham publicity machine

operated with a degree of efficiency and purpose that suggested, if not advance planning, at least an agency eagerly seizing an opportunity. The first detailed press statement appeared on the same day as the *Birmingham Post* exclusive and was followed by several more over the next week. Busy doctors and administrators were made available at two major press conferences and for numerous media interviews. The local Aids team was the key source of details about the case and relevant background material in all the early newspaper accounts.

Aids agenda

The health authority confirmed that 'there is a case of an individual with HIV, four of whose sexual partners are known to have been infected and one of whom has since died'. This formulation carefully avoided stating that these partners acquired HIV from this man, an assumption made in the media, but one for which there is only circumstantial evidence. Once these details were publicly identified with a named man, the authority's refusal to disclose the name became a mere formality. In addition to these points of substance, the health authority spokesmen emphasised three themes.

First, they entered into public discussion of the moral conduct of the individual concerned. They condemned his 'regrettable irresponsibility' for failing to comply with offers of counselling, though absolving him of 'a wilful intention to infect' (23 June). They declared their intention to 'encourage him to readdress his lifestyle and to act more responsibly'. They later confirmed that he had 'received further counselling and advice on the need for a responsible attitude towards sexual intercourse and the use of a condom' and reported that his 'response to counselling had been positive' (30 June). Trial by media ►

No 'nightmare scenario'

The Birmingham scare has been used as proof that the 'nightmare scenario' of a major heterosexual epidemic is taking place in Britain. In reality, it illustrates the opposite. The fact that it has taken this long for the promoters of the Aids panic to find one individual around whom to publicise their 'nightmare scenario' suggests that heterosexual spread remains rare.

For five years the authorities have emphasised the danger of HIV spreading from high-risk groups into the heterosexual mainstream. First bisexuals were

identified as the potential 'bridge', then drug addicts: neither of these nightmare scenarios has happened. Now the Birmingham case has focused attention on haemophiliacs. In the first decade of Aids in Britain, up to the end of 1991, some 1200 haemophiliacs were infected with HIV. Heterosexual spread from this group has led to six cases of Aids and 51 HIV positives. According to some press reports, the 'HIV Romeo' personally infected 20 or even 30 women in Birmingham—that is, around half the national spread from haemophiliacs! ► (continued over)

◀ (continued from page 21)

Those scared by the hysterical press coverage of the Birmingham panic could have found an antidote in the July issue of *Living Marxism*, where we published the facts about the heterosexual spread of Aids and HIV in Britain. In case you missed them, we reprint them here.

'Reports published by the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre show that, of around 5000 cases of Aids notified in Britain between 1982 and 1991, some 400 were thought to have acquired HIV infection through heterosexual contact. However, 80 per cent of these were infected abroad, largely in countries in Africa where heterosexual transmission

is the most common mode of infection. Some 10 per cent (designated as 'first generation' cases) became infected from contact with recognised high-risk partners, mainly intravenous drug abusers and recipients of infected blood products. The remaining 10 per cent ('second generation'), a total of 47 cases, were infected by heterosexual partners outside recognised high-risk categories in Britain.

'The incidence of heterosexual Aids outside high-risk categories is running at a rate of a handful a year. The parallel figures for individuals who are HIV positive by 'second generation' contact in Britain are 131 out of a total of 15 000. It is worth noting that though there has been a slow but steady increase in 'second generation' heterosexual Aids cases, reports of parallel HIV positive cases ▶

was thus complemented by the Birmingham medical inquisition's demand for public penance.

Then the inquisitors moved on to consider 'what, if any, action' could be taken 'to prevent the further spread of the infection by the individual concerned'. Options considered, and ruled out as impracticable, included compulsory treatment under mental health and public health legislation. They concluded that prosecution would 'be a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions should complaints be made to the police' (23 June).

Finally, they seized the opportunity in every statement to emphasise the danger of heterosexual transmission of HIV and the need for safe sex. The first press release stressed that 'the best defence against acquiring HIV infection is through the practice of safer sex by using a condom' (23 June). When some newspapers began to speculate about the role of anal intercourse in the supposed network of cases in Birmingham, the health authority particularly emphasised the hazards of vaginal intercourse.

'Loveless, drunken rutting'

What is striking about the media coverage of the Birmingham case is that, while it amplified the hysteria, it followed the broad themes laid out by the health authorities remarkably closely. 'Aids maniac on the loose with a mission to kill' was the opening headline in the *Birmingham Post* on 22 June, and the national press carried on the demonisation of the 'HIV Romeo'. Just as the devil often appears as a plausible rogue, this evil man was described, by Mark Bestel, manager of Birmingham Aids Lifeline, as 'an ordinary, charming young bloke' (*Sun*, 23 June). Yet, 'doctors say' he is engaged on a 'twisted revenge plot'.

Different newspapers added their distinctive twist to the character assassination. For the *Sunday Times*, he was a typical dissolute product of the inner-city underclass (28 June); the *Sunday Express* focused on a 'grotesquely irresponsible subculture of promiscuity', 'a frantic, loveless, drunken rutting among the amoral young'; the *News of the World* hinted darkly at 'unnatural', 'illegal', 'kinky' acts (28 June).

'Blessing in disguise'!

Politicians and lawyers had numerous suggestions for methods of coercion. Local Tory MP Jill Knight proposed detention in a mental hospital; local Labour MP Clare Short wanted names and photographs of offending men publicised. This suggestion was also favoured by a legal contributor to the *Guardian* who drew a parallel with media warnings against poisoned food in supermarkets (24 June). The *Sun* said that castration was one of several proposals that 'merit urgent study' (24 June). Professor Leonard Leigh of the London School of Economics suggested using the rape laws; Professor John Smith of Nottingham University recommended a charge of GBH.

All of the press took up the call for safe sex as the only safeguard against the heterosexual transmission of HIV. 'There is one grim lesson from the Birmingham furore' proclaimed a sombre *Guardian* editorial: 'the importance of engaging in safe sex unless you are 101 per cent sure of the health of your partner.' (24 June) On the same day, the *Sun* put the same point more dramatically. In a report from a Birmingham disco headlined 'We are all living like nuns', it noted that 'even the most hunky men were given the cold shoulder as pubs and clubs were swept with the climate

of terror'. At the more respectable end of the spectrum, an editorial in the *Observer* recalled that 'before the war many women either refrained from extra-marital sex or insisted that their partners be protected' (28 June). It concluded that 'society will have to turn the clock back if it is to protect itself from Aids'. The *Observer* and the *Independent*, as well as some of the tabloids, fiercely condemned those newspapers, particularly in the Murdoch stable, which had earlier played down the risks of heterosexual spread.

Surveying the Birmingham Aids panic towards the end of its first week, Aids Lifeline spokesman Mark Bestel was well pleased:

'It is strange but I think this case could be a blessing in disguise. We hope it will make people think before getting into bed without a condom.' (*Guardian*, 26 June)

This is an extraordinary and revealing statement. By this time, the man at the centre of the controversy and his wife had been forced to abandon their home and go into hiding. A factory at which the man had worked was described as being in the grip of an 'Aids panic'. Local haemophiliacs experienced a sense of being further stigmatised; according to one member of the local haemophilia society, attendance at a Birmingham haemophilia clinic that week was decimated. But for the Birmingham Aids establishment this wave of scapegoating and hysteria was 'a blessing in disguise'.

Satisfactory panic

What Bestel meant was that, whatever the wider consequences of the panic, for the Aids establishment it was a blessing. It fulfilled local Aids workers' desires to 'do something' to curtail one

declined between 1990 and 1991. The results of anonymised surveys conducted at antenatal and sexually transmitted disease clinics confirm the low prevalence of HIV outside known high-risk groups and people who have been sexually active in Africa.

'A number of important points follow. First, the Aids epidemic in Britain is not following the African pattern of rapid heterosexual spread, facilitated by other sexually transmitted diseases and prostitution. Second, the much-vaunted 'bridges' provided by bisexual men and drug abusers between currently infected communities and the heterosexual world are carrying very little traffic in Britain. Indeed the prevalence of HIV among British drug abusers remains low. The CDSC's April *Communicable*

Disease Report concludes that 'current evidence does not suggest that the American pattern is occurring here'.

'Whatever is happening in Africa, south-east Asia, the USA, or even in southern Europe, in Britain, Aids remains an uncommon disease. At the end of its first decade it is still remarkably closely confined to recognised high-risk categories. Despite all the scares, among British heterosexuals who do not conduct their sexual relations in sub-Saharan Africa, Aids is very rare. For the vast majority of British people the risk of HIV infection is roughly on a par with that of being struck by lightning.'

(From Dr M Fitzpatrick, 'Aids panic in disarray', *Living Marxism*, July 1992)

man's sexual activities. Dr Crump was confident that the newspapers would have the desired effect on the recalcitrant haemophilic: 'Because of the media coverage I am sure he is re-evaluating the situation himself.' (*Sun*, 24 June) Furthermore, the panic satisfied the national Aids establishment's need to discover some focus around which to revive fears about the heterosexual spread of HIV. It is important to recall that not only has this fear been the central theme of five years of official Aids propaganda, it has also provided the main justification for the employment of around 2500 people in promoting HIV awareness.

Who benefits?

Who benefited from the tip-off to the *Birmingham Post*? Who had access to the relevant information? All the questions lead back to the local Aids establishment and the medical authorities. The health authority has confirmed that there is to be no inquiry and no attempt to identify or discipline the 'medical mole'. While it remains unclear at what level the decision to inform the press was taken, it is clear that all the senior figures in the health authority and local Aids establishment were complicit in an outrageous breach of confidentiality.

The Birmingham affair raises a number of wider issues concerning the public response to Aids in Britain. It reveals above all the way in which HIV infection and Aids are no longer regarded as disease states, but as essentially moral conditions. People suffering from other diseases are regarded as deserving of sympathy and support from society, and care and treatment from doctors. People with HIV and Aids, by contrast, are judged according to the degree of their individual responsibility for their

condition: 'innocent' babies infected by their mothers and recipients of contaminated blood; 'guilty' people who have become infected through drug abuse and homosexuality. The Birmingham case emphasised the moral distinction between people who practice safe sex, and those who don't. As Mark Bestel pointed out, it was not only one man who had acted irresponsibly: 'If all these women had protected themselves, this situation wouldn't have arisen.'

Dark ages

Amid the Birmingham furore Jonathan Grimshaw, co-founder of Body Positive, explained how the discovery that he was HIV positive had led him to change his sexual behaviour (*Guardian*, 26 June). Yet, he admitted, 'there have been times when, because of the anger and despair associated with the diagnosis, I have not acted responsibly'. He added that 'a failure to act responsibly 100 per cent of the time is not confined to people with HIV'. But in the self-righteous world view of the Aids zealots, people—especially HIV positive ones—must be made to act responsibly 100 per cent of the time. If they fall short of this lofty goal, they must endure courses of moral correction (counselling) or face exposure. Doctors, MPs and newspaper editors, of course, always behave 100 per cent responsibly, especially in matters of sexual morality.

The transformation of a disease, which is caused by a virus, into a marker of a defective character signifies a return to the pre-scientific dark ages of medical practice. The Birmingham panic shares many features with medieval responses to the plague: the scapegoating of carriers of infection, the suggestion of demonic influences, the mass hysteria. It is also accompanied by a degradation

of medicine. The major role of doctors in relation to Aids is no longer to treat sick people, but to make healthy people virtuous in the hope that this will enable them to escape contamination, or at least limit the scale of contagion. The moralistic climate created by the Aids panic enables doctors to justify violating elementary standards of confidentiality in the cause of promoting righteous behaviour, in one individual and in society more widely.

The Birmingham case has reduced the debate about HIV/Aids in Britain to the question of what form of legislation could best be used to coerce one individual. Some of the solutions proposed recall the notorious Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s, which tried to prevent the spread of venereal diseases, particularly in the armed forces, by locking up prostitutes. These laws were viciously oppressive towards women but quite ineffective in preventing VD. The fact that the government rejected calls for new legislation in response to Birmingham should not disguise the fact that the panic gives it greater authority to intervene in matters of sexual morality, and more widely in curtailing civil liberties.

Conform or else

The Birmingham case illustrates how fears of a rare but devastating disease can be manipulated to promote a climate of public opinion conducive to sexual conformity and state repression. It confirms the urgency of separating Aids the disease from the moral discourse in which it has been enveloped. This would enable people with HIV and Aids to receive the care and treatment to which they are entitled, and allow the rest of society to carry on life free from irrational fears and state intrusions.

Hands off the Balkans TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND

The Western powers stand poised to send military forces into Bosnia. In the Gulf, Western intervention cost the lives of some quarter of a million Iraqis. Western intervention in the Balkans could create another bloodbath.

Britain has played a key part in turning the new world order into a slaughterhouse. John Major acted as George Bush's trusty lieutenant in the Gulf War. In Yugoslavia, Lord Carrington's 'peace mission' has helped to target Serbia and pave the way for a Western assault. In July defence secretary Malcolm Rifkind published plans for more effective armed forces to deal with the 'threat' from Eastern Europe and the third world. Taking a stand against British militarism has never been more urgent.

But while Britain gears up for new conflicts, we should not forget that it is even now engaged in a colonial war on its own doorstep. For 23 years British troops have waged war against the republican communities of Northern Ireland, in order to maintain control over the Crown's oldest colony—a war that is already Britain's longest military engagement this century.

Twenty-three years on, the recent increase in the numbers of troops in Ireland shows Britain's determination to maintain its occupation by force. Revelations of collusion between the British Army and Protestant paramilitaries have exposed the brutal death squads as instruments



Crown forces. Cases such as the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six should remind us of how Irish men and women are arrested, tortured, framed and imprisoned.

Campaigning to get British troops out of Ireland is central to opposing British militarism. That is why the Irish Freedom Movement's march in London on Saturday 8 August is more important than ever this year.

Over the past decade, the IFM demonstration has established itself as the most important Irish solidarity event in Britain. But this year the march is about even more than standing up for Irish freedom. It is an opportunity to rally anti-imperialist forces in Britain at a time when Western intervention is paving the way for new bloodshed around the world.

Join the march on 8 August, and take a stand against British and Western militarism in Ireland, in the Balkans and across the globe.

March for Troops out of Ireland now!

Organised by the Irish Freedom Movement

Saturday 8 August

1pm Islington Town Hall,
Upper Street, London N1

For further details phone 071 375 1702



August brings yet another anniversary of the start of the Irish War. Yet this year things are different on both sides of the Irish Sea. Phil Murphy explains why

The Irish War in the

New World

The IRA has planted bombs in London and around England this year, as the latest stage of its campaign to force Britain out of Ireland. The bombs have killed several people, injured many more and done hundreds of millions of pounds worth of damage. Yet nobody in Britain—apart from those immediately affected—appears at all concerned. The Irish War, or the ‘troubles’ as it used to be described, no longer seems to trouble anyone too much.

Of course, since the conflict broke out again in the late sixties, Ireland has never been a source of real political debate among British politicians. The major Westminster parties have had nothing of substance to argue about, since they all agree on the need to defend the Union and make war on those who oppose British rule. Today, however, British politicians barely even bother referring to the troubles. The commons chamber is more empty than ever when it comes to the occasional statement on Ireland or relevant legislative change. Ministerial condemnations of the IRA seem to grow more tired and routine every time.

Indifference on Ireland

For its part, the British press used to jump at any opportunity to attack the IRA, portraying republicans as ‘a gang of mindless criminals and psychopaths bent on destruction’. Now the papers seem to spend much more time pillorying and demonising the Iraqis, the Libyans or, this year, the Serbs, than they do the Irish.

These days among ordinary British people it’s difficult to detect even that occasional questioning of what Britain is up to in Ireland, which persisted for much of the first two decades of the war. It would be too positive even to talk about war weariness in Britain; the attitude is more one of apparent indifference. A bomb or a bomb scare

which disrupts the London transport system is treated by commuters as just another inconvenience of everyday life, on a par with countless other rail and tube delays.

The overwhelming climate of opinion here seems to be that the republican struggle is an anachronism, out of date and irrelevant. Even if the IRA blew up the Queen tomorrow, you get the feeling that the questions raised as a result would be more about whether it would bring Charles and Di together than about Britain’s continued occupation of Ireland.

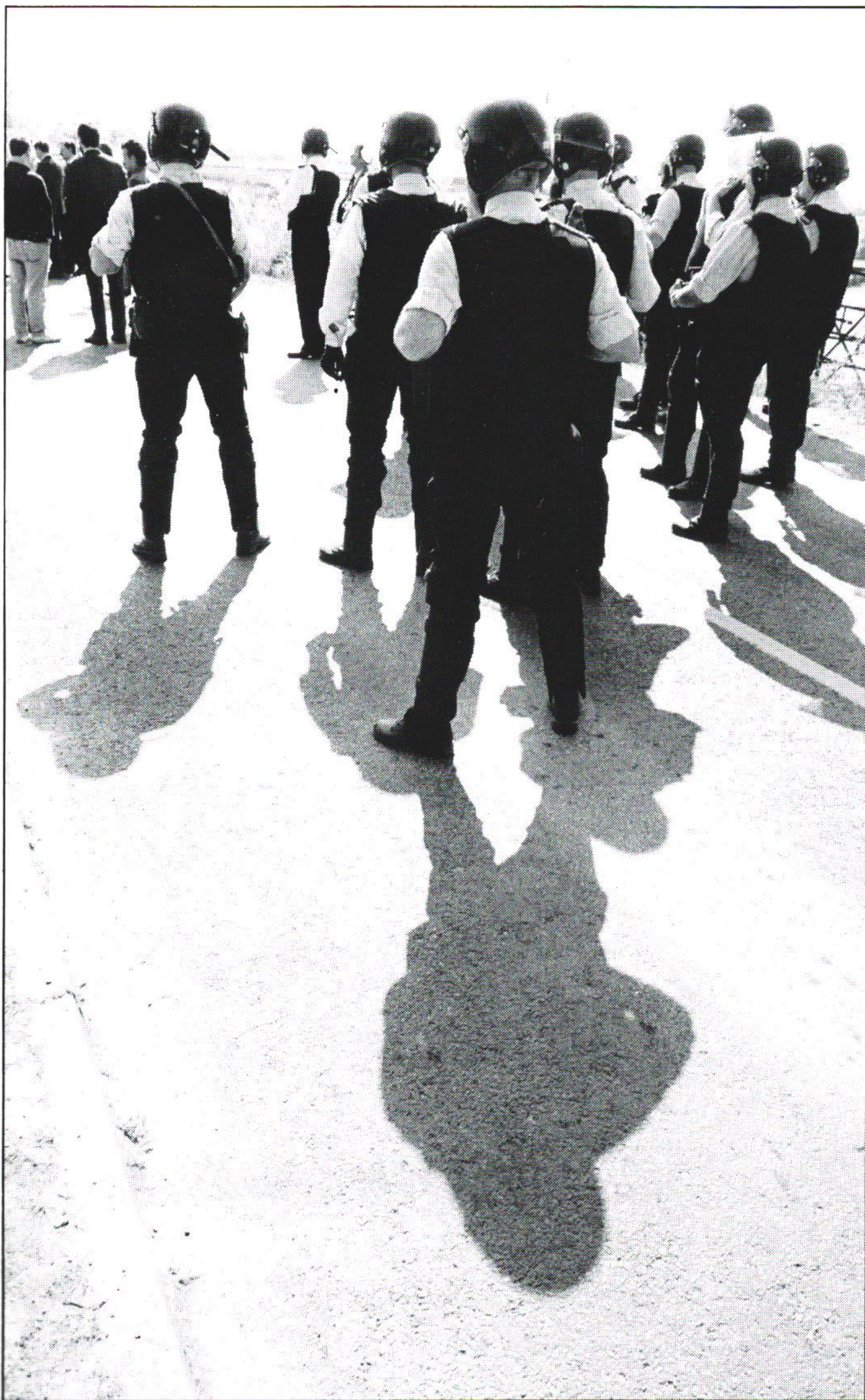
After the Cold War

Why has this happened? Why has Ireland all but disappeared as a political issue in Britain?

The key factor appears to be the new pattern of global relations which has developed since the end of the Cold War. These changes in the world have provided a catalyst for changing the terms of Irish politics too. This shift has then rebounded back on to the way Ireland is perceived within Britain. To understand the process better, it is worth looking in turn at the international changes, their impact in Ireland, and the consequences for the role which the Irish War plays in British politics.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet bloc has given the Western powers a new authority in their dealings with the rest of the world. Without the Soviet Union to act as an alternative model and counterweight in the third world, the Western powers have more freedom to pursue their interests. The balance of power between the West and its opponents has shifted decisively in favour of the Great Powers.

Anti-imperialist struggles have either ended or been put on to the defensive. The same pattern can be seen from central America to southern Africa to the Middle East. The West



PHOTOS: Simon Norfolk

Order

has made use of this new opportunity to adopt a more assertive approach around the world. The Gulf War bore bloody testimony to the new age of Western militarism. Subsequent Western interference everywhere from Cambodia to Yugoslavia has expressed the major powers' new spirit of going on the offensive.

Isolating republicanism

The new era in international politics has also worked to the advantage of the British authorities in Ireland. Most importantly, it has aided Britain's long-term political and military efforts to marginalise the republican movement and weaken its influence.

The IRA's hardcore support in Belfast, Derry and along the Border has so far held up well. Despite some voter slippage, Sinn Fein continues to represent about one third of the nationalist community, judging by this year's general election results in the North. But the demise of most other national liberation struggles around the world can only compound the sense of isolation among Irish republicans, both internationally and locally. It would be unreasonable to expect any new momentum to develop within the republican struggle in today's circumstances.

The authorities have seized upon the new state of affairs to announce 'the end of republicanism', and to set a new agenda in Irish politics, North and South. Many of the changes are the end result of trends which have been apparent for some time. Nevertheless, things are happening today which were inconceivable only a few years ago. They are the result of the changed balance of forces in the Irish War, and the perception that the republican struggle now poses a less forceful challenge to the status quo.

Loyalist volte-face

The recent unprecedented talks between Unionist politicians, Dublin ministers and the British government reflect the changes taking place. The Unionists have been forced to take part from a new position of weakness. Their particular brand of sectarian intransigence can no longer so easily be justified as a necessary counter to the threat of Irish republicanism. With the republican struggle contained for the moment, the British authorities can also feel more confident about whipping the Loyalists into line. Sensing their growing irrelevance, the Unionists have responded by making more concessions to keep the talks about Northern Ireland's future going. They know that if the talks fail they face an uncertain future on the sidelines. Hence the volte-face from the Unionist leaders who agreed to ►



sit down with representatives of the Dublin government for the first time since the 1920s.

Just as unprecedented was the tactical voting for a Catholic candidate by Loyalists from the Shankill Road area of Belfast in the April general election. These were the votes which allowed the Social Democratic and Labour Party to take Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams' West Belfast seat. This significant symbolic and propaganda loss to Sinn Fein (which retained its own West Belfast vote of over 16 000), was only possible because of the more relaxed attitude Loyalists have to the challenge from Irish nationalism. The respectable vote for Conservative Party candidates from middle class Unionists in North

dominated by Britain. As a product of this, the Irish establishment has always been weak, dependent and lacking in political legitimacy. For years the Dublin authorities have sought to stabilise their rule by appealing to the strength of tradition—in particular, the traditions of Catholic morality and anti-British feeling. Since the troubles began in the sixties, Irish governments have often made gestures of defiance towards Whitehall, while cooperating with the British war effort on the ground.

A new Ireland

Today, however, with the weakening of anti-imperialism, Ireland's political leaders are no longer so dependent on appealing to republican traditions and playing up illusory symbols of national independence. They can afford to be much less equivocal about promoting a 'new Ireland' and turning their backs on old shibboleths. The Irish political establishment does still have a serious legitimacy problem; the fact that it has nothing of substance with which to replace the old traditions means it is incapable of enthusing popular support. But whatever its problems today, it no longer feels under pressure to strike old-style poses on the national question. The result is that Irish ministers are officially sitting down with Loyalists for the first time since partition.

Military overdrive

So what does all this mean for the British angle? The interaction of the new international balance with the new political agenda in Ireland has made the British authorities more confident in the war. They seem to believe that they can now go beyond achieving 'an acceptable level of violence' in Northern Ireland; that with the right mix of military repression and political measures they can get a decisive result in Ireland and bring the war to an end.

Militarily, the British authorities are upping the pressure on republicans by sending in more troops and giving MI5 authority to operate against the IRA throughout Ireland, Britain and Europe. Politically, they are putting a lot into keeping the everybody-but-Sinn Fein talks process alive, as a way of complementing the military offensive by further isolating the republicans. The lack of critical comment from Whitehall on the attempts by Catholic and Protestant clergy to mediate with Sinn Fein can also be taken as informal British support for these bids to talk the republicans into making concessions.

After the election, John Major appointed two men with strong military backgrounds, Sir Patrick Mayhew and Michael Mates, as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and security minister respectively. These

appointments seem to point to the pursuit of a more openly militaristic line alongside political manoeuvres. The British government is certainly less coy about its prosecution of the war. SAS shoot-to-kill operations are now openly admitted, when a few years ago even the presence of the SAS was covered up. Paratroopers, trained to lack subtlety as killing machines, are deployed in strong nationalist areas like Coalisland where there is bound to be conflict with the community. And when the clashes occur and locals are beaten up and shot with live rounds, the Paras' actions are publicly endorsed by government ministers.

And in Britain?

Just as the Western powers feel no compunction about asserting their interests anywhere else in the world, so the British authorities are aware that they risk no serious domestic or international criticism for what they do in Ireland. Hence the more relaxed attitude towards concealing their dirty war. For example, the June *Panorama* programme on the Brian Nelson affair, exposing links between the British Army and Loyalist death squads, would have been banned in an earlier phase of the Irish War.

For all these reasons, the struggle in Ireland today occupies a different place in British politics. The British establishment has been successful in containing any immediate threat from the republican struggle to its authority within the United Kingdom. The Irish struggle can still pose a fundamental challenge to the repressive power of the British state. But today, this represents more of a potential than an actual problem for the authorities.

One of the few

However, on a broader canvas the Irish struggle has assumed a new importance. With the new international authority of the Western powers, the Irish War remains one of the few active anti-imperialist struggles in the world. Britain's political masters may be less constrained about unleashing the dogs of war in Northern Ireland, but the people of hardcore republican areas respond by saying that they have gone through too much to pack up now. They continue to resist. While they withstand the mounting pressures, the fight for Irish freedom can provide an international focus for opposing Western interference around the globe.

The Irish War may have slipped down the agenda of British politics. Yet campaigning in support of the struggle for Irish independence remains important for anybody in Britain who wants to make a stand against the New World Order, in which the Western powers order the world to do their bidding at gunpoint. ●

The fight for Irish freedom can be a focus for opposing Western interference around the globe

Down and Strangford provided further electoral evidence of the changed political parameters. Traditional voting patterns no longer seem set in stone.

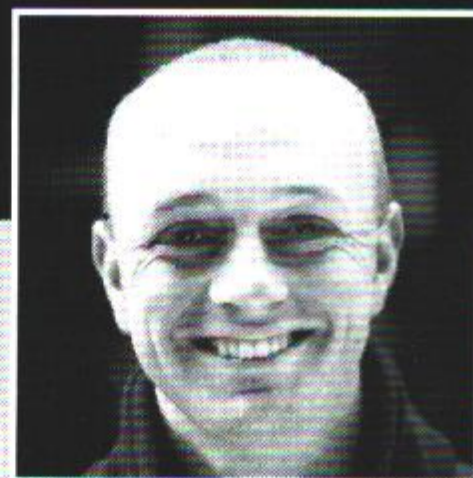
In Southern Ireland life seems to be changing even faster. Traditional forces like the Catholic church are on the defensive after being shaken by a series of public scandals, most notably the Bishop Casey affair. There is nothing new in the Catholic church being corrupt and hypocritical in its conservative teachings, but now this is no longer a taboo subject of debate in Ireland. The humiliated Catholic hierarchy is today almost silent on the great social issues facing Irish society, such as abortion.

Other taboos are also going. Dublin politicians are openly contemplating ditching Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, which embody Dublin's formal claim on Northern Ireland. They have also declared their preparedness to abandon the South's formal neutrality from international military alliances.

Southern puppet

These changes are in part further consequences of the shift in the balance of power in Ireland and around the world. As Western powers such as Britain have become more confident about throwing their weight around the world, even a puppet of imperialism like the Dublin establishment now feels better able to assert itself against republicanism—especially given Sinn Fein's decidedly marginal political influence in the South today.

The partition of Ireland created the South as an artificial state, economically backward and politically



Manners maketh comeback

Q: How does one greet a person who is wearing riding gear?
A: If they are crossing the 'quad' at Christ Church College, Oxford, the correct form of address is 'wanker'.

This example of modern etiquette comes not from the pages of *Viz* magazine, but from a motion passed by the Junior Common Room of the aforementioned college. The jest hit a raw nerve, and not just with the 'young fogeys' at Christ Church. For some time now there has been an uneasy mood abroad in the rarefied world of the Oxbridge establishment, with dons making noises about 'standards' and the 'wrong sort' of students. No-one can spell, nobody reads any more, and attention spans have been destroyed by years of mind-rotting popular culture. Worst of all, nobody laughs at the dons' jokes, and they fondly believe that this is because nobody understands their references to the classics.

It's not just Oxford, either. Cricket, we hear, has been defiled by Graham Gooch's 'barmy army' of 'Brits on Tour' followers. Wimbledon was in uproar over 'Monic-ugh' Seles and the grunting brat pack. Ascot was 'ruined' by pink lycra mini skirts. There is a general feeling that, as one young writer put it over a decade ago, 'the yobs are winning'.

In those days, the fear was that the bourgeoisie would be drowned in the rising tide of lumpen filth. Now there are worries about the young middle classes diving enthusiastically into the scum. As the Hooray Henry gave way to the City lager lout, the public schoolboys learned to say 'son' and 'pukka' and had their corduroy trousers surgically removed. The latest 'tribe' to be lazily labelled is the 'Secret Sharons': nice girls who don white stilettos and go native in tacky wine bars, 'Knightsbridge Girls who turn Essex after dark'. And at the apex of this rapidly submerging social pyramid, forcing it down with the sheer weight of their vulgarity, sit the young royals.

One consequence of all this uneasiness is that 'manners' have become a topic of public discussion once again. Etiquette books are back, imparting courtly rules from bygone centuries. The authors try to justify their existence in the 1990s by suggesting that people want clear rules when tricky questions of race, class and gender arise. It all sounds very nice. Good to know that Debretts and the rest can move with the times. After all, manners are just an encouragement to kind, considerate behaviour. One heavily hyped new book begins in this vein by arguing that manners are really codes for minor morals. But this is a tall order: most of its pages address the intricacies of eating peas with a fork and similar matters, and before long the author is admitting that manners are usually more concerned with just 'being right', and some people are naturally righter than others.

For, as they say in the Bertie Wooster sherry ad, one instinctively knows when something is right. They say that the upper classes are equally at home with a duke or a dustman, and this is usually mistaken for putting other people at their ease. In reality, their social graces are

busy wrong-footing everybody else in the politest possible way. The true reason the upper classes feel at home anywhere is that they *are* at home anywhere—the world is their home, they own it. They are comfortable talking to anyone because they feel superior to everyone.

Whether you are bothered about being wrong-footed by your social superiors depends on whether you aspire to be accepted by them. Hence manners are a particular preoccupation of the middle classes, where even today your position in a tight pecking order could rest on whether you say 'toilet' or 'serviette' in the wrong company.

One new guidebook makes a revealing observation about the nature of self-improvement and social mobility: 'Half the time people carry on as if we lived in a classless society these days, but the rest of the time those people are having quiet conversations about who others are and where they come from. The first thing to say is that no-one should feel ashamed of who they are and where they come from—and that applies to princes as much as slum children.' I don't imagine this particular £1.99 paperback was aimed at princes, so behind the reassuring tone is the clear assumption that the lower orders must shape up.

On this question many others agree. Whenever manners are discussed today, ordinary people are blamed for making the world an ugly place. The London papers are currently full of abusive articles about

people who eat in the street. It seems this is not only rude, but distressing to others whose relaxation is spoilt. So next time you're cramming down your food in the rush to get back to work because your lunch 'hour' is now 10 minutes, spare a thought for the businessmen as you pass their pavement tables—you're probably ruining their four-course meals.

And when you have to fight 50 other people for a place on the bus, remember how much more pleasant it is to queue—if you behaved better, the businessmen

wouldn't have to go everywhere by cab. And, when you finally get home in the middle of the evening, when the shops have shut, forcing you to buy another takeaway you can't afford, remember that as you sit round the TV too exhausted to speak, you are 'destroying the family institution of mealtimes'—not to mention the art of conversation.

Everybody is doing their bit. London Transport is about to publish a passengers' conduct guide. The writing is already on the wall—or at least, the posters are; little busybody thoughts for the day: 'Make time to help others', 'Make time to travel safely'. They request that you 'avoid travelling' during the rush hours (ie, between 7am and midnight). How long before it is 'bad manners' to cause a sweaty crush when half the trains are cancelled? And don't forget the 'cheap and cheerful service for typists' we are promised once BR is privatised. Perhaps we're ready for the return of the Great Unwashed—blaming people without bathrooms or running hot water for smelling bad. Or have the water board chiefs already thought of that? ●

There is a general feeling that 'the yobs are winning'

Hardly a week seems to pass these days without another police scandal being revealed, or another judicial frame-up exposed. The authorities have responded by setting up several inquiries, and promising to make the police and the law more user-friendly services. John Fitzpatrick thinks that anybody who believes that is an ass

Are you being served?

Watch out, there's an inquiry about. In fact, there's quite a few. Home secretary Kenneth Clarke has set businessman Sir Patrick Sheehy to work on the pay, conditions and management of the police forces of the United Kingdom. Sir John May is still trying to discover how the courts convicted the Maguire Seven and the Guildford Four. Then there is the mother of all inquiries: the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice under Lord Runciman. Set up on the release of the Birmingham Six by previous home secretary, Kenneth Baker, it is currently busy gathering evidence on 'all stages of the criminal process'. There is going to be some heavy blossom next spring.

Awkward customers

The air is already thick with arguments, submissions and lobbying. You have not heard the last of corroboration of confessions or of a new tribunal for 'miscarriages'. You will hear more too about cost-effective, user-friendly community policing, about 'bad apples', and, of course, about 'a service not a force'. The bandwagon will be fuelled by crime statistics, and

panics about terrorists, hooligans and hippies. Sir John Woodcock, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, recently managed to combine the ridiculous rhetoric of both consumerism and bogeymen: 'The abusing husband, the foul drunk, the lager lout and the belligerent squatter are customers. Different, but equally as much customers as the victims of crime.' Oh dear, are *you* being served?

Guilty judges

When the head man starts talking like this you can take it that the government really does have a big problem with the police and criminal justice system. At root the police are increasingly distrusted. In 1959, a Mori survey recorded that 83 per cent of the public had a great deal of respect for the police. Respect may not necessarily have meant trust anyway, but even so by 1989 that figure had become 43 per cent. That was *before* the celebrated 'miscarriage of justice' cases got going.

These cases have spread the credibility crisis to the whole system, and in particular to the judiciary. Very few people accepted their shifty

'not guilty' pleas—'it wasn't us, it was the police and the forensic scientists; we just sum up'. The new Lord Chief Justice is so worried that he has spoken to the press, saying it would be better if judges said sorry when releasing innocent men and women from jail. He has even *hinted* that wigs might be on their way out. For this he is praised as open and accessible.

Public image

The government knows that it is going to have to do rather better than this. The American politician Hubert Humphrey once remarked, 'there are not enough jails, not enough policemen, not enough courts to enforce a law not supported by the people'. That is how the authorities here were beginning to feel. Without the consent of the public, their job is a very difficult one indeed. For them the law must enjoy respect and legitimacy. This is what the inquiries are all about; not ensuring justice, but improving the public image of a decidedly unjust system.

As Sir John Wheeler put it in the House of Commons on the day the royal commission was announced, 'it is of the greatest importance for the public as a whole to have confidence in the criminal justice system and process...[The] announcement of a wide-ranging inquiry by a royal commission...will satisfy many of the concerns that are felt'. This was almost the exclusive theme of the debate. Labour's Roy Hattersley spoke for all sides when he said that the 'damage' to the 'reputation of British justice' (not, you will note, to those wronged) should be 'repaired as quickly as possible'. He added, 'we need something which improves and rehabilitates the criminal justice system immediately'.

Not one word

Kenneth Baker took a slightly more relaxed view when introducing the commission: 'Our criminal justice system deals perfectly well with the overwhelming majority of cases. That should never be forgotten. The cases that are now the cause of our concern represent only a tiny proportion of the work that is carried out to high standards....I believe that ►



our present arrangements work well in the overwhelming majority of cases, and I pay tribute to all those who endeavour to achieve that.'

Those enjoying the recent discomfiture of the police and judiciary and looking forward to the outcome of the inquiries would do well to remember the tone of this parliamentary debate, back in March 1991. And remember too, not one word of sympathy or regret issued from Baker for the Birmingham Six, released that day from over 16 years of false imprisonment. He was challenged to express sympathy for their families, but pointedly avoided doing so.

a consolidation exercise, an opportunity, in Hattersley's phrase, to rehabilitate the system. It's working, at least in media circles. An article in the *Independent* on 3 July began:

'In the pre-Clarke, pre-miscarriage of justice days....'

There is certainly nothing defensive about the police attitude. Consider: if the death penalty was still in force, then Winston Silcott, the man the police framed for killing PC Blakelock, would have swung long ago. So what has the Police Federation just demanded? The return of capital punishment. Consider: if confessions had not been terrorised out of the Guildford Four, and they

same liberal reformers will be proposing new structures of accountability, along with elaborate schemes of community policing.

However, as battle is joined, the critics have overlooked two important points. First, in their efforts to make the legal process more just and accountable, they miss the actual nature and function of the police force and criminal justice system in our society. Second, in their attempts to ensure that there is no repetition of the infamous 'miscarriage' cases, they ignore the specific political circumstances behind the most prominent of these: namely, the war in Ireland, and state racism in Britain.

There are now about 125 000 police in England and Wales, which is about one for every 400 people (256 in London). It was one for every 500 in 1970. Government spending on the police has risen by 74 per cent in real terms since 1979, which includes a 13 per cent rise in personnel and a 39 per cent increase in pay.

What are they all for? And don't say fighting crime. Home office figures for reported crime since 1979 show an increase in 115 per cent. The figures for the year to March 1992 show that 94 per cent of recorded crimes were against property. The detection rate for crimes against property is currently nudging 25 per cent.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act was available for Winston Silcott but not the Guildford Four. Did it make any difference?

The setting up of these inquiries, particularly the royal commission, expresses both the weaknesses and strengths of the authorities today. Margaret Thatcher did not use the device of a royal commission even once in 11 years. It smacked of indecision, and worse it meant the devolution of control to those not necessarily 'one of us'. John Major's government had little choice; the rot was too deep, and few, if any, had the stomach to bluff it out. It was damage limitation time; credibility had to be restored.

An inside job

On the other hand, the fact that criticism of the legal system can be safely contained within a royal commission demonstrates that the authorities still have control of the process of reform. After all, it was mainly elements within the establishment who pushed the issue rather than any forceful political opposition. No doubt television journalists, writers and campaigners kept a case like Guildford on the boil. The decisive pressure, however, came from law lords Scarman and Devlin, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Basil Hume, and ex-home secretaries Roy Jenkins and Merlyn Rees. It was an inside job.

The true measure of the weakness of the political opposition is that no senior policeman, no lawyer, no judge and no minister has even come under pressure to resign as the trail of corruption has unravelled. The government clearly feels it has lanced the boil, and that the whole business can now be treated as

had been allowed to remain silent, they would never have been convicted. So what has the Police Federation just demanded? The abolition of the right to silence.

Many agree with the federation that the problem has been that police powers have been lacking and sentencing too weak. Lord Denning has already pointed out that this fuss would have been avoided if all these Irishmen had been hung. Some take a slightly different tack. Lord Hailsham suggests that the police 'cut corners' because the rules of evidence are so complex, and Frank Field thinks some police are tempted to 'tamper' with evidence because they believe the system is unfair. A corner here, a tamper there. The subtext is that these people were guilty anyway, but got off on technicalities which should be abolished.

What are they for?

There has been no shortage of more liberal demands for reform delivered to the royal commission. Most shopping lists include a pic 'n' mix of the following: restriction of stop-and-search powers; audio and video taping of all interviews with all suspects; retention of the right to silence; confessions to be corroborated; defence access to an independent forensic service; restoration of the right to peremptory challenge of jurors; judges to sum up on the law only; a miscarriages of justice commission; reform of judicial appointments; multi-racial juries to be appointed and legal aid to be extended generally. As the police inquiry gets under way, no doubt these

Crime figure fraud

Crime statistics are famously difficult to handle, but it doesn't take a mathematician to work out that the police are not doing very well at fighting crime. Nobody should really expect them to. Neither should anybody waste too much time on crime figures, or even on their definition of what constitutes a crime. Is it going up? Is it linked to the recession? These discussions only play into their hands: more crimes must mean more police.

Terrible though an assault or burglary can be, we should remember what the government wants us to forget amid all the hysteria about crime: that the real problems which most people face, most of the time, concern poor or no employment, bad or precarious housing and dreadful public services. These are the conditions which lower the quality of our lives, not once in a blue moon, but for every minute of the day. Anyway, when did the police ever stop an assault or a burglary from taking place?

Batons drawn

The police though have been pretty successful at what they are there for. The history of the development of the police is the history of the government responding to threats to public order and to political dissent. The truth is that the police spend a lot of time just being

there—reminding the population of their existence, disciplining the young in particular with regard to their place in the world (see football crowd control) and generally standing by for the decisive confrontations. The batons have rarely been at rest for long: from the Reform Bill riots of the 1830s, against the Chartists in Kennington in 1848, the London Radicals in Trafalgar Square in 1884, the miners in Tonypany in 1910, the Liverpool rioters in 1919, the unemployed marchers in the 1930s, the students in the 1960s, and over the past 20 years against the miners, dockers, printers,

Irish people, black people, poll tax protesters. It must be said that in this department, especially recently, they have been doing rather well.

Obviously the more integrated the police are with the population, the more they direct traffic, tell the time and lend a sympathetic ear, the more accepted and successful they will be in their primary role. That is why in London they now deliver friendly freebie newspapers from the local stations, advertising not only the local crime scare, but also the wide range of social services they provide: the caring domestic violence unit, the liaison with local housing officers, the school visits and mixed sporting events. It is why the Met have hired public relations consultants, and why they have recently set up a mini police station inside the Whittington Hospital in north London. Said Chief Superintendent Peter Mathias, 'I was very anxious that we take policing to the customer'. Ah yes, are you being served yet?

PC Smith & Wesson

Since the high-profile paramilitary policing of Orgrave and Wapping in the eighties, a lot of money and effort has been expended on restoring a friendly image. The problem is that the state's need to professionalise, to centralise and to arm its police force has already made it impossible for George Dixon to reappear. It appears likely that the division of labour between the heavy mob and the community plods will continue to grow.

This may all sound like restating the obvious, but that would seem necessary when so many discussions of this subject today assume that the parties involved in the inquiries and reforms are gathering around the table on the same basis: 'Let's try to strike a just balance between protection for the innocent citizen and what is needed to convict the villain.' In the real world, Lord Mackay proceeds with cutting back on legal aid (one of the main proposals of reformers) and the police tool up with Smith & Wesson revolvers, Walther automatics, Heckler & Koch rifles, Uzi sub-machine guns, Remington pump-action shotguns, plastic bullets, water cannon and CS gas. They know they're playing by different rules.

Nowhere is this more true than in the case of the 'miscarriages'. The point that is almost completely ignored in the current debate is the central truth about them. They were not miscarriages at all in any proper sense of the word. They were not failures of the system. They were successes for a system which needed to punish and repress its Irish and black insurgents.

It is breathtaking that so many people can now address these

show-trials without a word about their political content. They were not accidents but deliberate and sustained decisions to set an example. Neither was the success of the frame-ups due to inadequacies of legal procedure. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act was available for Winston Silcott but not the Guildford Four. Did it make any difference?

Did the public exposure of the whole 'miscarriages' business make any difference to Alex Murphy, Henry Maguire, Patrick Kane, Michael Timmons and Sean Kelly? Who are they? Five of the 20 Irish people convicted in 1989 and 1990 in the Casement Trials. These cases arose from the deaths of two British soldiers who drove a car into a republican funeral cortege in Belfast, then shot at mourners who tried to repel them and were themselves finally shot by the IRA. The five have been convicted on some dubious heli-tele evidence and a spurious 'common purpose' doctrine, which allowed convictions for murder not on the basis that the accused killed anyone, but that they were active members of the crowd which, almost in panic, apprehended the soldiers. They are now serving life in prison.

Face facts

The frame-ups succeeded because of a political culture which permits and supports a ferocious scapegoating of Irish republicans and black youth, a political culture which remained silent and complicit for years while the state went about its business of repression. The only reason that the authorities even dared to commit such outrageous crimes was because everybody was studiously looking the other way. The police and judges know that if there is public backing it doesn't matter what the rules say. The only way to prevent another Guildford Four or Tottenham Three is to make British imperialism in Ireland and British racism at home anathema to ordinary people in this country.

Democratic control of the police and improved procedures for criminal investigation and trial sound like fine things. But does anybody imagine that we are going to get a step nearer to justice by burying our heads in the sand (or in the procedures of a royal commission) and ignoring what we are really up against? We are dealing with an apparatus designed to coerce and contain the majority of the population. There is no point in asking that apparatus to reform itself for our benefit. Instead, we need to work out how we can organise to defend and extend our rights against it. It would be a start if we publicised the truth about the political role of the police and the criminal justice system which they serve.



Coventry's anti-youth

Another summer of tension and trouble in Britain's cities began with battles between police and youth in Coventry.

What's it all about? Andrew Calcutt went home to investigate the new spectres haunting 'Ghost Town'

et the question of why authority should be contested, why the youths are so antagonistic, remains'. Paul Cheeseright, midlands correspondent of the *Financial Times*, was unable to account for the 10 days of disorder in Coventry, which started in May in the outer-city areas of Wood End and Willenhall, and later spread to inner-city Hillfields. Youths attacked police with stones and petrol bombs, wrecked some shops, and fire-bombed a school and a council housing office.

Presumably the *FT* doesn't have many readers in Wood End or Hillfields, and its man in the midlands had probably never been near those estates before. If he had, he would not need to ask why. The outbreak of disorder was the end result of a policy of consigning the young people of Coventry to the margins of the city. In geographic, economic and cultural terms, they have been shut out. Anti-police violence is one result of Coventry's anti-youth culture.

Father forgive us

In the fifties, Coventry councillors built the first wholly pedestrian city centre. Workers from the city's flourishing engineering and motor industries were encouraged to feel at home in 'the precinct'. The new cathedral of St Michael, consecrated 30 years ago this summer, adopted an egalitarian stance and based its ministry on the postwar spirit of reconciliation and consensus. To this day a special 'service of

reconciliation' takes place every Friday, beginning with the words 'Father forgive the hatred which divided nation from nation, race from race, class from class'. In recent years, however, the 'public space' of the postwar city centre has been encroached upon by enclosed shopping areas designed to exclude those without spending power. The atmosphere of easy consensus has also disappeared.

Move along now

'Feel free to select from this table.' The sign above the menswear display in Debenhams, the largest shop in the new West Orchard mall, is addressed to well-heeled *Arena* readers. Young people short on disposable income are not welcome inside or outside the store. 'They move you along', said Jez, an 18-year old who lives about a mile from the city centre. 'If you go in any of the big shops you get followed about. They all have security guards and they come up and say to you "are you buying something?"'. It's embarrassing if you're with a girl. You don't need it, do you?

The first time I met Jez he was standing with three friends on a raised walkway 'watching the birds because there's nothing better to do'. Dressed in t-shirt, baggy jeans and trainers, he said 'the police don't want us here because of the way we look'. The next day I saw him and his friends standing in the same place, being questioned by police: 'There were three of them giving us hassle. No reason. Said they

were just checking. They took our names and addresses and took notes on the clothes we've got on. There's no need for it—the dirty pigs.'

Wherever they go in the city centre, Jez and his mates are likely to be picked up by one of the 51 closed circuit cameras which comprise Britain's first comprehensive 'shopping management' security system. If they sit on a bench and sip a can of beer, they'll be in trouble. In 1988 the Labour council persuaded the Tory government to pass an act of parliament making Coventry city centre an 'alcohol-free zone'. (It was subsequently revised so that an upmarket bar called Brown's could put cafe-style tables on the pavement). Coventry's prohibition rule set the tone for 'clean-up' measures adopted in other cities. There aren't many places, however, with searchlights in the town centre. A former resident, visiting Coventry after five years' absence, said that Belfast was the only city where she had seen anything similar.

Shut out

Tourism, retail development and 'office villages' are the growth areas which Coventry council is trying to promote. Even in the eighties that left little scope for the jobless sons and daughters of former car workers. In the slump of the nineties, things are far worse. 'Sometimes we feel shut out of our own town', said Jez. City councillors deny it, but the logic of their strategy is that working class youth should stay at

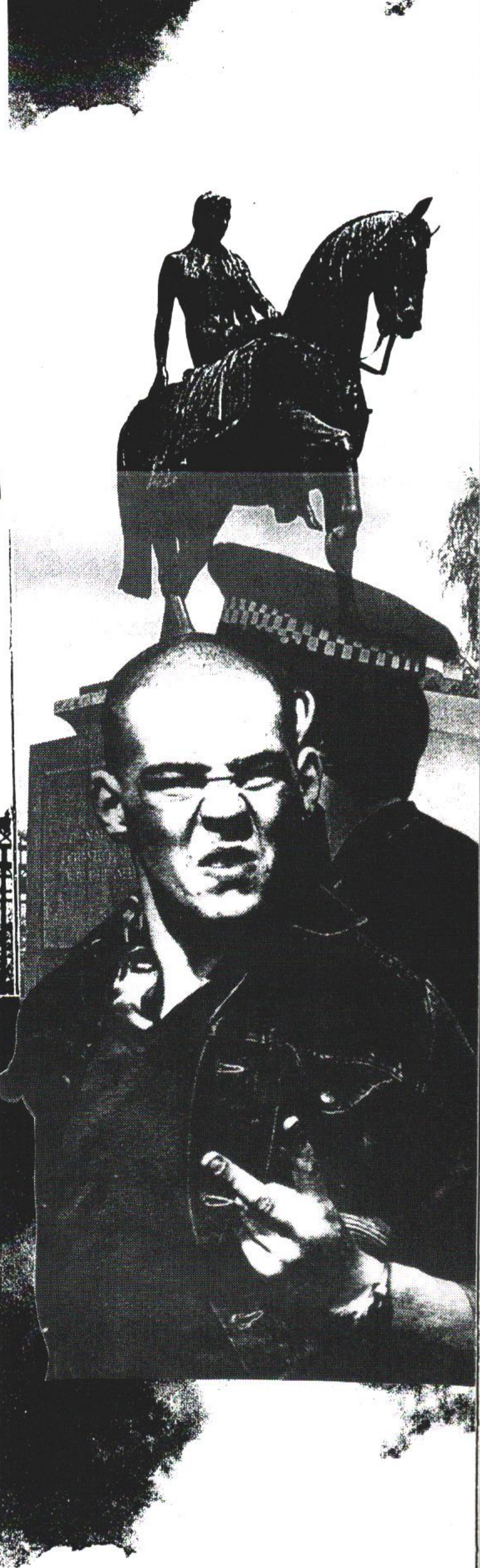
culture

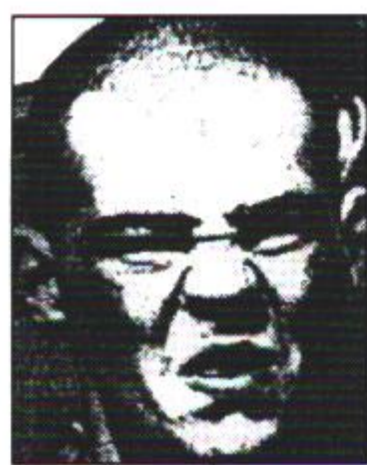
home on dilapidated outer-city estates, marooned by high bus fares and watched over by the West Midlands police helicopter. As the vicar of Willenhall—one of May's hotspots—put it, 'a great proportion of society is being shut into areas where they can't be seen'.

Wits end

Coventry's youth form part of the unseen unemployed. In the sixties school-leavers could choose a job and then walk into another one if they didn't like it. If they got the sack in the seventies shakeout, they could sign on and hope that life would get back to normal. But normal life is different nowadays, as a Willenhall youth worker explained. 'Young people aged 16 to 18 are disqualified from benefit. They should be guaranteed youth training but for the last year it's been very difficult to find a place. YT placements are disappearing because the companies are folding up. There is a bridging allowance of £15 for eight weeks. After that they live off their parents—nearly half local households have an income of less than £100—or off their wits.'

Some get temporary work at £2 an hour. Only half the 1991 crop of school-leavers has found work or training. Many others have taken up black-economy activities such as 'going on the pictures': they are paid commission-only for travelling to owner-occupied suburbs and hawking prints door-to-door. This sort of ►





temporary scam is as near as they will get to stable employment—and they know it.

Meanwhile the council is cutting back on facilities for young people. This year's budget included £5.38m cuts in education. Community education posts are frozen. The Stoker, a community arts venue, was shut down at the end of last year when its funding ran out. In Hillfields, the Afro-Caribbean development unit

The integrated Two Tone style is nowhere in the new city

and the ethnic minority development unit are closing.

Full employment and the welfare state are both relics of the past. The under-20s are growing up without them. To cope with the intensified pressures of their perilous existence, they have developed a new mind-set—a volatile cocktail of pragmatism and resignation offset by a sometimes violent urge to kick against the oblivion imposed upon them in today's anti-youth culture.

An Asian school-leaver said, 'I've decided I don't want to work until I'm 21. I'm just going to doss around till then'. Another youth thought life was 'alright if you've got money for a game of snooker'. But what about the stunt-riding of allegedly stolen motorbikes in Wood End, and the confrontations with police after they moved in to stop it? 'That's for kicks. If there's violence it's because of boredom and there's nothing better to do. Same with burglary. If you've got no money and nothing to do, you might do it for the kick of it and get some cash at the same time.' The high spot of his young life was 'smoking draw and having a drink. That's all anybody wants'.

'There's nothing here for me', concluded another youth. 'In a few years I'll go to Ireland, where my parents come from.' The irony is that recognising that 'there's nothing here for me' was what prompted his parents and many others to emigrate from Ireland to the boom town of Coventry in the first place.

The Tory government, the Labour council and the private developers have served an exclusion order on Coventry's youth. The police force is the only agency to have increased its interest in them.

Stop-and-search is even more frequent on outer-city estates than in city-centre shopping malls. It's so common that one youth said 'we don't get a lot of hassle—we just get stopped and checked for warrants'. A 19-year old from Wood End said: 'Sometimes you get stopped in the next street and you just tell them, "I've already been stopped".' Another youth explained: 'They go round giving you grief and saying you should be in bed. They want the streets clear as soon as it gets dark.' Police video cameras are in use on outer-city estates.

Motorcycle terrorists

Many Coventry residents believe West Midlands police are working to a rigorous new policy. A musician recalled the recent operation which involved setting up roadblocks and sealing off the city centre on a Saturday night. Earlier this year, police in Hillfields stepped up their activities, ostensibly to combat prostitution. Black youth in the area believe they are the real targets.

The police operation said to have sparked the Wood End disturbances was directed at 'motorcycle terrorists'. Youths on motorbikes have been buzzing round the area for 10 years, but riot squads are a novel way of dealing with them. The disturbances in Willenhall followed the heavy police presence in the area after an unexceptional burglary. West Midlands police conceded that they had adopted a high-profile policy in Wood End and Willenhall. The use of helicopters and the pro-active deployment of riot squad officers can only have been intended as a show of strength. It seems likely that the police chose to escalate an everyday altercation into a full-scale confrontation.

Segregated city

Swamp-style policing used to be exceptional. In the anti-youth culture of the nineties, working class estates are policed like this all the time. The authorities have piled on the pressure. It's not surprising that youth should try to take it out on the police. An increase in racist violence is another side-effect of the newly embittered atmosphere in Coventry.

The new Coventry is a segregated city. Black and white youths rarely mix. A 19-year old Asian explained: 'If I walk through town on my own, there's a good chance of getting hit.' He looked for back-up from the Jinns, a group formed in response to racist attacks and based at Tile Hill College of Further Education. White youth deny the influence of racism, but for many of them it has become second nature: 'I don't think there is much racism here—there are only a few Asians in Wood End. If they had a party and

attracted attention then they would get trouble. But they don't go out much anyway.'

In the days running up to the outbreak of anti-police violence, there was a serious altercation in an Asian restaurant not far from Wood End. A white youth was subsequently injured by a hit-and-run driver, and a number of Asian shops were attacked. The *Coventry Evening Telegraph* noted that 'racial tension begins to fester', and then said no more about it.

'Ghost Town'

Coventry is still remembered for the multi-ethnic music of Two Tone. 'Ghost Town' (1981), The Specials' biggest success, was a lament for the failure of postwar Coventry. But the integrated Two Tone style is nowhere in the new city. What's left of the music scene is an index of racial division.

'There are clubs for blacks and clubs for whites', said a local DJ. Former members of The Specials have moved in opposite directions: one fronts a rockabilly band; another is 'heavily into' black consciousness. The Asian community has set up daytime Bhangra parties for its young people. Even in mixed clubs, young people tend to stay within their own ethnic group.

Up to £17.50

There are precious few clubs and music venues in the city. Some clubs insist on a dress code which only over-25s can measure up to. That leaves about three city centre venues accessible to youth: the eclipse (house), Silvers (indie) and the recently reopened Tic Toc. The price of admission—up to £17.50—restricts access still further. Like everything else, there's not enough entertainment to go round.

On a Saturday night, different crowds compete for a piece of the action. 'Sometimes they kick off', as one 20-year old put it. The summer issue of *BOF*, 'Coventry's sonic fanzine', included an impassioned protest against 'hardened and cynical attitudes...bad vibes...aggravated attacks'. Having created the pressures which lead to violence, the Coventry authorities cite the outbreak of violent incidents in the city to back up their arguments for tighter policing and more repression.

When the city's youth lash out against the police and each other, it is a response to a whole range of new pressures—none of which is of their own making. Coventry has been stripped of the comfortable old clothes of postwar consensus. In the anti-youth culture now revealed there, tension and antagonism are as naked as Lady Godiva. The real question is not why did the May disturbances happen, but why don't such things happen more often.



Tessa Myer finds the arm of the law getting longer and longer

Three's a crowd

PHOTO: Michael Kramer

On the hot bank holiday Monday in May, the family of a friend of mine drove to Southend in Essex for a picnic by the sea. At least, they tried to. A short distance from the beach, they met a road-block: a 'no entry' sign flanked by a couple of policemen and a barrier. Finding an alternative route proved impossible as all the main junctions were sealed off in similar fashion. The police had turned the coast at Southend into a no-go area.

'My first impression', said my friend's mum, 'was that something unusual had happened, like a bomb had gone off'. But they could see other holiday-makers enjoying the sun behind the barriers. 'People weren't panicking; it all looked very normal.'

The explanation from the police was that the sea-front car park was full. They were told to turn back. My friend's mum was unconvinced. In the 30 years the family had travelled to Southend, they would simply drive around looking for a vacant parking space. 'I asked the policeman whether he thought I should take my food back home and eat it in the kitchen.'

Crowd control

An hour after being redirected a mile away, they walked past empty spaces in the car park on their way to the beach. The family laughed about it at the time. 'But it's also strange that they were doing that. There's no need for the police to tell us that the car park is full. We can find that out ourselves.'

These days, even if you want to 'get away from it all' and enjoy a picnic or a relaxing weekend, the police turn up and tell you how to do it. Pleasurable activities from picnicking to partying are becoming subject to increasingly rigid control. It is now considered normal that the police should organise people's movements.

A decade ago, when the police started developing modern public order tactics for controlling crowds, their use was restricted to major industrial disputes. During the 1984-5 miners strike, police imposed unprecedented (and often illegal) controls on movement. Kent miners were banned from using the Dartford Tunnel. Northern motorways were closed to stop flying pickets, and Scottish miners were arrested

for the crime of travelling on a bus. The police arrested and charged more than 10 000 people, almost half of them under the old Public Order Act (1936).

After the miners' strike, the 1986 Public Order Act codified existing police practice. Under the act, the police can arrest anybody deemed a threat to general order. They can impose conditions on the location, numbers and duration of gatherings. Meeting more than two people can be termed a 'public demonstration' and liable to a fine. If three people make a fuss it's 'violent disorder', and the penalty is up to five years. A charge of riot can result in life imprisonment.

Public order policing is now used against an expanding list of people, as the authorities crack down on almost any crowd.

After the strikers, the first targeted group were football fans. They became the guinea pigs in a law and order experiment which culminated in the 1989 Hillsborough tragedy, when police packed Liverpool supporters into a suffocating terrace at the Sheffield stadium and even pushed back those who tried to escape; 95 died. The police then had the nerve to use Hillsborough as the pretext for imposing further controls on movement. Later that year when Middlesbrough played Sheffield Wednesday at the stadium, the police set up road-blocks outside Sheffield. Anybody with a Teeside accent who could not produce a ticket was refused entry to the city.

Operation Nomad

'Free' summer festivals used to involve liaising with farmers or choosing grassy areas with public right of way signs. Today they are effectively organised by the police and local authorities. In May of this year, four west country police forces launched Operation Nomad to prevent Avon Free Festival from happening on common land. All police leave was cancelled and travellers were confronted with road-blocks.

In the same month, 20 000 new age travellers, ravers and hippies descended on Castlemorton Common for a festival. They were greeted by a ring of 400 police and the buzz of helicopters. West Mercia police called this a 'low-key

approach'. 'The immediate thing', said local Tory MP Michael Spicer, 'is to get these people off the common quickly'. The police did as he suggested. Castlemorton Common turned out to be less than common ground for all.

Stonehenge summer solstice in June is now an annual exercise in crowd control. The other name for the festival is Operation Solstice. Since 'the Battle of the Beanfield' at Stonehenge in 1985, when police first showed their intention to control events by beating and arresting festival-goers, and impounding vehicles, National Heritage has closed the site for the summer festival. For 11 months of the year the stones can be viewed at close hand. During June, however, even catching a glimpse of the sunrise through the ancient monument is a crime.

Pushed around

This year the Home Office banned 'processions' within a four-mile exclusion zone around the stones under Section 13 of the Public Order Act (1986). A 'procession' was defined as more than two people. A convoy of about 18 vehicles on the A30 at Barton Stacey travelling in the opposite direction to Stonehenge was stopped by Hampshire police for obstructing traffic. Asked if there was a difference between a group of people taking a stroll and a procession, a Wiltshire police spokesman replied 'not necessarily'.

The bank holiday road-blocks which my friend's family came across in Southend were another small example of this same pattern of crowd control. It seems that whether you are a 'hooligan', a hippy or even a holiday-maker, you are increasingly likely to be pushed around by a police force obsessed with public order.

The emphasis on public order policing is a sign of the underlying insecurity of the British establishment today. Even though they do not have to contend with any political opposition movement, the authorities seem afraid of just about any crowd. With their economy in ruins and nothing positive to offer people, they are resorting more and more to enforcing regulations and restrictions, regimenting society. 'Public order' has become a catch-all label for ordering about an ever-wider cross-section of the public.

My one night stand



Why do women flock to the Chippendales? Helen West suggests that a more pertinent question is what do women do the rest of the time?

To describe the Chippendales as pretty boys who take their clothes off is like saying football is just 'a bunch of men kicking a ball around a field'. Whatever you may have heard or overheard, take it from one who has seen them in the flesh—block and (almost) tackle—these lads know their stuff.

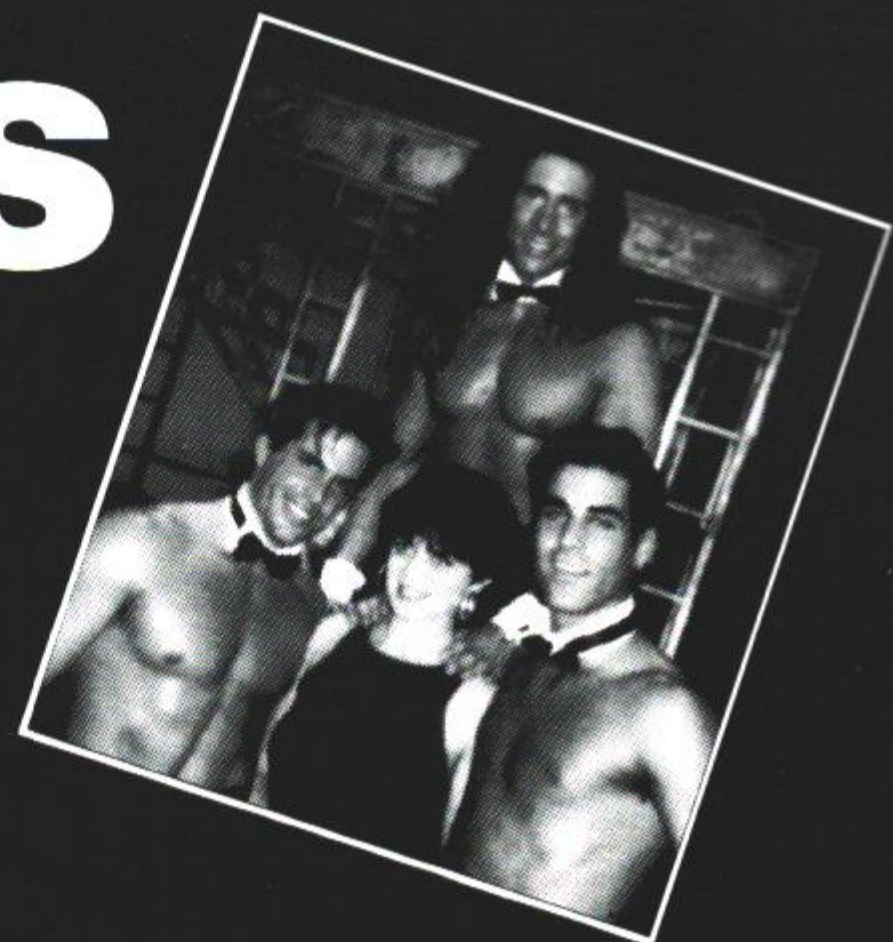
The Chippendales, or Chips as they are fondly known, number approximately 20. I didn't manage to count them all at once but noticed certain common characteristics. They are all young, handsome and possess bodies which once I would have dismissed as looking like skinned rabbits but now consider to be lean and muscular. They sport names like August and Tor and little else. Although some are said to have science degrees, I don't think the girls go along to check out their CVs.

Their show lasts for two hours with a half-hour 'breather' in the middle. It's a singing, dancing, stripping extravaganza, and no expense has been spared on the sets, mood-lighting and suggestive props (have you heard about the banana?). One backdrop is simply the top part of a pair of Levis—with fully functional zipper.

It's a professional show, although uninitiated friends snigger in derision when I tell them this. Maybe it's because all the dance sequences revolve around female fantasies. No doubt my friends are sceptical of my capacity to keep a critical eye on their dancing skills when they are prancing around as savages in loin cloths. Other fantasies include being bound-over by an 'arresting' officer, getting carried away by the bellboy, a titillating tarzan-type and, one of my favourites, the Harley Davidson sketch.

Contrary to the often snobbish distaste with which commentators have dismissed the Chippendales following, I find the idea of a thousand mainly working class women having a great time together quite satisfying. Not only were they having a good time, they were revelling in it. In that there is nothing new.

with the Chips



I myself was brought up in the tradition of Friday nights out with the girls. We would go to great lengths to avoid the pubs/clubs that we knew the husbands/boyfriends would be in because this was our night. We would spend ages getting ready to go out so that we could flirt, drink and talk together without interruption, and then go home to raised eyebrows and the inquisition. The men in our lives might have been out flirting, drinking and talking too, but somehow it was never seen as the same thing. A night out with the Chippendales has some things in common with the Friday night out.

The lights dimmed and in the hush a bass beat started to thump, then with the words 'Do you wanna rock?' the show had begun. Ten minutes into the show, the girls were as one. If they needed a better view they stood on their chairs. If they wanted to sing and dance in the aisles they did. If they fancied a particular Chip they let him know. They felt they could do what they wanted.

The women were uninhibited because what they experience at the Chippendales show is a reversal of their everyday existence. First, money has changed hands and you are there in the knowledge that you are the paying customer. Second, women outnumber the men on stage by about a hundred to one. You are among friends and nobody is judging you. You are constantly told that these young and handsome men are there for you. And you are encouraged to leave all thoughts of your other half at home and enjoy yourself.

Of course, part of the novelty is that we can't do this all the time. There are socks to wash, babies to feed and books to cook. That means that when they do get a break, most women are determined to enjoy it to the full. The other side of it is the feeling that for too long this has been a man's thing. Men read porn magazines, go to see strippers and watch blue movies when they want. But women are only allowed to do such things at hen parties—in other words, at

a one and only rave-up before some woman ties herself to one man for the rest of her life.

The most frustrating part of the whole Girls Together scene is that you can't help feeling that the things you do together are not risky at all. At the time you feel you are doing something outrageous, but afterwards you wonder why enjoying yourself is considered to be something unusual.

By some unhappy accident in my misspent youth I worked as a Bunny Girl, or to be precise a Pussycat, for one evening. Speaking from experience, I can say that the men who came along to the club did not think for one minute that their good time ended at closing time—unlike the women at the Chips show. Contrary to the impression given by *Sun* stories, backstage sex romps are not the common experience of women who go to see the Chippendales.

It says something about women's lives that they feel they can only really let their hair down in the company of other women at an artificially staged event such as this. Men can behave how they want, any time they like. But we are supposed to be happy with the odd night out on the town. Well, thanks for nothing.

The Chippendales are not about to liberate women. But then again, women know this. Women know the Chippendales are not going to come home with them at the end of the show and bath the kids or put the washing out. My friend and I went along knowing they weren't about to liberate us—that is something we take a bit more seriously.

We went along in the interests of 'research', but we too discarded our inhibitions after the first few numbers. After looking at the stage then looking at each other, an unspoken decision was taken to let rip. When a couple of Chips did a number which gave you the option of Mr Romance or Mr Rough Diamond, and the latter shouted 'I'm a working man and I'm gonna work for you', my friend shouted back at the top of her voice, 'Yes, me, work on me!'. ●

Easy Rawlins

LA law

Walter Mosley's crime fiction covers familiar ground, but from a very different perspective. Andrew Calcutt spoke to the man who has put the black into a nineties' version of noir

Easy Rawlins walks the mean streets of postwar Los Angeles. In Walter Mosley's *Devil in a Blue Dress* and *A Red Death*, he drinks too much and is often alone. He's a freelancer with high moral standards and a sardonic grin. Another detective in the Philip Marlowe mould? Except that Easy and his creator, Walter Mosley, are black.

The classic detective novel works by virtue of the protagonist's social mobility. Raymond Chandler made Marlowe equally at home in the boardroom or the bar-room. It's not that simple for Rawlins, as Mosley explains:

'There are two different things. One of them is kind of overt racism where black people are noticed in certain places or kept out of certain places. In that way Easy doesn't have very much mobility and he has to be very worried about what's happening all the time.

'But in another way, because all of these assumptions are made about who he is and who he could be and what he could possibly be after—he might be planning to pick my pocket or rob a bank but he's not going to understand what we are talking about—at a certain point as Ralph Ellison says, Easy becomes invisible.

'In that way he can go more places, because if a white man with a suit and tie walks in you have to pay attention to him on that level. A white man could tell Easy what he thinks, and he doesn't think anything will happen. It's something Easy could take advantage of, although you wouldn't ever like it. Because in taking advantage of it you have to degrade yourself. But Easy does do that.'

Where the classic detective is a self-contained persona, 'Easy can't be who he wants to be. He can be different things, he can speak different languages but he can't ultimately become what he needs to be'. For Mosley, Easy's fractured personality is derived from the black experience: 'When you're black you experience two different worlds. I keep on trying to talk about it in relation to the Rodney King beating. Most white people who saw it don't like it. They say: "I'm outraged, I think it's terrible." Most black people feel that and also see it as more of a metaphor of their whole lives. Rodney King getting beaten is like me getting up every day, somebody might say. There's a much larger sphere of knowledge that black people have to deal with, and it's too large for any one person to deal with. So you kinda have to segment your life: I'm like this when I'm at work, I'm like that when I'm with my wife. I'm like this when I'm walking down the street at night.'

Mosley points out another difference between his writing and traditional detective fiction: 'In a kinda classic

mystery series, the detective would always be the same—the same personality, although it might be different stories and very interesting stories. I'm trying to write a series of novels which are truly novels; to truly be a novel one of the things you have to do is that your main character or characters have to change.'

Age and relationships change Easy. He is also affected by the sweep of history. In *Devil in a Blue Dress*, says Mosley, 'he represents a certain class of black men and women who migrated to Los Angeles after World War Two'. Mosley, a 40-year old former computer programmer, drew Easy from the

experience of his father's generation: 'The turning point in my father's life was the war. He met white people on an equal footing, even if the army was still segregated. He learned that he was smart and in no way less than anyone. Many black people learned that lesson, and when they returned to the South they realized that they'd have to leave in order to have the kind of lives they wanted.'

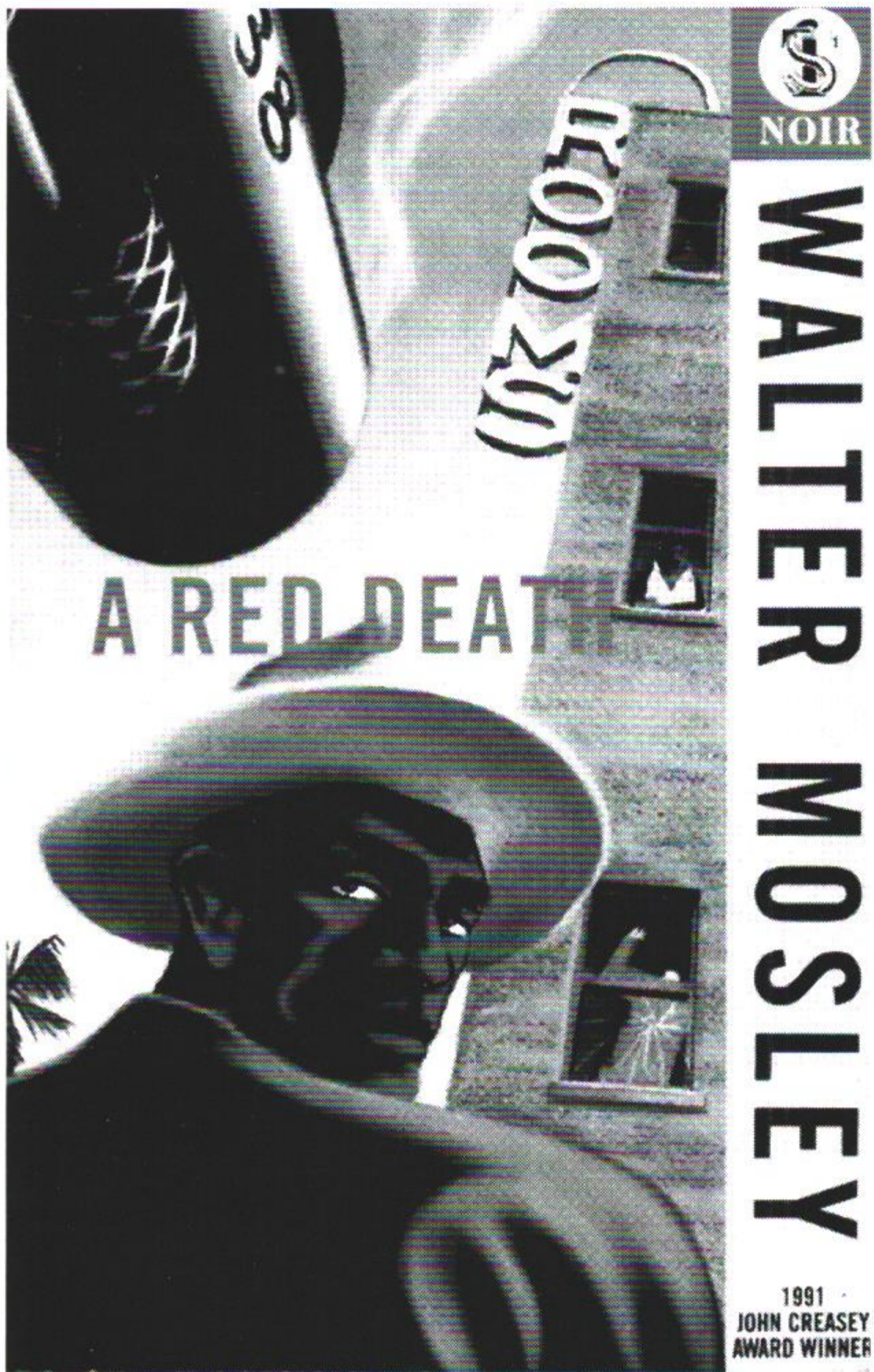
Mosley's father LeRoy moved to LA where he married Ella Slatkin, a Jewish woman whose family was linked with the Communist Party. Mosley's second novel, *A Red Death*, finds Easy trying to save his integrity as well as his skin in the



Richard Stead on the sequel to Art Spiegelman's cartoon novel of the Holocaust

As a kid from a Jewish background I had a morbid fascination with the Holocaust. I can remember leafing through my father's books on the war, only to linger on those last pages with their photographs of pits filled with the emaciated bodies of the last concentration camp victims. Today, the Holocaust still seems to hold a perverse attraction. How could something so horrific have happened? What made people commit such acts of barbarism? What enabled some to survive while others perished?





age of McCarthyite witch-hunts. Mosley believes 'this specific time reflects in white society the problems that black people will always have in the United

States; the thing where the powers above you all of a sudden hate you. I think it's a very good meeting point for black and white working class people. That's why I chose it.'

White Butterfly, the third Easy Rawlins novel, is so far only available in the States. In it, Mosley weaves 'the two major themes of American life—sexism and racism' into the stability and respectability of the 1950s. Mosley intends to continue the series—with a novel set against the Watts riots of 1965.

How would Easy react to the riots of 1992? 'He would abhor the violence, but he thinks the violence is necessary because nobody's going to pay any attention unless the violence is happening. I think most black people feel like that. In Los Angeles they think it's wrong to hurt people and now they have to go five miles to get a quart of milk—two very good reasons. But still, once the violence happens all of a sudden people pay attention.'

While black crime writers like Chester Himes and Donald Goines 'start out in a rage and get angrier because there's no resolution', Mosley made Easy 'see a way out. I really consciously wanted a character who at the end would understand himself, not completely, but he wouldn't have to go to Paris either, like Richard Wright or James Baldwin and Himes. I wanted a guy who was going to stay, and in California there was more of a possibility for doing that.'

- *Devil in a Blue Dress*, Pan, £4.50 pbk
- *A Red Death*, Serpent's Tail, £7.99 pbk



national characters they depict. But Spiegelman is not so crass; there are no obvious stereotypes in the drawings and we can see that the device is used more to handle events which are themselves so strange and horrible and personal that they can only be made sense of or even contemplated at all if they are estranged, distanced, mannered in their treatment. The comic form is not enough. They have to be animal characters too.

The first six chapters of *Vladek Spiegelman's* story, leading up to his internment in Auschwitz, were released in a collected form in 1987, having earlier been published individually in the avant-garde graphic magazine *RAW*. The final five chapters of *Maus*, chronicling Vladek's internment in Auschwitz, were collected recently and released under the subtitle *And Here My Troubles Began*.

Here, the parallel plot of Art Spiegelman's relationship with his father becomes even more problematic. His frustration at his inability to understand his father's experiences—'I can't even make any sense out of my relationship with my father. How am I supposed to make any sense out of Auschwitz?'—is equalled only by his disbelief at his father's racism towards a black hitch-hiker. Yet Vladek's ingenuity in ensuring his own and his wife's survival in the concentration camps holds both his son's and the reader's admiration throughout this final book.

Of mice and men

Art Spiegelman's graphic novel, *Maus*, is the story of his father's experiences of the Second World War, as an Auschwitz survivor, and his own subsequent relationship with his father, as he attempts to understand what his parents went through and why.

Much of the critical acclaim for Art Spiegelman's work stems from his use of the comic to explore a serious subject. In the same way as the sixties underground artist Robert Crumb consciously subverted the child's comic book with images of sex and puberty, Spiegelman has taken the medium



generally used for visual one-liners and superhero camp and attempted to portray one of the most harrowing experiences of twentieth century humanity, filtered through a very complex father-son relationship.

The strangeness of this juxtaposition of medium and subject matter is underlined by Spiegelman's decision to remove humanity from the story altogether. The Jews are depicted as mice, Poles as pigs and Germans as cats. No doubt we are tempted to project our own version of the natural characteristics of these animals on to the

Maus brings no enlightenment about the causes of the Holocaust, and Spiegelman's own desire to understand what happened remains unfulfilled. But in the course of trying to understand, he paints a vivid picture of the Holocaust from the inside and helps to demystify the victims themselves.

Oh, and he settles another score too. Quoted on the fly leaf is a newspaper article from Germany in the thirties, 'Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed....Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and honourable youth that the dirty and filth covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal....Away with Jewish brutalisation of the people! Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross!'

- *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* is published by Penguin, £5.95 pbk
- *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began* is published by Pantheon Books, £12.95 hbk



Cricket tests

'Dil, Dil Pakistan'

As the current test series has shown, many Asians in Britain fail Norman Tebbit's cricket test by defiantly supporting Pakistan against England. John Pearson went to Bradford, the heart of Yorkshire cricket, to find out why

The day Pakistan won the World Cricket Championship was a special one for Asians in Bradford. T-shirts bearing the legend 'Pakistan: world cricket champions 1992' were selling fast in all sizes. Over 400 youths packed into cars decked with Pakistan flags for a motorcade around town. Their hi-fis blared out 'Dil Dil Pakistan' ('My Heart Is with you Pakistan') by Vital Signs.

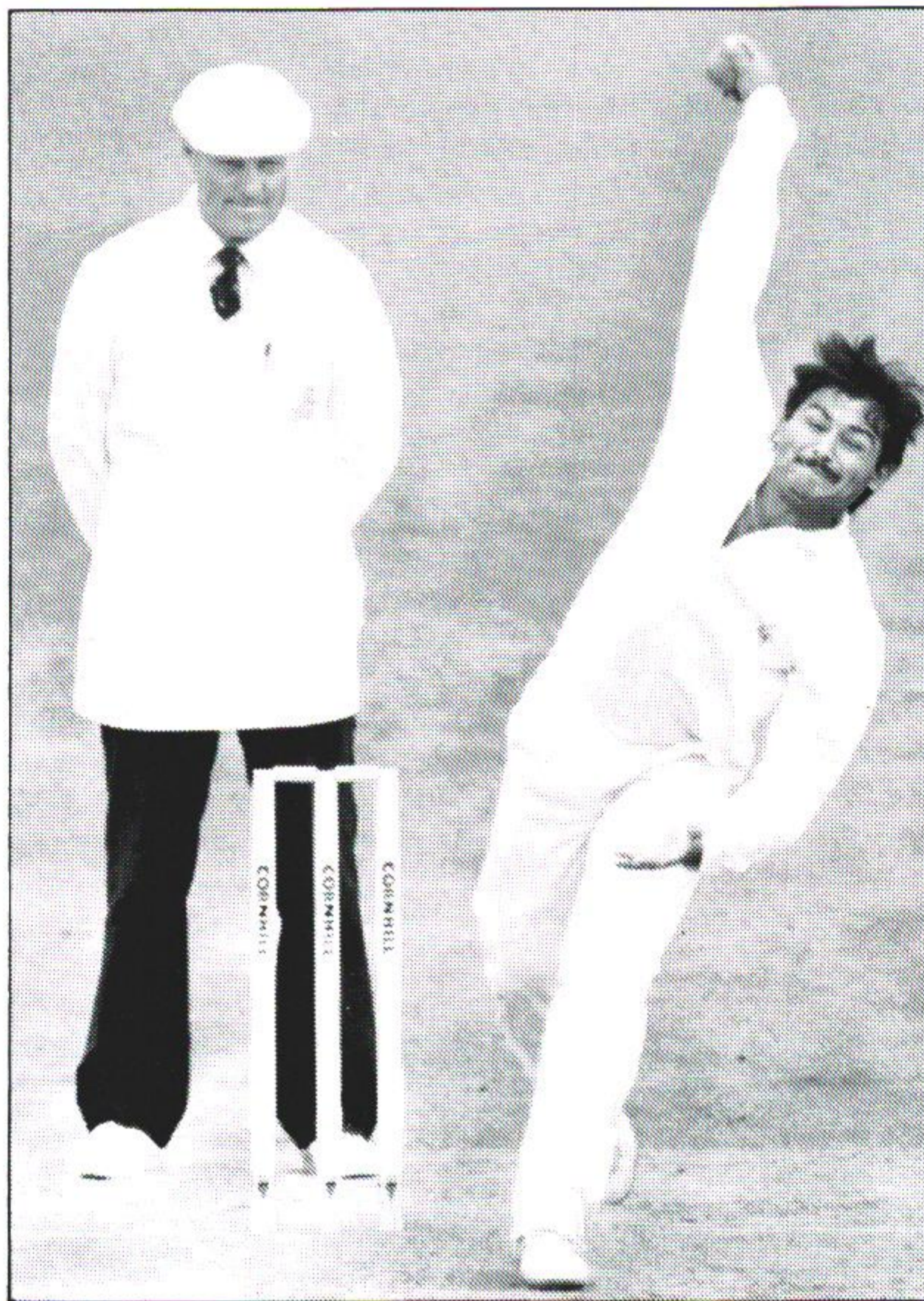
The motorcade was shortlived. 'Tension was there all morning', explained Tahir. 'The police had been making their presence felt outside college. Quite a few were standing around watching and filming us, and then when cars started off they tried to stop us straight away. It's OK for Leeds fans to bring Leeds city centre to a halt when they win the league, but they found an excuse to stop us. We only wanted to celebrate.'

Bradford Asians hope to be celebrating a victory for Pakistan again in August when the test series against England ends. It isn't difficult to understand why it would stick in their throats to support England rather than Pakistan. Asians are excluded from playing a normal part in British society, and there is little to give them any sense of belonging to the British way of life.

Every aspect of life for an Asian in Bradford, from schooling and housing to work and leisure, is shaped by the pressures of exclusion from being 'really' British.

The education system operates on the basis of informal segregation, between mainly Asian schools like Grange in Lidget Green and mainly white schools like Buttershaw. The jobs market operates on the basis of an informal colour bar. 'Asians tend to get educated and then go into taxis', mused Saeed Khan.

Asians rarely get jobs with mainstream white companies. Lidget Green is a densely populated Asian area. It is in a ward with the largest concentration of employment in the city—over 45 000 jobs. Yet few jobs go to the Asians who



live there; the unemployment rate in Lidget Green is more than twice the city average.

Asians tend to keep themselves to themselves, because to do otherwise is asking for trouble. Tahir Khan doesn't drink alcohol but he plays pool. 'If I went into a pub, I'd expect to get abuse. The first time I went into the Willowfields this guy says, so that everyone can hear, "What's the most popular name in Bradford?". Someone replied "Smith" but the first guy says "No—Khan". If you respond you know there'll be a fight, so you just grit your teeth.'

Perhaps the most graphic local example which helps to explain why Asians fail the cricket test is Yorkshire County Cricket Club. 'I say what I like and I like what I say', says Harry Enfield's Yorkshireman pointing to a black guy, 'you'll never play for Yorkshire!'. Until its

recent signing of Sachin Tendulkar, Yorkshire hadn't signed a single black player in its 129 year history.

The club's unwritten 'no outsiders' rule has not only stood firm against the tide of black players from overseas who have added interest to the game of every other county. It has also kept out the thousands of black people born within the Yorkshire boundary.

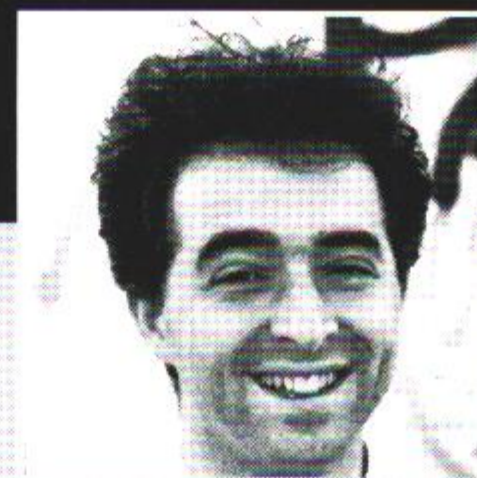
Accusations of racism are 'scurrilous' according to Geoffrey Boycott, committee member and former Yorkshire captain. Try telling that to black players like Viv Richards or David Lawrence who have both been involved in altercations with Yorkshire supporters over racist comments. Brian Close, chair of the Yorkshire cricket committee, was forced to apologise after comments about 'bloody Pakis' and making a distinction between 'them and us'.

The only reason why Yorkshire signed Tendulkar is that the club is facing a crisis. Headingley, ground of the club which boasts more county championships than any other, today has an air of decay. The crisis starts on the cricket pitch. Yorkshire hasn't won the coveted county championship since 1968. Its team of tykes is mediocre. I should know—I paid to go and see them play.

'Wide', muttered the Yorkshire fan in front of me under his breath as the Yorkshire bowlers ran up to bowl every ball. As Yorkshire's opponents, Hampshire, amassed 211 runs off 40 overs the mood in the stand turned from tenuous optimism to outright gloom. By the time I'd made it to the members' bar, Yorkshire had slumped to 13 runs for three wickets. A pint of Stones later and Tendulkar was run out. 'Now we're down to the real crap', said the drunk next to me.

Yorkshire's cricketing crisis is reflected in its declining membership, down by 6000 since 1978; its ageing membership; its declining attendances, as few as 112 people paid to go through the turnstiles of a county championship match last season; and its deteriorating finances. A recent survey suggested the club had only seven more years given its current assets and income. It is this crisis which has led to the signing of Sachin Tendulkar, the brilliant young Indian batsman.

It must have taken a lot of swallowed pride for the Yorkshire committee to invite Tendulkar. In 1982, a ballot on whether to recruit an overseas player had shown only 537 out of over 5000 in favour. Fred Trueman had threatened that 'the day Yorkshire engages an overseas player, I will drive to Headingley and hand in my membership'. I don't know if Tendulkar's arrival has led to Trueman's departure. But I do know that it will take more than that to get Asians behind Yorkshire cricket. ●



Life ends at *El Dorado*

Asking a soap writer to review the opening episodes of *El Dorado*, is like asking a brickie what he thinks of Carl André's famous work 'Bricks.' 'Bricks' is not a piece of shoddy workmanship that you suck your teeth and shake your head at. 'Bricks' is so devoid of skill, cleverness, expression or functionality, that it is impossible to apply the usual critical criteria to it. It is a pile of bricks and in some way this is sublime.

El Dorado too is a pile of something. And it too is devoid of all the qualities we normally look for in entertainment. In production terms, the opening episode was simply not broadcast quality. The sound was appalling. The light in certain key shots did not match. The script was beyond discussion. The sets wobbled. Punctuality was the only quality it shared with mainstream TV drama. It started exactly at 7pm. But it was, in its way, sublime.

I was birdwatching once in Spain and saw a hoopoe. Now a hoopoe is a very rare bird. In the *I-Spy Book of Birds*, you get 30 points for a hoopoe. You would not get much more for spotting the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. But my companion said seeing it here did not count. You had to see it in Britain.

What happens in Spain does not count if you are British. This is why people have holiday romances and wear ridiculous shorts. What happens in Spain is a long, bright dream, in which you can reinvent yourself. A good soap should be just this, of course, a reinvention of ourselves. Think of the beers—Newton & Ridley at the Rover's (cheap and creamy), Shires at The Bull (potent and traditional). Joy's Bar on the other hand sells San Miguel and Pepsi. The Pepsi is most striking because bars in southern Spain offer a whole range of amusing colas—Jolly Cola, Sporty Cola, Sexy Cola, Walky Cola and my favourite, Soca Cola. But if Joy's bar was stocked from the shelf, its customers were bin ends.

I have seen every single 'character' in *El Dorado* before, usually in a sitcom. Gwen for instance, the rubber-gloved, long-suffering mum crawled out of the waste disposal of *Ever Decreasing Circles*. Snowy is actually Benny from *Crossroads*. The rest are from the Queen Vic. They are all masterpieces of complexity compared to Fizz (a Bimbo) and Pillar (big breasts).

The way you introduce a character in a series like this is crucial. Pillar was shown trotting a horse around a ring while the camera peered with Benny Hill intensity at her bouncing bosom. If the characters were thin, the language was atrophied. You will not hear the Holdsworthian imperative, 'Don the motley, Mr Watts', here, nor even Bobby Grant's warning, 'wind your neck in'. Instead we had, 'I could give her one,' and 'get stuffed'. There was a moment when I thought the German boy had said 'washing up bowel' but this turned out to be the result of poor sound, not good writing.

At first this nullity was irritating but after a while it became

mesmeric. It was so derivative that it seemed not to be taking place at all, to be a collection of gestures in the direction of drama, like an endless trailer. This ersatz quality was emphasised by the show's post-modern reflexivity. One of the main characters was introduced by means of a video shown in the bar. So we watched actors acting out the act of viewing an actor acting someone acting up. The baddie (Marcus) too was caught on the video of a kind of Roger Cook person. Marcus said, wittily, 'are you going to move or am I going to move you?'. And surely the oddly incongruous sign for Texas Homecare was a wry comment on the show's own flat-pack wobbliness.

Coronation Street offers an enriched version of home, something both comfortingly familiar and compellingly vivid, like memory itself. *El Dorado*, on the other hand, offers a picture of life diminished, depleted, dried out. It reminded me most strongly of Philip K Dick's astonishing novel of exile, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, in which settlers on Mars spend most of their time taking drugs and staring at a kind of Barbie doll's house, using chemicals and plastic to build a shabby, fragile version of home. Faced with infinity, the human imagination implodes, busying itself with the comforting tokens of normality—brand names, old jokes, stock characters, 'these fragments I have shored against my ruin'.

El Dorado gave a similar picture of humanity washed up, exhausted and enfeebled, on the barren shores of time. The title—with its historical overtones of gold-lust and genocide, vying with the yearning for the Fountain of Youth and the possibility of earthly paradise—is surely the most bitterly ironic since Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*, in which the only character gabbles aimlessly while sinking into the sand.

But at least with Beckett and Eliot you can close the book and hug your kids. The Beeb have leased the site of *El Dorado* for 10 years, subjecting the viewing and tabloid-reading public to its nihilistic howl with a persistence that even Andy Warhol would never have attempted. This is creative bravery indeed. Unless you happen to think that the human mind is not depleted or exhausted, in which case it's just a load of bricks; and the San Miguel and Pepsi is just naked product-placement.

You can get 50-1 at Ladbroke's on *El Dorado* having less than six million viewers by the end of the year. What d'you reckon? As I've outlined, it's a question of epistemology. I never put money on epistemological questions. To do so implies the existence of a truly objective bookie and this is logically absurd.

A piece of insider gossip to finish off—Gary Lineker and Stan Hey are developing a drama series for Central TV about a British footballer who gets transferred to Spain. Terry-Thomas is apparently slated for the part of Graham Taylor. ●

**But if
Joy's bar
was stocked from
the shelf, its
customers were
bin ends**

MARXIST

REVIEW OF BOOKS

John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Culture of Contentment* has been widely reviewed as an attack on modern capitalism. Phil Murphy sees it more as a defence of old-fashioned capitalism against the modern masses

Enemy of the people

The Culture of Contentment, John Kenneth Galbraith, Sinclair-Stevenson, £14.95

The Culture of Contentment is an easy read, and that's one of its problems. It provides a no-holds-barred exposure of many of the more revolting features of capitalism in slump. From financial scandals to the new militarism of the Gulf War, American capitalism comes under abrasive scrutiny. Although Galbraith focuses on America, similar examples of graft and corruption in the rest of the Western world come easily to mind: Olympia & York, Lloyds, BCCI, Robert Maxwell, to name only some recent British cases.

But for all its bite, the political message of this book is profoundly conservative. The message is that capitalism as a system is not to blame; the responsibility lies with the well-off people who express their short-term preferences in the polling booths. With his unusually trenchant style, Galbraith provides a much more effective apology for capitalism than most of the recent spate of pro-market texts. His polemic against 'modern capitalism' is in fact designed to help save old-fashioned capitalism.

Galbraith is a devout believer in capitalism as the best way of organising society. For Galbraith, as for Adam Smith and John Maynard Keynes, to reject the pursuit of profit maximisation is to reject 'the basic tendency of human nature' (p54). Firmly rooted on this foundation, he stands out as an unashamed and eloquent critic of the way modern capitalism works. *The Affluent Society*, his most famous book, first published in 1958, has become the definitive political liberal's critique of the postwar boom. In it, Galbraith poured scorn on the revival of market ideology after the Second World War, highlighted the inefficiencies and inequities of the free market, and argued for greater social compassion and public spending on behalf of the less fortunate in society.

Now he has approached today's depression from the same perspective. His conclusions for economic policy are also similar. He identifies the slump as a consequence of the supply-side economics of the 1980s applied in America, and in slightly different ways in Britain and elsewhere. Galbraith claims that, by following the popular objective of getting 'government off the backs of the people' (p22), government policy has opened the way to greater social inequalities and to the sort of major business

collapses and scandals to which unregulated modern capitalism is so prone.

His alternative is to argue for a revival of state intervention and welfare provision in order to mitigate 'the inequities and cruelties of the system and, in doing so...to ensure the survival of capitalism'. (p52) He makes the case for public works schemes and other expansionary government expenditure as the required 'macroeconomic regulation' in recessionary times. He wants these to replace the counter-productive reliance on the monetary policy of the 1980s.

However this argument for greater state activity is not what makes this book important or unique. Even in today's climate of general adherence to free market ideology there remains a significant group of economists and commentators who join Galbraith in promoting the Keynesian line. What is distinctive, and politically objectionable, about Galbraith's book is the explicit attempt to blame ordinary people for the failings and inequities of modern society. The author restates his basic thesis in the last line of the book, pointing to 'the contentment that is the cause...[of] the present discontent and dissonance' (p183).

For Galbraith there are three strata within the population: the rich, the fortunate and the poor. The first two have allied together during the years of prosperity to form the 'contented electoral majority'. Theirs is the 'culture of contentment' which becomes the font of all evil in society today.

All the traditional and populist ogres are put in the firing line as well—the financiers, the big corporations, the military-industrial complex. But again and again, Galbraith returns to emphasise that it is the 'contented electoral majority' which must carry the responsibility for the problems of modern capitalism.

Their pursuit of narrow self-interest, of looking to their own short-term comfort rather than the long-term interests of capitalism, has fuelled 'the new overriding commitment to laissez-faire and the market and the resulting movement towards general deregulation' (p62). To this Galbraith attributes all the disquieting features of modern American life, with which there are parallels

across the Western world.

For example, Galbraith enters the discussion about the 'underclass' in America's inner cities, and points to the possibility of an 'underclass revolt' (the coincidence of the Los Angeles riots with the launch of Galbraith's book provided his publishers with another selling point). His contribution to the debate is to ascribe the potentially explosive character of the underclass to the myopia of the contented majority. 'The economically fortunate, not excluding those who speak with the greatest regret of the existence of this class, are heavily dependent on its presence' (p31).

Yet apparently the contented majority are too preoccupied with their own immediate well-being to countenance the implementation of welfare measures to defuse social unrest: 'It has always been one of the high tenets of comfort that the uncomfortable accept peacefully, even gladly, their fate. Such a belief today may be suddenly and surprisingly disproved.' (p171) Aren't the comfortable people stupid?: 'It is unfortunate that human feeling is not more sensitive, but so it is.' (p160)

Galbraith also blames the speculative insanity of the 1980s on the mood of the contented. The Savings and Loans scandal; the wave of unsustainable property speculation; the self-destructive tendency of the large company, expressed in the mergers and acquisitions mania of the 1980s; all these are attributed to the short-sighted attitude of the contented.

This shortsightedness has led to the weakening of state regulation and the legitimisation of laissez-faire policies. The greed of the 'contented' is ultimately to blame for all these developments in casino capitalism. And not just the scandals, but the slump too. There is no doubt, writes

Galbraith, that the 'primary responsibility' for the severe recession starting in 1990 lay with the 'short-run economic policies of contentment' (p157).

In the spirit of absolving capitalism—as opposed to its unacceptable modern face which he freely criticises—Galbraith makes strenuous efforts to distance even this attitude of self-satisfied contentment from the ideology of capitalism. This same culture of contentment was supposedly at work in the decline of the Roman Empire, in the decay of the aristocratic court of Louis XVI, and in the collapse of the Soviet Union. Not content with drawing illegitimate historical parallels, Galbraith goes on to suggest that these social phenomena have natural causes. The culture of contentment is nothing to do with 'the capitalist world', we are told; it is the uncontrolled expression of a deep and general 'human instinct' (p7).

Even the American government is absolved of any responsibility for trying to run capitalism: 'Much that has been attributed in these past years to ideology, idiosyncrasy or error of political leadership has deep roots in the American polity.' (p27) Don't blame Reagan or Bush, pleads Galbraith, they are just 'faithful representatives of the constituency that elected them' (p18).

Galbraith's elitist contempt for the 'people' ends up letting capitalism off the hook. Capitalism has shown itself to be a severely limited and historically obsolete form of organising society. Yet it is presented as the natural and eternal order of things by economists. So, when the moribund features of capitalism are once again exposed by a world slump, along comes Galbraith, just as Keynes did in the 1930s, to blame the people and their psychological defects for the failures of a bankrupt society.

A Thatcherite polemic masquerading as a political thriller is Daniel Nassim's verdict on Robert Harris' *Fatherland*

Nicholas Ridley—the novel

Fatherland, Robert Harris, Hutchinson, £14.99 hbk

Imagine a world without Auschwitz. The name of the Nazi death camp conjures up images of the depths of human depravity: gas chambers, piles of dead bodies, human skeletons in pyjamas. Robert Harris, until recently a columnist for the *Sunday Times*, has created just such a world in his best-selling thriller, *Fatherland*.

It is 1964 and Germany has won the war. Its vast empire includes all of eastern and central Europe, much of Russia, the Baltic states, and parts of Western Europe. Britain is led by a tame regime friendly to Germany. Winston Churchill and his government have fled to Canada long ago, while King Edward VIII, a Nazi sympathiser, sits on the British throne.

It is a world in which the dream of revisionist historians like David Irving, who seek to deny the existence of the Holocaust, has become a reality. Following Hitler's dictum that 'the right history is worth a hundred divisions', the Nazi state has covered up all references to

the murder of six million Jews. Words which today are part of our lexicon of terror do not figure in the vocabulary.

The plot centres on an investigation into an old man's suspicious death by Xavier March, a homicide investigator with Berlin's Kriminalpolizei (Kripo), the criminal police. March has all the tell-tale signs of a Nazi baddie that will be familiar to any British reader. He wears a black uniform, carries a Luger pistol and has the SS rank of Sturmbannführer (equivalent to major). But March has ceased to believe in the Nazi system. And in the course of his investigation, with the help of his American lover, he comes to recognise the full horror of the regime.

By the end of his investigation he confirms what he had long secretly suspected: that the Jews who had lived in what became Germany's empire had not just been 'resettled' somewhere to the east. They had been murdered by the million in Hitler's death camps. This gives away the plot. But then the climax will be clear to ►

most readers from early in the story.

Besides, the real point of *Fatherland* is not the story itself. It is the carefully researched detail of what Europe would be like under German domination. One device Harris uses to make this point is to send March on a tour of Berlin. This is not the Berlin of 'Checkpoint Charlie', where the Cold War divides East from West. Instead, we have a Berlin designed by Albert Speer, the leading Nazi architect, to celebrate the glories of the Reich.

In a typical passage, describing how March and his son find themselves in the centre of Berlin, Harris paints a graphic picture of the German colossus: '[They] had reached the top of the Avenue of Victory, and were entering Adolf Hitler Platz. To the left, the square was bounded by the headquarters of the Wehrmacht High Command, to the right by the new Reich Chancellery and Palace of the Führer. Ahead was the hall. Its greyness had dissolved as

out. The Slav peoples have been reduced to penury. The centuries-old threat from the east has disappeared. Once the recession ends, Germany is poised to enjoy massive economic expansion eastwards, into what was once communist territory.'

By this time Harris has well and truly given the game away. His concern is not really Hitler's Germany, but the modern version under Helmut Kohl. Harris articulates the British establishment's fear of being marginalised in a Europe ruled by Germany. Until the end of the Cold War, Britain still counted for something as the USA's junior partner in Europe. Today, Germany is politically as well as economically the leading power on the Continent and Britain has been relegated into the league of has-been nations.

Why does Britain's decline express itself so often in the form of an obsession with the Second World War? You can scarcely open a British book without finding some reference to the Second World War. You cannot turn on your television without seeing an old war film or a documentary about the Nazi era. You can't go to a cabaret without some comedian making a crack about the Germans. It seems like the football fans' anthem—'two world wars and one world cup'—has become the standard response of the British establishment to its contemporary predicament.

Britain is obsessed with the war because it has such a bleak future. The implication of this obsession with the past is that Britain may not have as good an economy as Germany, but at least it has a better history. Britain may not have brand names that can compete with Mercedes, Volkswagen or BMW, but it once had the Spitfire, Churchill and VE Day.

This is where the Holocaust comes in. For Harris and other commentators, the Holocaust is the ultimate proof of Anglo-American moral superiority. This point was emphasised in the author's commentary on the recent Bomber Harris affair. In a tirade against those who opposed the statue dedicated to the man responsible for carpet bombing Dresden, Harris said that for him 'the most disturbing feature of the campaign against the statue has been the rise of moral equivalence: that the British terror bombing campaign puts us on the same level as the Nazis' ('The big difference between "Butcher" Harris and a Nazi', *Sunday Times*, 31 May 1992).

All of this goes entirely against the historical record. Before the Second World War, British leaders had no complaints about Nazi anti-Semitism. Indeed, anti-Semitism was rife in Britain too in the thirties, and even increased during the war. Winston Churchill was a notorious anti-Semite and a believer in British racial purity.

During the war, the Allies made no attempt to save the Jews who were being massacred in Europe. After the war, the Jews were shunted off to a giant ghetto in the Middle East called Israel. The Holocaust only became a popular subject of discussion in the late seventies, when Germany began to re-emerge as a world power.

Auschwitz is indeed an appropriate metaphor for human depravity. But its significance is not that the killing was carried out by Germans. It is rather that Germany was the most cultured and economically advanced capitalist nation in Europe. Even at its most developed, capitalism can only offer barbarism.

For Harris, the Holocaust is the ultimate proof of Anglo-American moral superiority

their distance from it had diminished. Now they could see what the guide was telling them: that the pillars supporting the frontage were of red granite, mined in Sweden, flanked at either end by golden statues of Atlas and Tellus, bearing on their shoulders spheres depicting the heavens and the earth.' (p27)

Sometimes Harris' descriptions of his hypothetical Berlin are disturbingly familiar. When March pays a taxi driver in Reichmarks, Harris notes that 'every country on the continent accepted Reichmarks, it was Europe's common currency' (p193). This is surely the nightmare of opponents of European Monetary Union today.

Indeed the front cover of the book is illustrated by two familiar flags: the swastika on a red background and the 12 gold stars of the European Community against a blue background. With only a few minor changes, such as the addition of Scandinavia, Harris' fictional EC contains the same countries as today's.

It is a Europe where 'people drove German cars, listened to German radios, watched German televisions, worked in German-owned factories, moaned about the behaviour of German tourists in German-dominated holiday resorts, while German teams won every international sporting competition except cricket, which only the English played' (p196).

In case anyone had missed the point, Harris wrote a cover story for the *Sunday Times News Review* entitled 'Uber Alles: Nightmare landscape of Nazism triumphant' (10 May 1992). It was illustrated by a colour picture of Hitler with Albert Speer's Great Hall in the background. The article is even more explicit than the novel about Europe under German domination.

Harris notes that in 'the Nazi system, the British, French and Italian economies were to be satellites around the German sun', and asks rhetorically, 'Has it not happened?'. There is no let up: 'One by one, Hitler's central war aims have been achieved. Bolshevism has been wiped

**LIVING
MARXISM**

back issues

No44 ● June 1992

Abolish the Monarchy

Race and the LA riots; The real dependency culture; The exhaustion of British politics; God and the Big Bang; Francis Bacon.

No45 ● July 1992

The Serbs: 'White niggers' of the new world order

Europe's national identity crisis; Aids establishment in disarray; Olympic war games; Magritte

£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 yearly stickers are 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

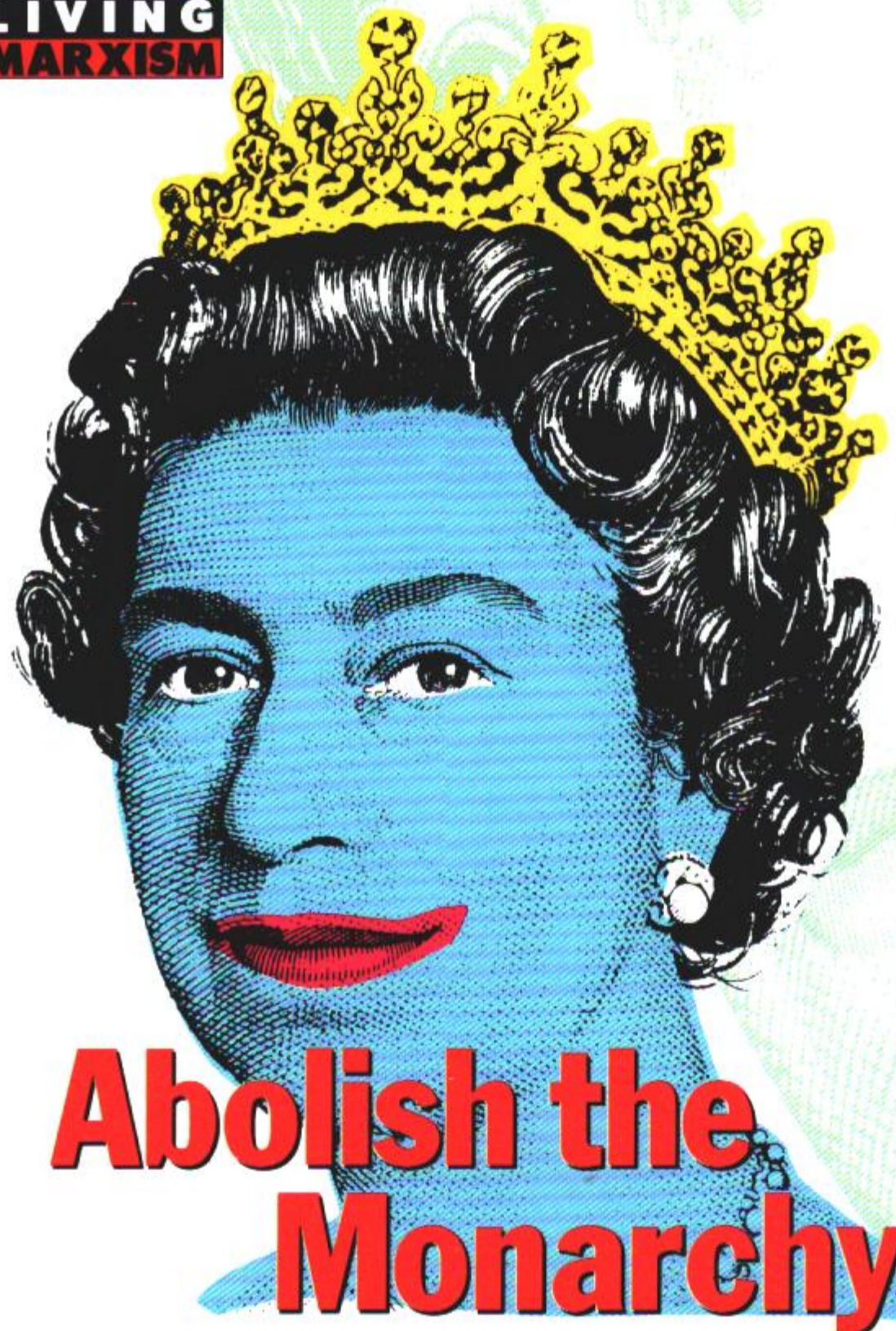
Abolish the Monarchy t-shirts

Single size extra large t-shirt £7 plus 80p postage and packing

Black, red, blue and yellow on white

Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd, and send to BCM, JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX

**LIVING
MARXISM**



Abolish the Monarchy

OUT NOW!

**LIVING
MARXISM**

INDEX

Issues 1-44; November 1988-June 1992
£2 plus 40p p&p

Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX



El Lissitzky:
Study for poster for the
Russian Exhibition at the
Kunstgewerbemuseum,
Zurich, 1929 (detail)

PHOTOGRAPHY **IN** RUSSIA

1840

Museum of Modern Art

30 Pembroke Street,
Oxford OX1 1BP

Recorded Information 0865 728608

Tuesday to Saturday 10-6.
Sunday 2-6

Late night opening Thursday until 9



1940

26 July - 25 Oct 1992

Admission £3

Concessions £1.50

Free admission Wednesday 10-1
and Thursday 6-9

Ivan Raoult: People from the Nishnii
Novgorod Province, 1870s (detail)

Organised by the Museum of Modern Art Oxford in co-operation with Michael Pauseback Edition, Cologne, Vuart, Moscow, and Russian Museums. Sponsored by The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, New York, Visiting Arts, London, and Michael Pauseback Edition, Cologne.
The Museum of Modern Art Oxford receives financial assistance from The Arts Council of Great Britain, Oxford City Council, Visiting Arts and Southern Arts.
Registered Charity no. 313035.