

LIVING MARXISM

Special feature

USA v
EUROPE



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Hidden side of the Yugoslav war



THE PICTURES THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE

TOWARDS 2000

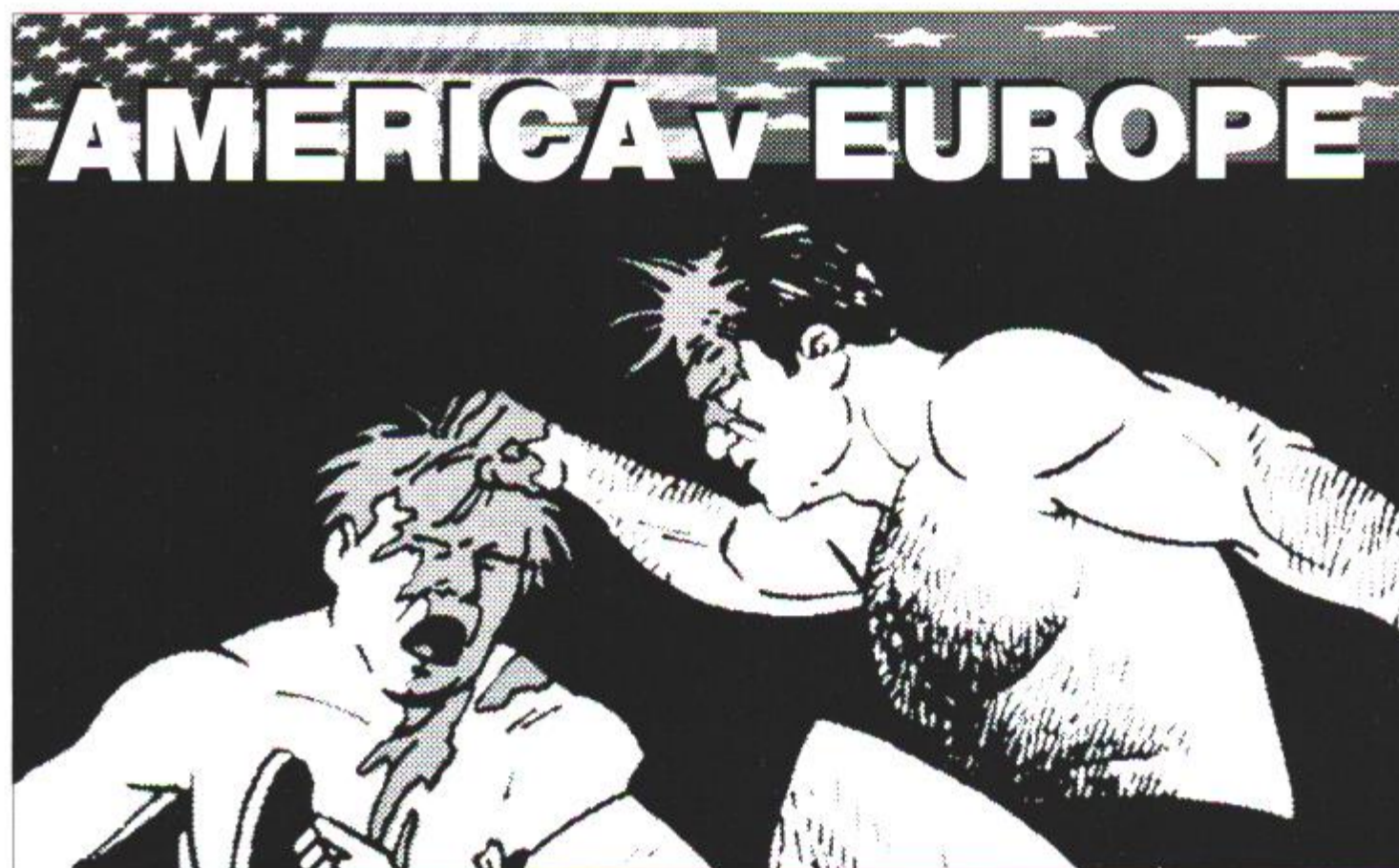
Revolutionary ideas
for today
23-29 July 1993

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As transatlantic rows break out over everything from the war in Bosnia to trade in oil seed, this issue of *Living Marxism* focuses on relations between the USA and the EC.

We highlight the likely points of future conflict, examine changing European perceptions of America, and look at some developments over there which are influencing political debate over here—like the resurrection of Malcolm X, the rise of PC, and the retreat of the 'pro-life' lobby. We welcome other views on these issues, especially from our growing band of American readers—to whom we feel no animosity whatsoever.



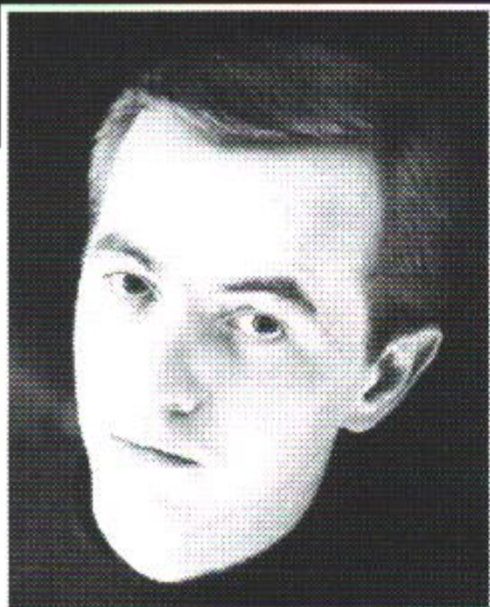
Cover photo: The severed heads of three Serbs (identified as Blagoje Blagojevic, Nenad Petkovic and Brana Djuric) beheaded by Muslim fighters. This picture was seized from Saudi Arabian soldiers captured near Teslic in Bosnia. It is part of an exhibition of war photography banned from Britain under Western sanctions against Serbia. For the full story and more pictures, turn to page 19.

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Mick Hume

Tell it like it is

When the British government banned an exhibition of photographs showing atrocities committed against Serbs, we knew that *Living Marxism* would have to go to Serbia and get the story and the pictures. Because we knew that nobody else would.

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia is a dirty war, in which forces on all sides will do whatever they can get away with. The overwhelming impression given by governments and the media in Britain and the West, however, is that the Serbs are the arch-villains of the piece. We have been presented with a singularly distorted, one-sided view of the war, to the point where it looks less like the odd reporting mistake and more like a systematic misrepresentation of the facts.

There can be no excuse for the way in which the media has broadcast fantastic tales about alleged Serbian atrocities, while more or less ignoring what has been done to the Serbs themselves. It is not as if it is impossible to discover the facts.

Joan Phillips, the assistant editor of *Living Marxism* who went to Belgrade to see the forbidden exhibition, has been into the Yugoslav war zones several times over the past year, seen at first-hand what is happening to Serbs as well as to others, and returned to tell the truth to our readers. Yet the great Western newspapers and television stations, with all of their technology, their money, and their permanently on-the-spot reporters, have somehow managed to miss more than half of the story.

The problem is not one of poor journalism. It has to do instead with the

willingness of the media to accept the terms of discussion laid down by Western governments today.

The American, German, British and French governments have all declared the Serbs to be the guilty party in the conflict, and competed with one another to put forward anti-Serbian measures, from sanctions to air-strikes. For their part, meanwhile, the media appear to have swallowed the line from the ministries whole.

Instead of asking basic questions about unsubstantiated claims of Serbian war crimes (like 'where's the evidence?'), they have published horror stories as fact. Rather than asking simple questions about the West's interference in Yugoslav affairs (like 'what gives Bill Clinton or David Owen the right to dictate to these people?'), the media have devoted most of their energy to calling for yet more and firmer Western intervention.

The result of the suspension of critical thought is a public silence on important issues in the West, such as the banning of the Belgrade exhibition. We seem to be witnessing the creation of a consensus of know-nothing stupidity, an unprecedented willingness among liberal-minded media people to believe whatever the authorities tell them.

In this uncritical climate of non-debate, a Washington empire-builder like Clinton can do more than get away with threatening gunboat diplomacy against the Serbs or with strafing Iraq. He can act like a warmonger and still be treated as a peacemaker by the media.

Guardian journalist Ed Vulliamy recently claimed on BBC 2's *Late Show* that

Western journalists who support intervention in Bosnia still have the same principles as they did when they opposed America's war in Vietnam.

So where were the voices of protest in January, when the US navy blockaded Haiti to prevent desperate refugees from poverty and repression fleeing to the USA? Even president Clinton's risible claim that this military action was launched on purely 'humanitarian' grounds—to save Haitians from drowning in leaky boats, you understand—was reported as a reasonable argument.

And where were the voices of protest when first George Bush and then Clinton ordered yet more air-strikes against Iraq, some of which involved British bombers?

The official pretexts for this latest display of Western power in the Middle East were even flimsier than usual. Yet the media faithfully reprinted the tired stories about non-existent Iraqi nuclear facilities, alongside the tales of 'Iraqi incursions into Kuwait' which ignored the fact that the 'Kuwaiti territory' in question had just been stolen from Iraq and handed to the emir by the UN security council.

At first, some Western reports even tried to give credence to American claims that the cruise missile which hit the Al-Rashid Hotel in Baghdad was an Iraqi propaganda ploy. Good story: shame about the piece of cruise shrapnel discovered in the rubble, complete with the address of the American manufacturer.

This has all gone much too far. It is high time to put the criticism back into commentary. So let's not mince words.

What happened in Iraq, in the Gulf War and in January, was murder, the slaughter

of civilians and conscript soldiers carried out to prove that the USA and the West call the shots in the third world.

And the bloodshed in the former Yugoslavia is not primarily the responsibility of the Serbs, or of the Croats or the Muslims. The moment the Western powers decided to meddle in Yugoslav affairs, they sealed the fate of the peoples on the receiving end of their attentions. As argued elsewhere in *Living Marxism*, at every stage of the conflict, the West has been responsible for raising the stakes—and so increasing the body-count.

The advance of Western troublemaking around the world, and the retreat of criticism and opposition to it, is a dangerous development that demands a hard-hitting response. That is why the politics of the moment must be anti-militarism. Its importance now overrides all other issues.

The rise of militarism is the crucial dynamic behind everything that the Western powers are doing today. Militarism is about more than air-strikes and diplomatic bullying in the East and the third world. It is also linked to the economic slump and the crisis of capitalism in the West. Which makes it doubly important to take a stand against it.

Foreign adventures provide Western governments with an easy way to distract attention from domestic problems, be they unemployment or political scandals. But more than that, economic problems themselves are now often addressed first

We seem to be witnessing the creation of a consensus of know-nothing stupidity

through the prism of militarism—as in the debate about the balance between rearmament and public spending cuts in Britain. This is a complex issue to which we will return at greater length in the forthcoming issues of *Living Marxism*.

For all of these reasons, there is a pressing need to cultivate a critical and anti-militarist climate of debate today. This is the spirit in which *Living Marxism* has helped to launch and to publicise the new Manifesto Against Militarism, as the focus for a campaign against what the Western powers are up to from Baghdad to Belgrade.

An important step towards exposing the truth about Western militarism is to counter every government and media distortion of the facts. *Living Marxism*, in its self-appointed role as The Lie Detector, is the magazine for that job.

Our decision to go it alone and publish the pictures from the forbidden Serbian exhibition in this month's issue is a sign of our dedication to open debate, and our determination to tell it like it is. In the months to come *Living Marxism* will do all that it can to provide an alternative source of information and arguments, to fill the gap left by the new consensus of stupidity which incorporates much of the media.

At a time when critical discussion is distinctly out of fashion, and gagging libel actions and press censorship are in, there is a crying need for somebody to publish the pictures they don't want you to see and reveal the facts that they don't want you to hear. We depend upon you, our readers, to support us in this aim. Spread the word, sell the magazine, and help break the selective silence.

The Revolutionary Communist Party presents

A MANIFESTO AGAINST MILITARISM

launched at the Hot Wars and Holocausts Conference in November 1992. If you would like a copy of the manifesto, and details of related events, write to Manifesto Against Militarism, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.

Amnesty International

The February issue of *Living Marxism* carried an open letter to Amnesty International from Joan Phillips ('Whose side is Amnesty on?') in response to that organisation's newspaper advertising campaign about the war in the former Yugoslavia. This is Amnesty's reply.

I am sure that your readers and Joan Phillips share our desire to see an immediate end to the appalling human rights violations perpetrated by Serbian forces detailed in our report (*Bosnia-Herzegovina: Gross Abuses of Basic Human Rights*) though this is not evident from your open letter. I am pleased to see, however, that you agree our facts are correct.

Rather the letter attacks us for the impression that Joan received mediated by her particular viewpoint. Throughout Amnesty's history we have been similarly accused by right-wing governments of being a left-wing organisation and by left-wing governments of being part of a right-wing conspiracy. The last few paragraphs enter the realms of the absurd asking (I trust rhetorically) if we are really saying we need more human misery.

Yes, human rights abuses have been committed by other participants in the various conflicts in former Yugoslavia and Amnesty has publicised all those it has details of and will continue to do so wherever this is within its Mandate.

Our advertisement sought to give the opportunity to men and women who were not currently Amnesty members to play a part in ending the abuses by all sides. Naturally we cannot print the full report in our advertisements without buying the whole paper. Neither does an advertisement calling for positive action read like an academic thesis if it is to be successful in mobilising people. The power of public opinion harnessed like this does matter and has in countless cases made a real difference. Giving people the opportunity to do something is important.

You may like to know that Amnesty is also publishing paid advertisements in the main newspapers throughout the various republics stressing the primacy and universality of human rights, calling on those involved in the conflict to ensure the maintenance of basic, minimum standards.

The recommendations from our Bosnia report are:

- Leaders of all parties to the conflict within Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as the governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Croatia, share responsibility for the gross human rights abuses.
- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) must be granted full access to all places of detention. All civilians detained solely

because of their national origin or held as hostages must be released, with adequate protection for their safety following release.

- All parties to the conflict must carry out thorough and impartial investigations into all reports of gross human rights abuses, including deliberate and arbitrary killings of non-combatants and torture and ill-treatment. Anyone who ordered or carried out such abuses must be brought to justice.

- All parties to the conflict should give unimpeded access to all areas under their control to missions dispatched by inter-governmental organisations and humanitarian organisations, with guarantees that people who provide information to these missions will not suffer reprisals.

In its recently released report on rape and sexual abuse by armed forces Amnesty International also recommends that the international community offers established expertise or resources in the field of information-gathering and counselling of rape victims either through inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies working in the region or through support for local initiatives.

I am sure that your readers will join with us seeking an end to abuses by all sides involved in the conflict.

John Baguley Head of Fundraising, *Amnesty International, British Section*

Don't desert Serbian left

How long are you going to stab the Serbian left in the back by your opportunistic support for greater Serb hegemonism? Don't you think it ludicrous to be on the same side as the Thatcherite union-basher David Hart or the monetarist Sir Alfred Sherman on a foreign policy issue?

Socialist ideas caught on early in Serbia, introduced by Svetocar Markovic (who died in 1887). He called for the creation of a federal Yugoslav state. Dimitrije Tucovic (1881-1914) called for a federal Yugoslavia, founded the Serbian Social Democratic Party, published a pamphlet berating his fellow countrymen's brutality towards the Kosovan Albanians, saying 'the historic task of Serbia is a big lie'. As for the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, right from its origins in 1920, it called for a federal Yugoslav state and opposed the centralist beliefs of the Serbian (and first Yugoslav) premier Pasic in the Constituent Assembly, and was banned for its pains in 1921.

The trouble with the Serbs is that although they number only 40 per cent of the Yugoslav population, they wish to give themselves the same airs as Englishmen, who number 80 per cent of the population of these islands. You don't want the English to rule Wales, Scotland or any part of Ireland, so stop sucking up to the

Serbs when they seek to brutalise Slovenes, Croats, Albanians or Bosnians.

If you were to push your hatred for the so-called New World Order to its logical conclusion, you would end up rehabilitating Nicolae Ceausescu. In his day he never had any time for it. By the way, the Romanian fascists Eugen Barbu (who admired Ceausescu when he was alive) and Gheorghe Favar (who still admires him) are both very fond of the Serbs, and a person is known by the company he keeps.

Tom Carter BA (South-East European Regional Studies) *Somerset*

Undemocratic USA

In his article 'Corrupting democracy' (January), James Heartfield implies that popular democracy exists in the United States. Not!

It can't really be Heartfield's suggestion that the legislative branch (congress) somehow represents the public interest in the face of attacks on the working class by the executive branch (the president). Agreed, term limits for congress would restrict voters' rights to decide who should represent them, and for that reason should be opposed. But although members of congress are elected directly by popular vote and the president is elected somewhat less directly (by the electoral college), it does not mean that congress represents the interests of ordinary people.

Heartfield goes too far by describing what would be curbed as 'popular democracy'. Certainly, the introduction of a line-item vote, an unlikely event as it would have to be approved by congress and accepted by the supreme court (the judicial branch), would increase the powers of the executive branch at the expense of the legislative branch. But what real difference would that make to the working class? How can you 'further restrict' democracy that doesn't exist? Can you reduce zero by 10 per cent?

Though I was taught in school that American parliamentary democracy was the best system ever devised because of its ingenious system of checks and balances between the three branches, as a Marxist I no longer hold this to be self-evident. Heartfield implies a distinction between the different branches of government, suggesting that one is defensible over the other, when in fact all three are branches of the same tree; one that serves only the interests of the ruling class and needs to be cut down, not pruned.

Daniel Bryan *New York*

What's the point?

I am at a loss to see the point of your 'What's in store before 1994?' extravaganza. Where your serious articles seek to identify the mediations

between underlying trends and current events—and have thus been able to anticipate developments in Britain and throughout the world—we have here a series of snippets taken out of any theoretical context. Instead of collective thinking about underlying tendencies, we have what looks like a bunch of individuals sounding off 'on anything you like', as your preface to the column helpfully puts it.

Contributions from Neil Joseph and Mike Belbin are simply a recycling of observations which will be familiar to any reader of *Living Marxism*. The only thing 'new' here is the whining tone and the occasional excruciating attempt at satire. Mark Reilly's contribution on Ireland, on the other hand, launches us into the future with a vengeance giving us a whole doomsday scenario for 1993. How is such an exercise supposed to advance our political understanding of the current situation in Ireland as analysed by Mick Kennedy in the same issue of the magazine?

The common denominator in all the contributions is fatalism. We are passive spectators to events that evolve—slowly or rapidly—according to some immanent logic. The calendar cut-outs at the top of these pages, with their curious resemblance to bingo cards, remind us that we are dealing here more with a game of chance—in which you can choose shorter or longer odds—than with Marxist science.

Even *Living Marxism* is bound to run the occasional sub-standard article—but here we have the prospect of another 10 months of this ballyhoo. Ann Bradley remarks that 'there is intense pressure on space' in the magazine. Surely the answer must be obvious.

Louis Roche *Paris*

Casement Park showtrials

An attempt is being made to criminalise the nationalist people of West Belfast. In an extraordinary perversion of the legal doctrine of common purpose, the British state through a series of cases known as the Casement Park Trials has imprisoned people whose only crime was to defend themselves.

In March 1988, following the SAS shooting of the Gibraltar Three, their funeral was attacked by the Loyalist Michael Stone. Three mourners were killed. During the funeral of one of the victims, Kevin Brady, two undercover soldiers

drove at high speed into the cortege and began brandishing their revolvers. Fearing another Loyalist killing spree some of the mourners courageously disarmed the soldiers and removed them to nearby Casement Park. Later they were shot by the IRA.

Since then 41 people have been charged in relation to these events. Five have received life sentences although none have been accused of shooting the soldiers. Indeed three of the accused, Pat Kane, Michael Timmons and Sean Kelly weren't even accused of being present at the shootings. They were convicted on the basis of an alarming interpretation of the legal doctrine of common purpose.

The traditional interpretation of common purpose means that a person can be convicted of, say, murder if, together with others, they formulate a criminal plan resulting in a killing. Kane, Timmons and Kelly were not alleged to have formed any such plan with those who actually did the shooting. Nonetheless they were convicted of abetting murder. The courts have thus extended the meaning of the law to say, in effect, that anyone present at Casement Park or indeed in the funeral cortege can be taken to have assisted in the killings. If these judgements are not reversed, anyone participating in a march, picket or other demonstration runs the risk of criminal prosecution simply for being present. This is a product of the state's attempt to criminalise the entire nationalist community of British-occupied Ireland.

A Justice for the Casement Park Accused campaign has been formed to raise this and other issues thrown up by these series of vindictive trials. They can be contacted c/o Green Ink Bookshop, 8 Archway Mall, London N19 5RG.

Steven Hepburn *Middlesex*

Taking offence

So Dame Jill Knight is offended. Oh dear! Apparently she is worried that the friends and relatives of serial killer Dennis Nilsen's victims will be offended at his televised descriptions of the murders. How charming of her to be so concerned for the sensibilities of what...100 people? Maybe 200?

While no-one would wish to minimise the anguish of such people, perhaps Dame Jill needs reminding of a few other rather larger

groups of the population who also have cause to be offended?

The NHS has customers waiting and waiting, hoping it's their area's turn for the share of cash. They are highly offended. Every user of state education is offended when the goal-posts are moved and the rules changed again. Time is running out for our children.

Customers of public transport are offended waiting at bus stops and train platforms for rumbling old stock that may never arrive. That ever-increasing group, the unemployed, outcasts from this government's systematic destruction of our manufacturing base, are quite offended too. As are the ever-growing numbers of bank workers, shop assistants, nurses and teachers being fobbed off with worthless 'voluntary' redundancy.

And lastly that dwindling minority group, that threatened species, the employed. With fewer resources to work with and increasingly menacing threats from management of lower pay and redundancy, it's not difficult to see who wields the knives in our society. Offended? Sure! I just wonder where the opposition is?

Sandy Fox *Birmingham*

Spot the difference?

I wonder if any of your readers have noticed the resemblance between Quintin Hoare—subject of January's apology after *Living Marxism* published a letter by Andrew Coates that accused Hoare of Serb-baiting racism—and Attila Hoare, who wrote to *Living Marxism* some months ago accusing it of 'a vile piece of racist propaganda' in associating present-day Croatian nationalism with the rehabilitation of that republic's Nazi past.

Are these two people related? We should be told.

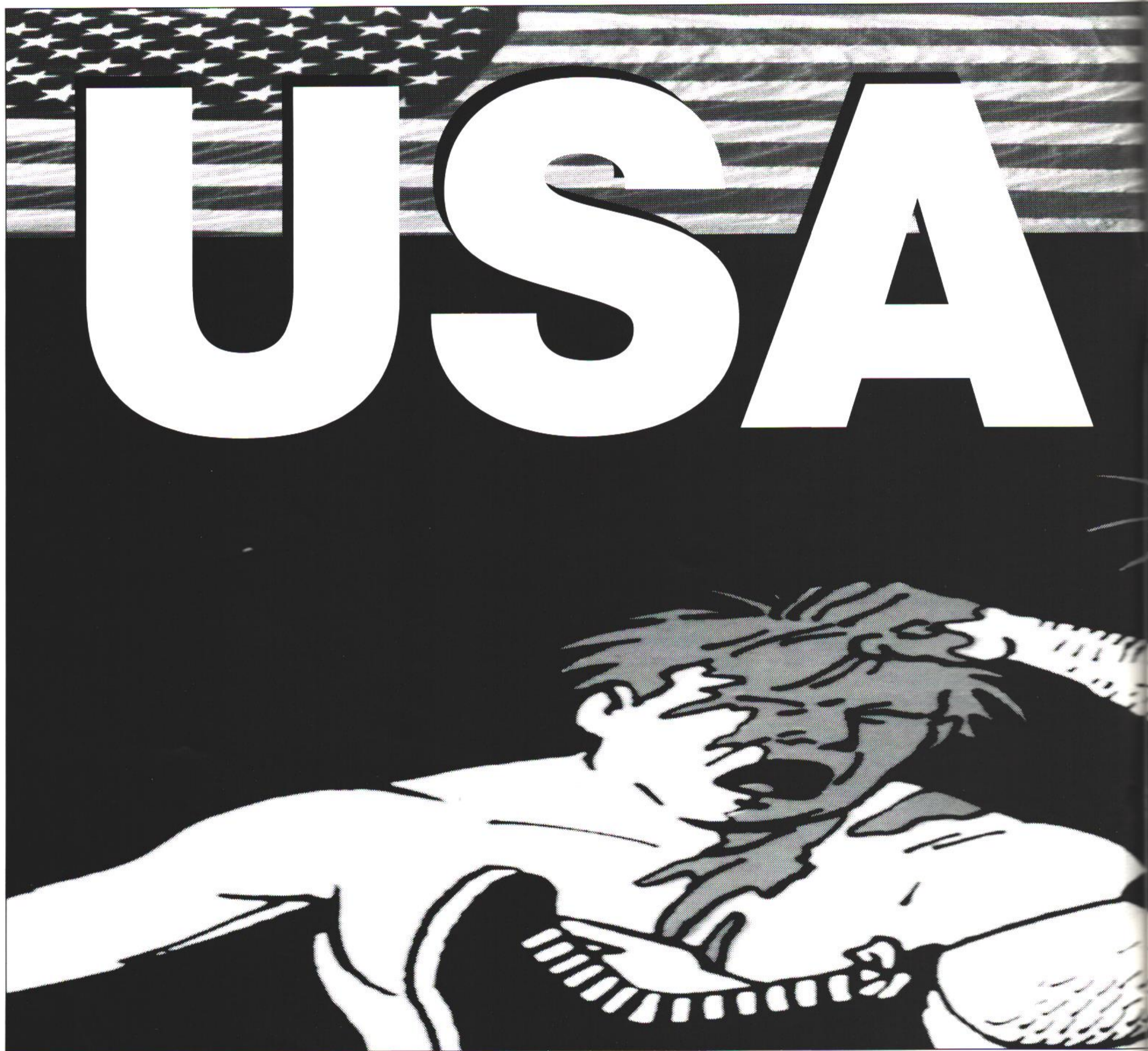
S Alec *Bo'ness*

What's in store before 1994?

Due to our special 12-page picture feature on the banned Yugoslav war exhibition, this month's contributions from readers on the likely effects of the slump in 1993 have been postponed until the April issue of *Living Marxism*.

We welcome readers' views and criticisms.

Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or fax them on (071) 278 9844



These days transatlantic rows seem to break out over everything from the war in Bosnia to trade in oil seed. Helen Simons examines why, and highlights the likely points of future conflict between the USA and the European Community

European politicians and commentators are apprehensive about the new administration in the White House. Within days of taking office it was clear that Bill Clinton was not going to be Europe's best friend. From declarations about the need for the USA to take firm action in Bosnia to the imposition of punitive tariffs on steel imports, the new American president made it clear that he is not afraid of upsetting European sensitivities.

Some pundits have explained Washington's cooler stance towards Europe as a reflection of the age gap between George Bush and Bill Clinton. They argue that past presidents were all of a generation that fought in the



ILLUSTRATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: JAMIE HERNANDEZ

Second World War, and so shared an instinctive sympathy for their old allies and the Europe that they had helped to shape. Clinton, on the other hand, wasn't even born until after the war, so the old ties and loyalties will mean little to him. He is said to represent a modern breed of politicians that is tired of the old diplomacy and determined to put America first.

A closer look at the relations between Europe and America, however, shows that the new tensions have little to do with a generation gap. Transatlantic relations have been deteriorating for some time. Rows, splits and conflicts have become commonplace on questions as wide ranging as trade, exchange rates,

European defence or military intervention in the third world. In fact the 'Atlantic partnership' has shown every sign of coming apart since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The end of the Cold War, rather than the end of the Bush administration, was the watershed for US-EC relations.

The Cold War provided a unique framework for transatlantic politics. The military alliance of Nato, established to see off the supposed Soviet threat on Western Europe's doorstep, allowed America to assume the leadership of Europe. Since the USA was the only power capable of standing up to the Soviets, European nations looked to America to protect them.

From the American viewpoint the best thing about the Cold War arrangement was that it allowed US leadership to extend beyond military matters. Even in areas where US world leadership was more questionable, America could use its position in the Western Alliance to impose its interests on the allies. This was most striking in the economic sphere.

The US economy has been in a stagnant state since the end of the sixties. Where once the USA could dominate the world economy in every sector, the past 20 years has brought the emergence of rivals in both Europe and Japan. In 1970, for example, 64 of the world's 100 largest industrial ►



corporations were based in the USA, 26 were in Europe and only 8 were in Japan. By 1988, 42 of the 100 largest were located in the USA, 33 were in Europe and 15 were in Japan (see L Thurow, *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle among Japan, Europe and America*).

America dealt with the emergence of credible economic rivals through the mechanism of the Cold War alliance, by playing the 'linkage' game. When US economic interests were threatened by the Europeans, America would link the issue to the question of European

allies/rivals. Where once Washington could simply assume world leadership, it now has to struggle to preserve it. This is the problem that underlines the new administration's more aggressive stance towards the European nations.

Clinton's exact foreign policy gameplan remains uncertain, but it seems certain that the USA will become more active in the international arena in the coming years. Clinton's emphasis on putting America first and homing in on the economy 'like a laser beam' has been widely misinterpreted as an isolationist stance. In fact the reality of Clinton's policy will be far from isolationist. Rather we can expect to see America actively intervening on the world stage in a sustained effort to reassert its authority over its economic competitors.

In the coming months the US administration will be on the look out for opportunities to demonstrate America's leadership capabilities. From Somalia to Iraq, America will be keen to show the world that it is still calling the shots. Washington's motive in this is to preserve the status quo of world power relations, not to stir up trouble. Nevertheless, the effect of its interventionist role will be to heighten the tensions between Europe and America.

A brief survey of some key flashpoints between the allies serves to illustrate this problem.

● Trading places

Clinton's team has promised to give the economy the same priority as security in the post-Cold War world. One campaign adviser explained the administration's thinking:

'Military power remains a valuable "currency" but economic power has been appreciating in value, becoming more and more "hard currency". Economic security is no less vital to national security than strong defence.' (BW Jentleson, 'Foreign policy for a post-Cold War world', *The Brookings Review*, Fall 1992)

This is one campaign promise president Clinton seems determined to see through. One of his first moves was to set up a high-powered Economic Security Council, to go alongside the militaristic National Security Council which dominated US foreign policy during the Cold War. But, when America is losing out in markets around the world, is there any mileage in pursuing an economy-based approach to foreign policy?

America can no longer rely upon its economic competitiveness to secure world leadership. In sector after sector the USA is losing pole position to either the Germans (in chemicals,

for example) or the Japanese (particularly in cars and computers). But while the US economy lacks the dynamism of its rivals, it still has an economic ace which allows it to bully its way around the globe. The fact is that America is still the world's largest economy, and the largest market for goods. So it can make life difficult for its competitors by threatening to deny them access to the millions of American consumers.

In the Gatt trade negotiations, for example, the USA has tried to get its way with threats. Washington hopes that by threatening to deny European producers free access to the American market, it will bully Europe into submission. Since the US market is the largest in the world, US sales are vital for most European producers. A suggested 200 per cent tariff on French wine, for example, could cripple many of France's vineyards.

America's strategy is to use what remains of its economic strength unilaterally to see through its interests. Given the hostility that this politicisation of trade evokes, it is a high-risk strategy which could backfire if Europe decides to retaliate.

● Paying the bills

America may be able to bludgeon its trading partners into submission, but it is likely to have less joy in the financial arena. The USA has long been indebted to the rest of the world, as it has relied on credit to keep its economy going. The federal deficit grew from \$73 billion in 1980 to about \$300 billion today. The total public debt has grown from \$180 billion in 1980 to \$4000 billion today.

The big problem facing Clinton is how to finance this debt. In the last decade of the Cold War, America forced its allies to subsidise the deficit by extending credit and coordinating interest rate policies. The German and Japanese governments played a particularly big part in keeping the credit flowing into the USA during the eighties, buying up US treasury bonds and pressing their financial institutions to do the same. Today things have changed. Germany, for example, now has its own problems funding the costs of German reunification. Both Germany and Japan have become net sellers of US bonds.

The result is that the USA faces a mounting crisis in paying off its debts. Last year it had to rely on near-bankrupt Latin American governments to buy around \$25 billion of US securities—which is a bit like a desperate debtor going to a loan shark when the legitimate banks turn you down for more credit. Unable to rely on the same levels of cooperation from its European allies, America is

Despite American nostalgia for the Cold War ways, there can be no return to the past

security. The heavy hint was that if Europe failed to toe the line, US troops might have to be withdrawn from the European arena. By linking every issue ultimately to the question of security, America could use its military strength to see off challenges to its economic interests. The Atlantic Alliance was just a cover for US leadership in the Cold War era.

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought this episode to a close. The disappearance of the Soviet threat has weakened America's leverage over Europe. Last year, when vice-president Dan Quayle tried to play the linkage game during the Gatt trade negotiations, it became clear that the trick no longer worked. Quayle's suggestion that failure to agree on Gatt could hinder US support for Nato only succeeded in uniting all of the European negotiators against him. Even loyal Britain condemned the move as a feeble bullying tactic. Rather than whipping Europe into line, the affair caused many Europeans to question the future of Nato. Bush felt obliged to disown Quayle's remarks and to emphasise that there was 'no linkage at all.... They are separate. These two issues are separate' (*Independent*, 12 February 1992).

The old Atlantic partnership is no more. Despite American nostalgia for the Cold War ways, there can be no return to the past. Today the USA is faced with the problem of finding a new way to impose itself upon its

now likely to take more unilateral action to resolve its financial problems. This in turn is likely further to increase tensions with Europe.

Last year's slide in the value of the dollar was an example of the kind of American initiatives we can expect to see in the future. By allowing the dollar to go into free fall on the foreign exchange markets, the US authorities sought to make American goods cheaper and foreign imports more expensive, in order to narrow their burgeoning trade deficit. The dollar's fall also had the effect of reducing the

forces are a key symbol of America's continued leadership of the Atlantic Alliance. The major presidential candidates may have disagreed about the number of troops to be stationed in Europe, but both insisted that a core of US forces were there to stay. While no European power is yet demanding that the troops go home, the US military know that they are in a precarious position.

American strategists have tried to find a new role for Nato in Europe. Bush, for example, made many speeches after the collapse of the Berlin Wall on the importance of 'adapting and renewing Nato for the New World Order'. Foreign policy experts have called for the creation of a US-led rapid deployment force, and argued that the old Nato should take on the new problems of national unrest in Eastern Europe. Despite the reams of paper devoted to the subject, however, it is clear that the more Nato is discussed, the less of a role it seems to have.

A few astute politicians now realise that the Cold War arrangements cannot be maintained indefinitely. Former defence secretary James Schlesinger recently spelled it out:

'Ultimately the realities of the changing political and economic lines of forces [within Europe] will outweigh all the immediate declamations of unswerving loyalty and fidelity to institutions like Nato....The sharply diminished need for US protection unavoidably implies the shrinkage of US importance to Europe. That will be true no matter how much we flatter ourselves.' ('Transatlantic partnership: an American view', *The Brookings Review*, Summer 1992)

In reality, American statesmen would be best advised to keep quiet about Nato or risk drawing more attention to its outdated character. All the post-Cold War talk of Nato having a new role has already provoked a debate in Europe about the need for a new security system.

France's call for a European force has already set in motion the creation of the Franco-German corps, due to be in action by 1995. Ironically, by raising the leadership stakes and looking for a new role for Nato, the Americans have opened the way to the creation of a European force outside of their control. Security issues, which once provided the firmest cement holding the USA and the EC countries together, are set to become another bone of serious transatlantic contention.

● Hot wars

America's need to reaffirm its world leadership is revealed most clearly in its taste for foreign adventures.

By asserting its military and moral authority in Somalia or Iraq or somewhere else in the third world, Washington hopes to confirm that it is still the leading power on Earth.

The trouble today is that interventions which are designed to demonstrate America's global authority now increasingly risk exposing its isolation and lack of legitimacy. Compare the recent air-strikes against Iraq with the Gulf War. Back in 1990-91, America led an international alliance against Saddam Hussein. British and French troops fought under US command while the German and Japanese governments helped foot the bill.

In 1993 by contrast, America's military adventures in Iraq enjoy less than fulsome support from the old Allies. As the air-strikes have become more clearly exposed as a cynical exercise in demonstrating US authority, so America's rivals have become less keen to play ball. France has openly disowned recent US actions, and even tame Britain has expressed unease.

Tensions between the USA and Europe are clearest in the discussion around the war in the former Yugoslavia. For months US politicians and commentators have gone out of their way to criticise European efforts to sort out the conflict. The USA cannot accept that Germany or the EC could really assume the role of power-broker, even in their own backyard. The Americans have consistently contrasted their short, sharp military action in Iraq to the ineffective EC intervention in Bosnia.

Washington's intention here is to impress everybody with the need for American world leadership. But it is a high-risk gambit. The US attempt to wrest the initiative from the EC has raised the stakes in the Balkans, and focused more international attention on the conflict. Moreover, all the talk of the need for a US-backed solution to the conflict has dragged America closer towards involvement in a Balkan War that it does not want. As a result, far from US leadership in Europe being confirmed, many European leaders have urged America to keep out.

Neither the USA nor the EC is going out of its way to provoke the other. Yet the pursuit of an active foreign policy in the post-Cold War era is continually bringing transatlantic antagonisms closer to the surface. However much either side would like to avoid it, US-European relations appear to be entering a dangerous age of conflict. Bill Clinton's approval rating over the next four years is likely to be even lower in Europe than it is in America. ●

America's need to reaffirm its world leadership is revealed most clearly in its taste for foreign adventures

real value of American debt held in dollars by foreign creditors. In effect, the USA was exploiting the dollar's leading position as the global currency to make the rest of the world pay part of its bills.

The consequences of the dollar's slide were painfully felt throughout Europe. Although the Europeans blamed each other for the internal crisis of their Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), the primary cause of last year's turmoil on the currency markets was the falling value of the dollar, which led to an appreciation in the value of the German deutschmark. This was the main reason for the tension within the ERM. As the US administration seeks to put America first through a more unilateral financial policy, there is likely to be more trouble ahead in the world markets.

● Insecurity in Europe

Security policy is the area which has forced America to face up to its changing role within Europe most directly. With no Red Army to confront, the rationale for the US security umbrella has disappeared. Nato now has no *raison d'être*. That causes Nato officials to suffer frequent existential crises, and calls into question the presence of American troops in Europe.

No serious US politician wants to enter into a debate about the presence of American troops in Europe. These



Europe looks for America

In European eyes, says Alan Harding, Bill Clinton is no John Kennedy and the USA is no longer the promised land

The USA used to conjure up images of the Statue of Liberty welcoming the huddled masses of the world; now America means Rodney King being kicked and beaten into unconsciousness. A more recent generation thrilled to Neil Armstrong walking on the surface of the moon; their children play with Japanese computer games. The USA was always the biggest and the best; now IBM, once the flagship of American capitalism, returns the largest-ever corporate loss.

These changes in perceptions of the USA are more important than they seem. European impressions of America have always been a cipher for the hopes and expectations of people in Europe itself.

More than America

One of the most famous European commentators on America, the French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville, wrote in the 1830s that 'in America I saw more than America; I sought there the image of democracy itself, with its inclinations, its character, its prejudices, and its passions, in order to learn what we have to fear or to hope from its progress' (*Democracy*

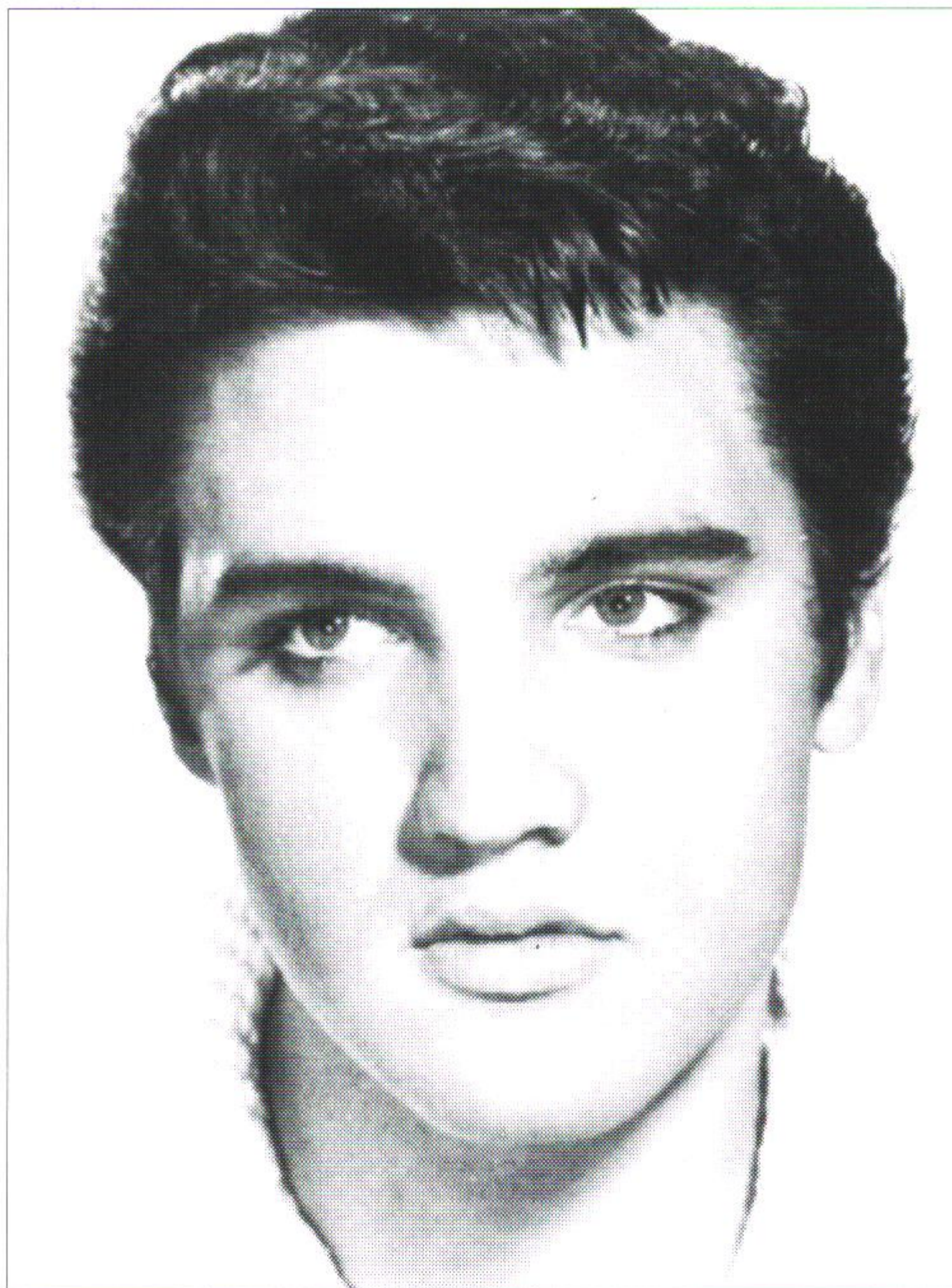
in America, p14). De Tocqueville feared the triumph of American-style democracy over the old hierarchical order. Many others have celebrated the triumph of liberty and equality. And some have condemned the vulgarity of the great American experiment. The USA never fulfilled either the highest hopes or darkest fears invested in it. But those who look towards it have always, at least until the past decade, remained pregnant with expectation at what America could offer the world.

For 300 years Europeans have sought to give coherence to the sense of what America made possible through a plethora of images. They have variously described the USA as a child, an innocent and a giant, as a new Greek colony in which the old civilisation is uncorrupted, and as Rome to Europe's Greece. The common thread is that, for Europeans, the USA always represented the future. It meant that the world and its horizons were not constrained by hardship in an old country. There were new possibilities that could be made reality in a new world—the world of Thomas More's *Utopia* and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*. America was the Promised Land.

For millions of Europeans who travelled to America, and for those who remained behind, it represented liberation from persecution and corruption. America was untainted. Virtue and hard work would be their own reward. The Russian radical Alexander Herzen declared in 1851 that for the free man there was 'no other refuge in Europe than the deck of a vessel making sail for America' (quoted in EH Carr, *The Romantic Exiles*). In our own century, however, the hopes of Europeans escaping from their own continent were much higher than those of many who had lived in the American reality.

Dorothy's rainbow

In his song 'The Promised Land' which chronicles the black migration to the latest land of opportunity—California—Chuck Berry concludes 'This is the Promised Land calling/ The poor boy's still on the line'. Only in the past few years have Europeans gained the sense that blacks have had for many years, that America is something other than the land at the end of Dorothy's rainbow. Europeans may not make exact comparisons between their own wages and those of Roseanne's husband, or even know that life



Images of America, then and now

expectancy in the South Bronx is lower than in Bangladesh. But the USA is no longer the land of their dreams. Young Irish and many Britons, the poor men and women of Europe, are almost the only Europeans who still make the ocean journey one way.

Teeming creativity

Britain had the first Industrial Revolution, but it was in America that the productive power of machinery reached out to define the scope of the twentieth century. European capitalists cast admiring glances at Ford's production line and at the work efficiency methods of Frederick Taylor. The Chrysler Building and the Brooklyn Bridge provided the imagery of modernity and a teeming urban creativity.

Jaundiced and backward-looking Europeans of the old order bemoaned the vulgar materialism of the USA. European workers, however, aspired to the prosperity that this new world seemed to offer. For European intellectuals and artists, many of whom were exiled in the USA during the fascist 1930s, America became a source of creative energy. Many brought darker shades to their American vision—film noir is one

result—but even in the worst days of the Depression, America was compared favourably with Europe.

Whatever its failings, the American capitalist model was better than the decay and decadence of Europe. Fifty years on, as the capitalist world undergoes a new depression, Europeans are once again stunned—not by the vibrant urgency of the American economy, but by the collapse of its bridges and roads and the apathetic response this engenders.

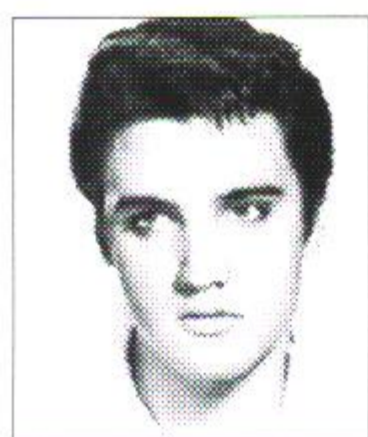
Face to face

In the years between, Europeans came face to face with America. The American way, 'Americanisation', came to them and most Europeans greeted it with enthusiasm. As early as 1899 the Pope coined the term 'Americanism' to describe the impact of the modern on traditional beliefs. But it was the Second World War and the establishment of US world supremacy which opened the floodgates.

'Then the future began to arrive in the present. It arrived at the Europeans' doorstep, their markets, their press, their schools. It arrived in the shape of investments, new foods, industrial

products, machines, gadgets. The future intruded in the shape of missionaries, evangelists, salesmen, advertisements, and movies. It took the form of new brides in the oldest of families, new faces in the highest society. It also appeared at lower social levels in strange attitudes and ideas, new ways of thinking, new styles of living, and alien values. Europeans began to hear these innovations from the mouths of their own children and with increasing apprehension and dismay. The future was no longer a remote transatlantic barometer or a flickering image on a distant screen in the west. The future was an intrusive, unavoidable, living presence. They called it "Americanisation".' (C Vann Woodward, *The Old World's New World*, p80)

In Britain during the war, and across Western Europe after it, tens of thousands of GIs brought an energy, brashness, optimism and lack of deference which reinvigorated the tired Europeans. The phrase that the GIs were 'overpaid, oversexed, and over here' has come down to us as a mark of a resentment ►



which the average Briton let alone German never really felt. In fact only the old establishment which envied American power and the pro-Soviet left which invented the label 'Coca-Cola imperialism' were anti-American.

For the rest of the population America was not only chocolate,

Everyone wanted to be Elvis or go to bed with him

cigarettes and stockings but the hope of prosperity and a more comfortable life. Young people wanted to jitterbug and then rock and roll, but the music came to them not just as an ethereal voice on the radio. It came on the wave of US economic power.

Through the Marshall Plan an unprecedented input of American capital facilitated the reconstruction of Western Europe. America raised everyone's expectations. My mother bunked off from picking Brussels sprouts in the Land Army to watch Bette Davis and Clark Gable. She listened to Frank Sinatra and Johnny Ray, but her younger brothers and sisters who couldn't remember the thirties and thought not being hungry was normal wanted more.

Spending power

By the middle of the 1950s in Germany the economic miracle was under way. Britain was less dynamic but there was full employment. What's more, young people—'teenagers' as they were known in the American idiom—had a new spending power and relative independence from old social constraints. Their higher expectations could not be satisfied in the environment of postwar Britain. The mores of the upper classes were a source of contempt. The bomb-damaged streets were something to escape from. The lead singer of the Ted Heath Band did not provide a role model.

America was where the action was and America was Jimmy Dean, Brando and, more than anyone, Elvis. Britain's youth not only listened to him. It started to look like him. It began to act like him. Everyone wanted to be Elvis or go to bed with him. The youth had no respect.

British youth were not the only ones appropriating American culture.

Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and the New Wave reinvented French cinema in homage to the American B-movie. French kids followed what was going on, but they had to listen to Johnny Hallyday.

Even when British youth redefined the culture and moved ahead of white middle America, an element of American culture was the catalyst. Mick Jagger and Keith Richards got together because Jagger had the latest Chuck Berry import. Throughout the sixties and into the seventies black American music was the rhythm for the homage to the American experience.

America still defined political radicalism. The image of freedom was the civil rights movement. The image of opposition was the movement against the Vietnam War. The American establishment was an ogre but the way to subvert it was still the American way.

Up in flames

Yet the Vietnam War became part of the fault line that cracked the European view of America from the sixties. Suddenly the new world was bombing south-east Asia back to the Stone Age. The hopes for an end to poverty and oppression engendered by American government programmes known as the Great Society were going up in flames as America's urban ghettos were rocked by a black rebellion.

The acute crisis in American society was underpinned by economic decay. The US economy was still colossal in comparison with all others but its industrial plant was more decrepit. In terms of capitalist production, the USA was no longer a young country. The scale of investment necessary to reinvigorate the ageing manufacturing base proved beyond the capacity of American capitalists.

In 1971 the Nixon administration was forced to end the Bretton Woods exchange system which had fixed the dollar to gold and ensured that the USA reaped the benefit of trade being dominated by its own currency. There was no longer enough strength in the American economy to justify the supremacy of the mighty dollar.

American dystopias

Self-doubt replaced self-confidence throughout American society. In Europe, a troubled and withdrawn America could no longer be the model. Once more the American experience became the way that Europeans understood the world. This time, however, instead of adopting the American dream, Europe took over the American sense of loss and decay. Europeans watched and reproduced American dystopias and nihilism.

The awe in which America was held was replaced by growing criticism

of American presumption. Europeans could see that America was not the power it had been as the tourists struggled to make the dollar stretch on their European tour. Once Europeans laughed in their millions at Mickey Mouse; now they have left the European Disneyland as a wasteland. From Disneyland to Bill Clinton, Europeans think of America as all style and no substance.

Ghetto fashion

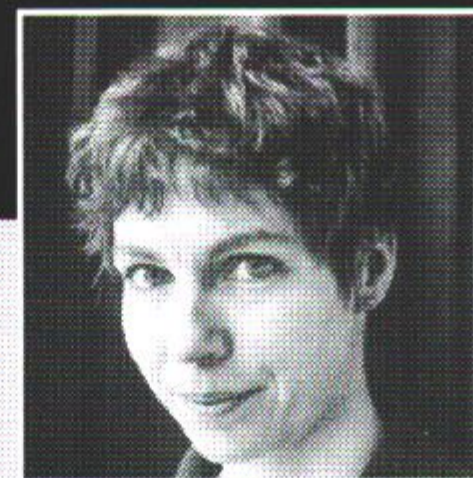
Today German youth can buy more Japanese sound systems than GIs can; yet they still have nothing better than American music to listen to or American idioms to imitate. The irony is, however, that many of Europe's youth are now most likely to adopt the styles of the American ghetto. The longest disco queue in Frankfurt is outside the clubs where black American servicemen hang out. Youth fashions are the baseball hats, expensive trainers and insignia of American sports teams. The fascination with the music and fashion of the US ghetto (where violent death is the alternative to grinding poverty, and apathy or indifference are the only cool responses) is a perverse summation of the lack of any new purpose or confidence in European society.

True to their long relationship with America, Europeans now echo the American people's own sense of their country not as a land of the future but as a place of the past. Americans have an acute sense that their children will be the first generation to be worse off than their parents. As Ridley Scott illustrated in *Black Rain*, the landscape of the future is Osaka, not Los Angeles. In this movie the gangsters drove German Mercedes, not Cadillacs.

Tatty vestiges

The dominant mood is nostalgia for a lost dream, lost possibilities. The American dream may be over, but, because there is little else on offer, too many people on both sides of the Atlantic cling to its tatty vestiges. The hard truth is that if you could put America on the stage today you wouldn't get a lean, mean youth breaking guitar strings in the King Creole club, but a fat, middle-aged junkie sweating out corny ballads in a Las Vegas casino.

When Europeans look at the USA today, the majority regret the passing of their own aspirations. For most of this century America was both the future of democracy and the future of capitalism. To regain the hope for the liberation of humanity which once united us, Americans and Europeans need to learn that capitalism and freedom are in fact mutually exclusive. That is the lesson of the end of the American century. ●



The right to choose baby's sex

Britain's first sex selection clinic has opened at Hendon in north London. Run by a chemical pathologist, Dr Alan Rose, and a biochemist, Dr Peter Liu, it uses a technique based on the separation of fast-swimming male sperm from slower girlie sperm. Once separated, doctors can inseminate a woman with the appropriate batch. There's no guarantee of success—estimates vary between a 60 and 70 per cent chance of getting the sex you want. Sperm are notoriously unpredictable; one male sperm can be sluggish but still capable of fertilisation, and some female sperm can sprint ahead of the lads.

People have always tried to determine their babies' sex. The Greeks believed that tying a cord around the left testicle would produce boys. Making love while the north wind blows, keeping your boots on, and swallowing a raw egg or eating shellfish before the action have all been recommended at various times. They don't work—but 'post-conception' sex selection techniques do.

Infanticide, for example, is an extremely effective form of sex selection. So is abortion following ante-natal testing. These methods have been routinely practised in countries where one sex (usually boys) has been favoured over the other. India has many clinics which conduct amniocentesis tests at the request of women and abort unwanted female fetuses. Likewise in China where there is considerable pressure to have only one child, and parents would prefer that one child to be a son.

It is highly probable that abortions of wrong-sex fetuses have been going on in some British clinics too. After all, just about any medical treatment is available if you can pay for it. However, the Hendon clinic is the first commercial venture openly offering a choose-your-sex service in Britain, and it has thrown up yet another of those moral conundrums that the media love to jerk off about. In the press the debate has been presented in starkly polarised terms: money-grubbing private medics versus socially responsible commentators concerned with important ethical issues.

How do the 'ethical' arguments against sex selection measure up? Probably the least persuasive is the argument that nature does a sound job of producing a rough 50:50 balance of the sexes and we interfere with it at our peril. Commentators have warned that such interference might create a severe population imbalance in favour of boys, and make it impossible for humanity to reproduce itself.

The strange thing is that the socially responsible, ethically minded commentators warning against this threat to human reproduction are the same people who bang on about the dangers of an expanding world population. Now they want it both ways. In India, liberals and feminists have long pressed the government to close abortion clinics practising sex selection. Health officials have refused, on the grounds that the clinics encourage smaller families. You might not approve of this form of social engineering (I don't), but it is more logically consistent than the approach of those who support population control, yet oppose sex selection, both on moral grounds.

The flawed arguments about the future of human reproduction are often just a cover for the critics' real objection to sex selection: namely, that choosing the sex of your baby is an abhorrent interference with nature. This is ridiculous. We spend most of our lives trying to interfere with 'natural' fertility patterns by practising contraception, and few of us would be prepared to give that up. Fewer still would be prepared

to give up modern medical advances such as antibiotics, chemotherapy and microsurgery, despite the fact that such medical wonders have helped to create 'unnatural' demographic shifts like an ageing population.

A more persuasive-sounding argument against sex selection is that it legitimises and encourages discrimination against women. My own view is that medical practice can only reflect, rather than cause, the attitudes which exist in society. And the only way to alter this is to change the real basis for such preferences.

For instance, in many underdeveloped societies there is a clear reason why boys are preferred to girls. Within the existing social division of labour boys grow up to work and support their parents, girls grow up to marry and cost their parents a dowry. In a society where there is no social security and old-age pension each generation depends on the next. Boys guarantee their parents a decent standard of living. Girls don't. Small wonder that the birth of a girl is greeted with significantly less enthusiasm. If you eliminate the socio-economic basis for the preference of one sex over another, by providing people with what they need, you can eliminate the basis for the prejudice.

Many have demanded that sex selection should be state-regulated and only allowed for 'good reasons'. There seems to be a consensus that one good reason would be to allow putative parents to ensure that a 'sex-linked' genetic disease was not passed on. This is regarded as a humane and desirable use of the technology, while the attempt to produce a son is seen as trivial and undesirable.

But do we really want to hand over the decision about whether we can or can't avail ourselves of medical technology to some moral ombudsman? Is it desirable for a panel of the great and the good to decide that the Smiths can take advantage of sex selection because if they have a boy it may have Duchenne's muscular dystrophy, but the Jones can't because the inherited defect suffered by a son of theirs is only likely to be colour blindness? If a couple are distressed because they have enough sons to form a football team and want to ensure the next is a daughter, why should they tolerate a posse of MPs, doctors or law lords declaring their ambition immoral? Why shouldn't parents decide—it's their sperm.

I have no moral or ethical concerns about the Hendon clinic. If couples want to have their sperm doctored to improve chances of getting a son or daughter, it's their business. My only objection to the clinic is its pathetic success rate. Charging £650 a time (non-refundable if you don't get what you want) to increase someone's chance of conceiving a boy from 50 per cent to 60 or 70 per cent is quite simply a con. Especially since, by the clinic's own figures, it takes an average couple two or three treatments to conceive. This is the most important problem with the Hendon clinic—but it seems to have been lost in the highfalutin' moral kerfuffle.

It's not surprising really. When it comes to medical developments, only select issues generate moral concern within the establishment; and the fact that people are simply being ripped off isn't high on the agenda. Yet medical rip-offs are a real threat to ordinary people. The principle of sex selection, on the other hand, is only a threat to the reactionary notion that gender is best determined by God or nature. ●

This year, the Western powers seem to have found it harder and harder to agree on a united approach to the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. When David Owen and Cyrus Vance put forward their plan for a peace deal between the warring factions, president Clinton's advisers treated it as an appeasement of Serbian aggression. Then US officials and German government ministers suggested, against opposition from Britain and others, that the UN arms embargo be lifted so that the Bosnian Muslims could be armed.

Since the Yugoslav civil war began in 1991 there has been a continuous debate in the West about how to respond, with different powers proposing different solutions. Meanwhile there has also been a steady escalation in the war, to the point where it could become a wider Balkan conflict, dragging in Greece and Turkey.

Many observers say that the reason for the escalation is that the West has not intervened decisively

have consistently argued that whatever Germany and Europe are doing in Yugoslavia, it is not enough.

The USA first tried to seize back the initiative from Germany by forcing through the West's recognition of Bosnian independence in the spring of 1992. This provocative act, which directly sparked off the war in Bosnia, was carried out after even US diplomats said it would be like pouring petrol on the flames. The USA has since tried to take the initiative away from Europe by dictating the terms of any settlement in Bosnia. It criticised the original Vance/Owen plan as a sell-out to the Serbs, and encouraged the Bosnian Muslims to carry on fighting.

The USA certainly doesn't want to be drawn into a messy ground war. But as it has stepped up its intervention in a bid to stay at the head of the Western Alliance, it has heightened tensions and intensified conflicts within the former Yugoslavia.

● Most significant contribution to escalating the conflict: the recognition of Bosnia.

Britain

As the weakest of the big Western powers, Britain is very ambivalent towards the Yugoslav conflict. On the one hand, it fears anything which might accelerate the reorganisation of the world order and relegate it from the top table. So it shared America's initial desire to keep Yugoslavia in one piece, and has argued against more forceful Western intervention. On the other hand, Britain cannot afford to be left behind the rest of the Western powers. Since failing to stop Germany recognising Croatia, Britain has sought to show that it is still a major player by sending in troops and despatching an armada to Yugoslavia.

The more Britain has to resort to military intervention the more strain it puts on the budget, at a time when the recession exercises severe restraints on military spending. However, since military strength is Britain's last remaining

What does the

Peace, of course, the governments intervening in the former Yugoslavia would say. Rob Knight finds that it is not so straightforward

enough. But a brief survey of the role of the main Western powers suggests that Western intervention itself has made the war worse. Each Western power has its own agenda in relation to Yugoslavia. The conflict arising among them has been the main factor escalating the war.

The USA

American foreign policy is motivated by the desire to maintain its status as the leading world power. As the country with the most to lose from any reorganisation of the world order, the USA's first instinct is always to keep things as they are. So when the conflict in Yugoslavia began, the Americans argued for maintaining the unity of the country. However, since Germany asserted its authority in the region, by unilaterally recognising the breakaway republics of Croatia and Slovenia at the start of 1992, US policy has been dictated by the attempt to keep Germany in its place. The Americans

Germany

Germany has played a more independent role in Yugoslavia than in any foreign policy issue since 1945. Its recognition of Croatia and Slovenia raised the civil war to its current intensity and made any peaceful resolution more unlikely. It is an open secret that Germany has been arming the Croats, making it possible for them to launch their offensive against Serbian areas in Croatia in January.

Germany's role reflects its emergence as the main power in Europe. Because the Germans do not want to break with their past good relations with the Americans, they have tried to get the USA and other European powers to agree with what they are doing. Nevertheless Germany's active intervention is forcing the other powers to respond, and so constantly raising the stakes.

● Most significant contribution to escalating the conflict: recognition of Croatia and Slovenia.

claim to Great Power status, it has no choice. Hence the February decision to reverse some of the planned post-Cold War cuts in troop numbers.

● Most significant contribution to the conflict: hard one this, as Britain is a minor player. Toss up between David Owen, the Ark Royal, and the anti-Serb propaganda campaign.

France

France is also concerned that it might lose its seat at the top table. In the past it has relied upon its role as a proxy for Germany. Now Germany is standing on its own feet, France fears that its international position will be undermined. Like Britain, it is compelled to show its military strength where possible.

● Most significant contribution: Francois Mitterrand starting the trend for flak-jacketed politicians to helicopter into the war zone and stir things up on primetime TV.



West want?

Apart from the main players, just about every Western nation and Russia has got involved. This is not because of concern for Yugoslavia, but because in a changing world everybody wants to be where the action is, for fear of being discounted in whatever final arrangements emerge from the chaos.

In addition to their individual agendas, all Western nations have common concerns about the Yugoslav conflict. They fear that they will not be able to maintain a joint approach to the war. In the uncertain post-Cold War world, all are afraid of the consequences of a breakdown of international agreements. Yugoslavia, like the Gatt talks, has become a testing ground for Western cooperation.

Each Western power pursues its own agenda, but at the same time tries to accommodate those of its allies. This creates a dynamic towards greater intervention. For example, Germany pursues a more expansionist foreign policy by

recognising Croatia and Slovenia. America responds, not by challenging Germany directly, but by accepting the recognition of Croatia, then trying to take back the initiative by recognising Bosnia—in poker terms, see you and raise you.

Other nations then make their bids for influence, a few thousand soldiers here, a relief convoy there, and finally a peace plan. At this point the USA steps in again to raise the stakes by calling for the arming of the Bosnian Muslims. And so it goes on. At every stage there is an escalation of the conflict. While the West plays its power games, Yugoslavia burns.

Paradoxically, the West also fears the instability created by the war, hence the attempts at imposing a settlement. Nevertheless the dynamic towards greater Western intervention is bringing closer a more general Balkan war.

The Yugoslav war takes place against the background of an unstable world order, a world in transition.

The resulting instability and insecurity affects every nation, informing discussions about world trade, the future composition of the UN security council or intervention in the third world. The tension between the Western powers' desire for cooperation, and the need to pursue their own interests, explains why there is such a confused character to international relations today.

A conflict like that in Yugoslavia brings the tensions to the fore. The Western powers have to respond, but in responding they bring out their differences of interest. Each then tries to impose its own agenda, while trying to minimise disagreements. The effect is always to increase Western interference, and so raise the stakes in the war.

The tragedy of the peoples of the former Yugoslavia is that they have become the pawns in a Great Power game which threatens to destroy them.

Maniacal journalists and experts are working up a muck sweat over the mutilation of horses.

Andrew Calcutt reports

‘When I saw her lying there I thought she was ill. But I felt her and she was already cold and stiff. Then I noticed a stab wound in her neck.’ Evidence from a murder trial? Extract from a Raymond Chandler novel? No, this is the *Daily Telegraph* quoting horse-owner Robert Broderick on the death of his mare, Mountbatten.

Never mind the starving or the casualties of war—these are mere humans. The British press has become obsessed with the spate of 30 injuries to horses in Hampshire and Buckinghamshire. From the locals to the nationals, journalists have had a field day.

‘Pregnant horse falls victim to mutilators.’ (London *Evening Standard*) ‘And he [the attacker] will either be caught in *flagrante delicto* by a passer-by, or in a pool of his own blood having met his match in the paddock.’ (*Bucks Herald*) ‘Sick Ripper maims pregnant mare.’ (*Daily Express*) ‘There is talk of vigilantes taking the law into their own hands if the perpetrator is caught.’ (*Guardian*) ‘The nocturnal menace in the fields and yards across the south of England.’ (*Daily Telegraph*) ‘Horse attackers “could turn on children”.’ (*Independent*) ‘The most hated men in Britain...uniquely disgusting crimes...a sexual assault on a horse is taboo destruction on an awesome scale.’ (*Sunday Times*).

Mutilation common

‘Uniquely disgusting’? Set against the record of barbarism in the twentieth century, that is a remarkable claim. Especially when any rural magistrates’ clerk will tell you that mutilation of animals—for sexual and other purposes—is fairly common in the British countryside. The only sceptical article, in the *Independent on Sunday*, suggested that many of the ‘Ripper’ wounds could have been caused by horses kicking each other. The hysteria surrounding the recent injuries is the only truly ‘awesome’ aspect of the affair.

The broadsheets have gone to bizarre lengths to discuss the ‘horse Ripper’ in seriously heavy-weight fashion. The *Guardian* asked whether the attacks were linked to the occult, and provided a social history of attacks on farm animals. In the manner of *Silence of the Lambs*, other quality papers built up psychological profiles of the horse attacker(s), although their expert diagnoses were less than convincing.

Dr Colin Brewer: ‘He probably has a history of some sort of psychological illness. But then there are lots of weird people in any community.’ Clinical psychologist Mike Berry: ‘it is quite

clearly something between him and the horse.’ Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals psychologist Richard Ryder: ‘this sort of behaviour can attract followers. On the other hand, he could be a lone operator.’ Former Broadmoor chief psychologist Tony Black: ‘he could be getting these [messages] from television or telepathy, God, the devil, Mohammed or space people.’ Professor David Canter was suitably unimpressed by ‘pseudo-psychoanalytic discussion’. ‘Perhaps he has just ended a relationship with a goat and has displaced his anger on to horses’, he mocked.

Why did the British press ride this story for so much more than its worth? Perhaps they had some encouragement from the more publicity-conscious elements in the police force. Here was a chance for the police to appear alongside wounded horses and distraught owners. Ignoring the advice of a *Hampshire Chronicle* reader, who said that a flock of geese is the best possible deterrent, they seized the

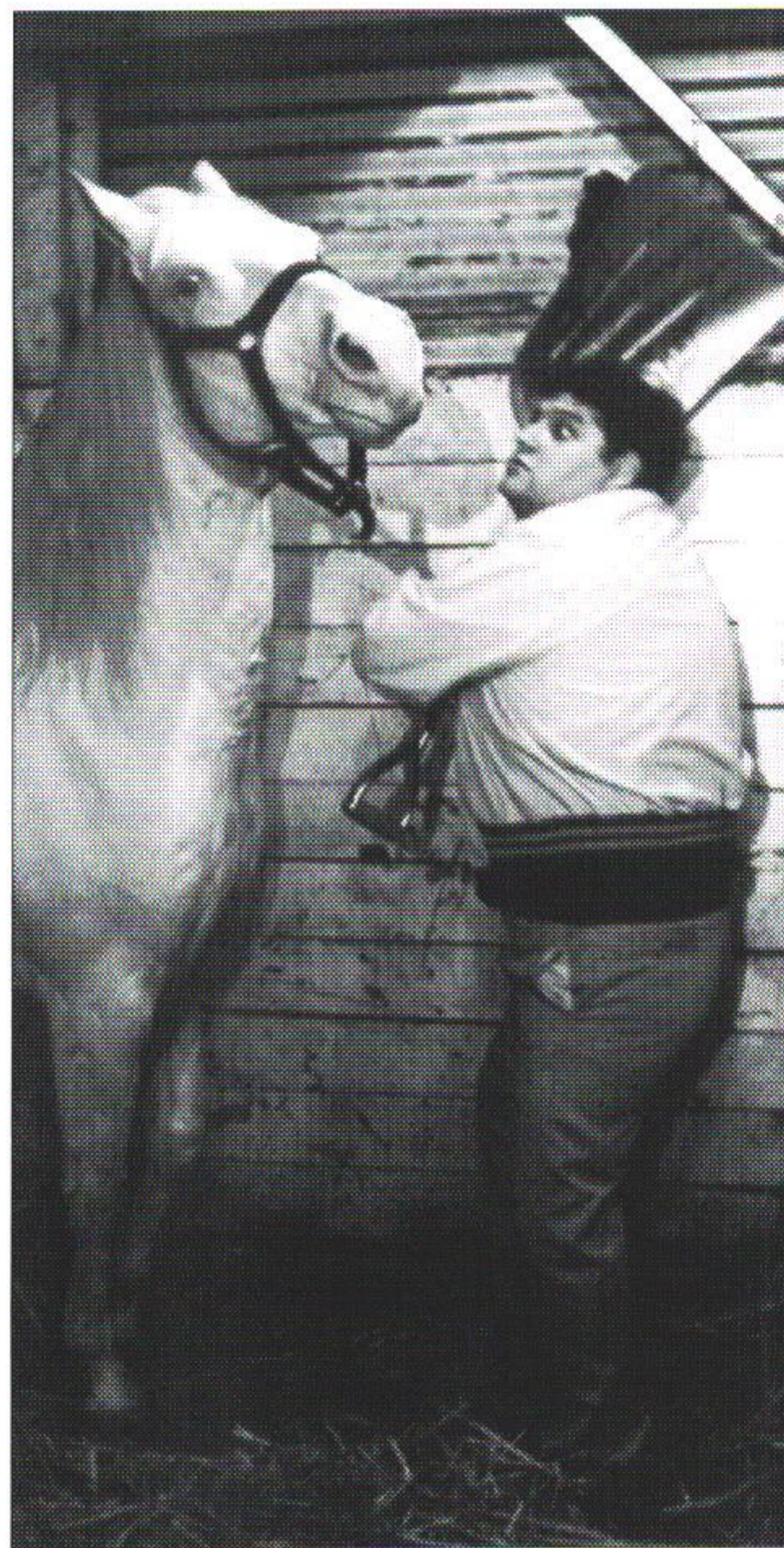


photo-opportunity to pose as defenders of the farmyard. This was the combined ‘human interest’/law and order angle which editors jumped fences to print.

Gleefully they informed us that the hunt for the horse attacker(s) had acquired ‘the status of a murder inquiry’, with incident rooms in Alton, Winchester and Thame. Many papers carried a photofit picture of a man the police wanted to interview. The *Daily Telegraph* was the only one to admit that the man was thought to have interfered with a cow in October 1990—he may never have been near a horse. Wilfully misleading? Or perhaps the defenders of the farmyard and their pet journalists have not yet learned to distinguish one animal from another.

The hype of the ‘horse Ripper’ is genuine in one respect: it accurately reflects the mood of disquiet among the British middle classes today.

Paranoia rife

‘Everyone’s worried now. They’re thinking, “could it be the neighbour?”’, said owner John Othen. ‘Horsey people’ are concerned for their womenfolk: ‘what would happen to my youngest daughter if she came across somebody with a Stanley knife in the stable?’ The *Guardian* reported that ‘people reconsider unusual lesions...once dismissed as innocent injuries’. Paranoia is rife, with the working class as bogey man. The *Sunday Times* noted ‘the prevailing pop-psychological theory...that the assaults are the work of a sacked stableboy’. The *Guardian* agreed that ‘there may be some perverted notion that horse-owning belongs to the privileged minority, especially if it transpires that he or they have been dismissed...’. The vengeful stableboy at the bottom of the garden stalks the fevered imagination of the insecure middle classes.

The ‘horse Ripper’ panic in the Home Counties is a sign of our times. With everything from the British economy to the royal family apparently falling apart, there is a lot of frustration and bitterness among the British middle classes today. But the decline of political life means that there is no obvious way of expressing it. As a consequence, we are left with a permanent sense of public outrage looking for an outlet. In October, the Cheltenham ladies marched against pit-killer Michael Heseltine. Now the middle classes are expending their nervous energy on the ‘horse Ripper’.

They are buying sensor lights, fitting alarms, forming Horsewatch schemes, offering rewards, and sleeping in stables with their horses. Stiff upper lips are much in evidence. ‘I’m not going to give in to these people’, Mrs Langlands Pearse told the *Daily Telegraph* after her horses’ tails were docked by an intruder. The *Daily Express* commended ‘two terrified horses [which] put up such a struggle that eventually the attackers fled without sexually assaulting them’. This is surely an example of the Dunkirk spirit that might yet save Britain from the knacker’s yard. ●

Horsing around

Hidden side of the Yugoslav war



THE PICTURES THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE

The British government has banned an exhibition of photographs showing atrocities committed against Serbs in the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. *Living Marxism* went to Serbia to get the full story and some of the pictures from the forbidden exhibition. They are published in this special 12-page section.

The Belgrade-based exhibition was banned by the Department of Trade and Industry on 13 January 1993, under sanctions imposed on Serbia by the United Nations. Croatian and Muslim groups from the former Yugoslavia have been

allowed to stage their own exhibitions of atrocity photographs in Britain without hindrance.

Living Marxism takes no side in the Yugoslav conflict. But we have sought to expose the distorted way in which this war has been presented to people in the West. In particular, we have opposed the dishonest campaign to demonise and scapegoat the Serbs—a campaign which the British ban on the exhibition has reinforced.

Publishing these pictures is part of *Living Marxism's* attempt to help set the record straight. Judge for yourself who is telling the truth.

The forbidden exhibition



When she started working on a project about Serbs killed in the Second World War for the Serbian Academy of Sciences in 1990, Bojana Isakovic (above) never imagined that two years later she would stage an exhibition about Serbs killed in a new war.

The original project involved recording the excavation and disinterment of the bones of thousands of Serbs killed and thrown into pits by the Croatian Ustashe regime in the Second World War. 'But when war broke out in 1991, I just turned towards recording the current developments', says Isakovic. The site where the bones were buried was destroyed by the Croats during the current war. All that remains for posterity are the photographs in Isakovic's exhibition (see picture, p22).

Intended as an 'encounter between the living and the dead Serbs', the exhibition opened at the Museum of Applied Arts in Belgrade on 29 September 1992. Isakovic says that it is a challenge to all those who want to bury the past or rewrite history to suit their purposes in the present: 'Croatia is trying to sanitise its history. So is Germany. Croatia is simply following in the footsteps of Germany. Who was the first to mention the "concentration camps" in Bosnia? Germany. And now Germany wants some kind of Nuremberg trial for the Serbs.'

Isakovic feels the British ban on the exhibition is typical of the attitude of the Western powers which she blames for the disintegration of Yugoslavia. She says her pictures should be shown because they tell an untold story about the Yugoslav war.

'It is understandable that the Americans and Europeans don't want to show our pictures to their people—because they are the authors of these pictures.

'I think it is Europe that is under a blockade. We have the opportunity on our TV to watch Sky, BBC and CNN all night long, so we know what is going on in Europe and the United States—but you don't know what is going on here.

'For two years, official England has been involved in a kind of propaganda against the Serbs, or at least it has been hiding the truth. If people in Britain saw the exhibition they would start asking questions. And I don't think the British government wants this.'

● Bojana Isakovic is the organiser of the exhibition, 'Genocide Against the Serbs'



dti

Thank you for your fax of 12 January to Mrs Roberts. I shall reply on her behalf.

I should draw your attention to operative paragraph 8(a) of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 757 which states that "all states shall suspend... cultural exchanges and visits involving persons or groups officially sponsored by or representing... Serbia and Montenegro".

On the assumption that permission is required I should advise you that permission is denied. Furthermore, it appears that to stage the exhibition in the UK would involve acts prohibited without a licence by articles 5(1) and (2) of the Serbia and Montenegro (United Nations Sanctions) Order 1992 and would be contrary to United Nations sanctions. I should advise you that a licence would not be granted.

Roy Crouch
Overseas Trade Division 2/3
Bay 653

(Above) How the Department of Trade and Industry banned the Belgrade exhibition from being shown in Britain

A selective silence

When the British government slapped a sanctions ban on a photo exhibition showing atrocities against the Serbs, Joan Phillips went to Belgrade to get the full story—and the photographs

It is embarrassing being British in Belgrade these days; embarrassing trying to explain to angry Serbs why the British media tells so many lies about them; embarrassing trying to explain why they are the only people in the former Yugoslavia being made to suffer Western sanctions.

It is even worse being a Western journalist in Belgrade; sitting in a press conference with Krajina's president, Goran Hadzic, and listening to the Serbs being assailed by other journalists for wrongdoing in Krajina when their own people have just been massacred in their hundreds by Croatian forces.

Krajina is a Serbian enclave in Croatia where the Serbs are in a majority. In March 1992, the Serbs of Krajina were placed under



A Serbian girl, suffocated to death in PVC and stuffed in a mechanic's pit, Borovo-naselje, November 1991

the protection of United Nations peacekeepers. In late January 1993, however, the Croats launched a series of military offensives to seize back land controlled by the Serbs in Krajina.

To most Serbs, the foreign media's coverage of what happened in Krajina was incomprehensible. How could it be that the Croats could rampage through Serbian villages killing their inhabitants, and yet the Serbs were the ones who ended up getting a bad press? According to Hadzic, Croatian forces had killed 830 Serbian civilians and 150 soldiers after a week of fighting. Yet foreign reporters had little to say about any of this.

Instead, they denounced the Serbs for stubbornly holding on to Krajina (where they

have always lived and where they make up a majority); for seizing weapons from arms depots (did they expect the Serbs to confront the laser-guided missiles of the Croats with pitchforks?); and for sabotaging a hydroelectric dam (which developed problems only after it was seized by Croatian forces, and was then miraculously made safe).

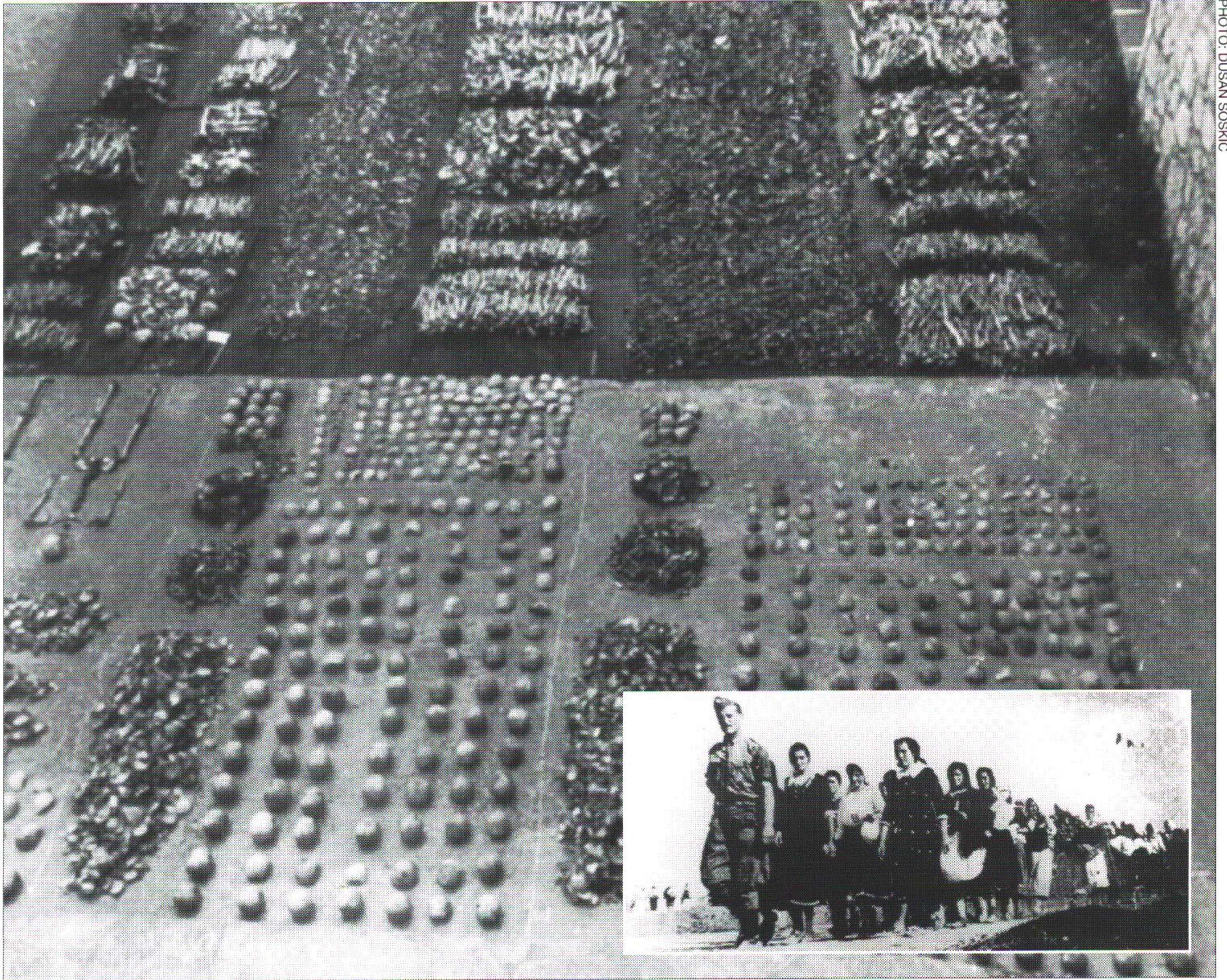
The Western media preferred to speculate about a possible attack involving Serbian troops from Belgrade, rather than condemn the real attack by Croatian troops from Zagreb.

Media coverage of what happened in Krajina is a case of what Bojana Isakovic calls 'selective silence'. Isakovic is the organiser of the Belgrade exhibition, 'Genocide Against

the Serbs', which has been banned in Britain. One of the aims of the exhibition, which opened in Belgrade five months ago, is to draw attention to the 'selective silence' of the world's media about the suffering of the Serbs in this war and the Second World War.

'Victims' is the word stamped on the front cover of the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition. 'There are many other victims', says Isakovic. 'They are Croats and Muslims, we don't deny that. I am sorry for all victims.' What she objects to is the way in which the media has managed to sustain a deafening silence about Serbian victims of the Yugoslav conflict.

Look at the photographs on these pages of *Living Marxism*. You see dead Serbian ►



The bones of Serbs thrown into pits by the Croatian fascists, the Ustashe, during the Second World War, just before they were buried in a crypt at Prebilovci, Herzegovina, in June 1991

Serbian women on their way to Jasenovac concentration camp in Bosnia, where up to 600 000 Serbs, Gypsies and Jews are estimated to have been killed during the Second World War

civilians. Yet to read the media reports of the war in Yugoslavia anybody would think that there were no Serbian victims. That impression can only be reinforced by the ban on Bojana Isakovic's exhibition coming to Britain.

The day I left Britain for Belgrade my mind was on what was happening in Krajina, so my attention was caught by the headline on the back page of the *Guardian*: 'Croats continue offensive as UN investigators discover mass grave' (26 January). Thinking that a mass grave of Serbian dead must have just been discovered in Krajina, I scanned the article, only to discover that the grave was in Vukovar, the dead were Croats and they had been killed more than a year ago.

In a war which has exacted a high toll of suffering on all sides, how could anybody argue that the massacre of one group of civilians is more or less important than that of another? Yet this is effectively what the Western media has managed to do. Whether intended or not, the *Guardian's* juxtaposition of the two stories had the effect of cancelling out what is happening to Serbs in Krajina today and focusing attention on what happened to Croats in Vukovar more than a year ago.

What exactly did happen in Vukovar when war was raging in Croatia in late 1991? Thanks to the media, Vukovar will be remembered as a symbol of Serbian aggression. But why did the Serbs destroy Vukovar, when

almost half its population was Serbian? An explanation has never been given. We were left to conclude that the Serbian forces who laid waste to Vukovar were evil men.

To understand what happened in Vukovar we have to fill in the background to the media images. The Belgrade exhibition helps to redress the balance. The problems there started in spring 1990, long before the first shell fell, when Franjo Tudjman was elected president of Croatia on a nationalist ticket. From this point on, the Serbian minority in Croatia had good cause to fear for its future. Tudjman's government began by removing Serbian street names, and ended up by removing Serbs—from their jobs, their houses and their land. (Continued on p27) ►

Mira Kalanj, a Serbian civilian from Gospic in Croatia, was killed and burned by Croatian forces between 16 and 18 October 1991. Her husband, Duro, was machine-gunned in the back and then burned

PHOTO: MIHAILO BATA JUSOMIC



A family photograph of Mira and Duro Kalanj with the eldest of their two sons



(Above) As Croatian forces withdrew from Vukovar on 15 and 16 November 1991, they dragged Serbian civilians from the cellars where they were hiding, and massacred them. These Serbs were axed to death in a courtyard, after being dragged from the cellar at 74 Nikola Demonja Street in Borovo-naselje, near Vukovar

(Top right) This three-year old Serbian boy was shot dead while hiding in the cellar at 72 Nikola Demonja Street. His mother and father, Sladana and Miroslav Cecavac, were also killed



PHOTO: GORAN MIKIC



PHOTO: GORAN MIKIC



PHOTO: MIHALLO BATA JUGOVIC

(Above) Between 16 and 18 October 1991, 24 Serbian civilians from Gospic in Croatia were slaughtered. Croatian forces killed the 15 men and nine women with guns, knives and sledgehammers, doused the bodies with petrol and set them on fire. From October 1991 to February 1992, more than 500 Serbian civilians from the Gospic area disappeared without trace

**LIVING
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This photograph was seized from Saudi Arabian fighters captured in Crni Vrh near Teslic, Bosnia. A Muslim soldier displays the severed head of Blagoje Blagojevic, a Serb from the village of Jasenovce near Teslic





Stipo Kraljevic took this photograph of his fellow Croatian Ustashe soldiers with the severed head of a Serbian villager from Ivanjska near Banja Luka, December 1942



A Croatian Ustashe soldier with the severed head of a Serbian Chetnik

◀ (Continued from p22) In and around Vukovar, where Serbs made up 37 per cent of the population, and Croats 44 per cent, trouble began almost as soon as Tudjman was elected. Following Zagreb's example, state and private firms began sacking Serbs from their jobs. Tensions increased in Borovo Selo, on the outskirts of Vukovar, as Croatian militants began intimidating Serbs by bombing their homes, restaurants and shops. Signs appeared in Borovo saying 'No dogs or Serbs'.

In the climate of fear and insecurity generated by Tudjman's nationalist policies, Serbs began flooding out of Croatia into Bosnia and Serbia well before the war began. Bojana Isakovic's exhibition shows photographs of

Serbian refugees leaving Borovo in May 1991. The war in Croatia did not start until July 1991. By the time the battle for Vukovar began, Serbs were already living in fear of their lives.

Yet somewhere along the line, the media managed to turn the story around. Vukovar, home to 31 000 Serbs as well as 36 000 Croats, became a symbol of Croatian suffering. Everybody seems to have forgotten what the photographs on these pages show: when the Yugoslav federal army marched into Vukovar it found the streets strewn with the corpses of Serbian civilians slaughtered by the Croats.

There is little doubt that Serbian irregulars took their revenge on Croatian civilians once they had control of the city. But the mass grave

containing dead Croats at Ovcara outside Vukovar should not obscure the fact that the whole of Vukovar became a mass grave for Serbs while the town was under Croatian control.

The story of the persecution of the Serbs in Croatia has still not been told. Before the war, there were 600 000 Serbs living in Croatia. Now there are less than 100 000—and their position is far from secure as events in Krajina testify.

Meanwhile, cities in the front line of the civil war in Croatia, such as Osijek, Karlovac and Sisak, are now to all intents and purposes Serb-free. The same is true of towns on the Dalmatian coast, such as Zadar, Split and Sibenik. In towns like Gospic, where ►



A Serbian soldier helps a wounded comrade, Vukovar 1991.
He was killed going back into the combat zone to rescue another.
The wounded soldier was later killed in action

hundreds of Serbs disappeared without trace while others were butchered and burned, there are no Serbs left. Over half of Zagreb's large Serbian community has left the city.

While the Western media has maintained a selective silence about what has happened to the Serbs, it has continually broadcast what the Serbs are supposed to have done to everybody else.

If the Serbs commit an atrocity or break any rule it is certain that we will hear every detail. The same cannot be said about the other combatants in this war. There are 40 000 troops of the Croatian army stationed outside the state of Croatia, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in defiance of a UN ban on the deployment of foreign (non-UN) forces. We hear nothing of this, and

Croatia has been subject to no sanction. Yet Serbia, which has no regular forces in Bosnia, is constantly accused of being the aggressor there.

When the West can find nothing to pin on the Serbs, it has no qualms about making things up. Take the row about the no-fly zone over Bosnia. The Americans have constantly accused the Serbs of violating the UN flight ban, despite plentiful evidence that Yugoslav air force planes have not made a single flight in the no-fly zone since it was imposed on 9 October 1992.

UN observers are stationed at all airports in the federal republic of Yugoslavia, and have access to all flight plans and planes. Awacs airborne surveillance systems based in

Hungary and the Adriatic have also confirmed that Serbian aircraft have been abiding by the ban. Meanwhile, Croatian planes violate the UN resolution as a matter of course. America's insistence on enforcing the no-fly ban clearly has less to do with violations than with giving the Serbs a hard time.

Black propaganda as well as bias has distorted media reporting. For example, in 1991 news reports informed us that Dubrovnik's old city had been razed to the ground by the Serbian forces besieging the city. Now we find that Dubrovnik's old city survived the siege intact. The only building completely destroyed was the Serbian Orthodox church, which was fire-bombed from within. The real damage done was to the reputation of the Serbs.



The corpse of Milorad Dekić, a Serbian policeman from Osijek, was found in the Danube near Susek (ID card below)

Briton 'planted black propaganda'

Robert Allen Lofthouse, from Nottingham, claims to have supplied the British and American media with black propaganda against the Serbs in Bosnia, according to the Belgrade news agency Tanjug.

Lofthouse was captured by Serbian troops on Mount Majevisa in northern Bosnia at the end of January. They claim he was fighting as a mercenary. According to the reports from Belgrade, Lofthouse has admitted supplying both Roy Gutman of *US Newsday* and the BBC with false information about camps, rapes, 'ethnic cleansing' and other atrocities carried out by the Serbs in Bosnia.

Lofthouse is said to have sent false reports and rigged TV footage to Gutman once a month, and to the BBC once a week, with the help of men working for a Muslim intelligence officer called Amir. For instance, he is reported to have admitted telling Gutman and the BBC that the Bosnian Serbs were using war gases in September 1992.

Gutman's reporting for the *Guardian* in early August 1992 certainly lacked the ring of authenticity. On 4 August, Gutman reported from Slavonski Samac, Croatia, that people in Serbian camps across the River Sava in Bosanski Samac were being tortured, killed and made to eat their own faeces. His report was said to be based on the (uncorroborated) testimonies of former prisoners.

On 5 August, Gutman reported from an unknown location that bodies had been cremated and turned into animal feed at a Serbian camp in Brcko.

On 6 August, Gutman reported from Zagreb on how 'Serbian guards kept their captives "in open pit"'. This was a tale of alleged atrocities at Omarska, told by 'Hajca'. We were told that Hajca 'did not witness the killings himself but on one occasion saw eight corpses covered with blankets'.

The story of Lofthouse's confession has not been reported in the British media. Doubtless they would argue that his black propaganda claims about Gutman are unsubstantiated. But so too were most of Gutman's stories from Bosnia. The *Guardian* was happy to print fantastic tales of people being turned into animal feed in Serbian camps. So why not a word about any of this?

Or what about the case of the emaciated man pictured in the *Independent* as a starving inmate of a Serbian detention camp (14 August 1992)? The caption failed to point out that the man was all skin and bones because he was dying of cancer. The *Independent* apologised the next day, but the damage had already been done, and probably nobody saw the correction hidden away at the bottom of an inside page. What we were never told was that the man was a Serb, whose daughter identified him after seeing Western media reports.

Some might object that it is easy to make mistakes, especially in the heat of war. But how many mistakes does the media have to make before it becomes clear that there

is something more than accidental about the distortions in reports of the war in Yugoslavia?

Last summer's reporting of non-existent Serbian 'death camps' in Bosnia is the most glaring example of how the media has helped to criminalise the Serbs. The emotive pictures and reports by ITN's Penny Marshall and the *Guardian's* Ed Vulliamy from Omarska and Trnopolje in August 1992 led to comparisons between the Serbian detention camps and Nazi concentration camps. Yet on BBC 2's *Late Show*, in January 1993, both reporters tried to suggest that the 'death camp' allusions had nothing to do with them. The *Observer's* Victoria Clark even had the cheek to blame 'a voyeuristic public' for the excesses of the media.

Now the media has moved on from discovering 'death camps' to inventing 'rape camps'. Serbs have been accused of 'systematically' raping up to 60 000 Muslim women. Muslim women who gave birth in November and December 1992 say they were held in camps and raped by Serbs, even though the war in Bosnia only started at the end of April 1992. Are the Serbs really such a devilish race that their children are born three months ahead of time?

The way in which distortion and downright lies have been accepted as news about the war in Yugoslavia is symptomatic of our uncritical times. It is time to demand the truth. ●



A Serb from Banija, killed while riding his bike, September 1991

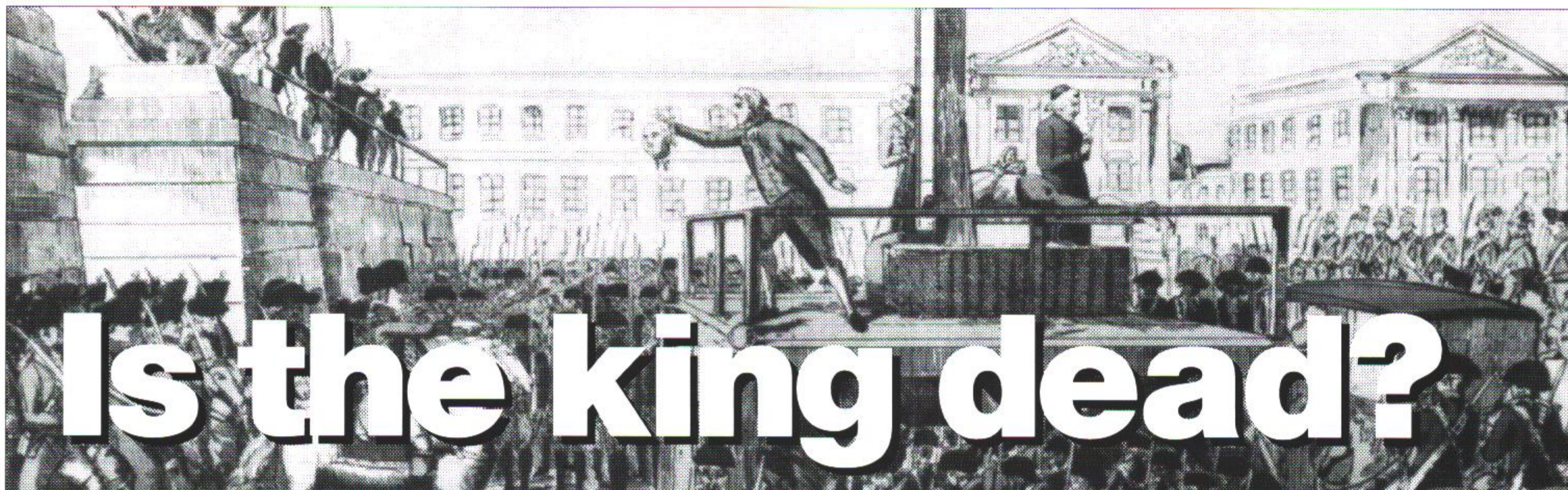
A SELECTIVE SILENCE

CENSORSHIP AND BIAS IN THE YUGOSLAV WAR

A selection of photographs from the forbidden exhibition, and materials related to the ban, can be seen at The Edge gallery and bookshop from Thursday 25 February. Phone for details.

THE EDGE, 92 Cromer Street, London WC1 Tel (071) 278 9755 Fax (071) 833 5045

**THE
EDGE**



Is the king dead?

Reports of a royalist revival in France have been greatly exaggerated. Richard Christiansen reports from Paris

In some respects, the French are lucky. They may share problems of unemployment, poverty and repression with their British neighbours, but they are at least spared the inanity of Charles' liaisons with Camilla being considered worthy of high-level debate. It may seem that 'Lady Di' is never off the cover of *Paris Match*, but that is because the French enjoy a bit of gossip as much as we do and like to laugh at dusty old Britain's antiquated traditions.

They can count themselves relatively lucky, as 200 years ago the leaders of the French Revolution, under pressure from the insurgent masses, dealt with the opulent and bloated royal body by cutting off its head. French royalism has since enjoyed periodic revivals, particularly in the nineteenth century, when the vexed question of ruling the unruly raised its head. But by and large, France's rulers have felt more secure singing the praises of 'Liberty, equality, fraternity', the better to disguise the real, privileged nature of society. Consequently, royalists have tended to get a rather bad press.

On with his head

At least that was how it seemed until the week before the two hundredth anniversary of Louis XVI's beheading was due to be commemorated on 21 January. Suddenly the French press was full of intellectuals wrestling with the question 'Should the king have been killed?'. The Louis XVI commemoration was shunned by most representatives of the French state. Yet when I arrived at work at the Place de la Concorde on the day, 5000 people had got there before me. So is France going royalist?

Well, not really. It is important to put these things into some perspective. Most of those commemorating the event were firmly in the senior citizen category. For the purposes of the event, the city council had allowed a few square metres at the edge of the Place to be given over for people to lay wreaths and white lilies. It was a bizarre scene. When the organiser of the mourning asked journalists to respect the 'sacred ground' during the ceremony, as cars tore past on their way to work, it looked as if they were trying to conduct a burial in the middle of a motorway.

Whatever has created renewed interest in the execution of the king, it is not the vibrancy of a mass movement to restore the monarchy.

Writing in *Libération*, Jacques Rancière suggested that the debate wasn't really about the execution of Louis, 'a transhistorical event which is always there to interrogate us'. Rather, it related to the fact that the French 'are at a juncture where thinking through what a "good democracy" is means one that is not linked to revolutions and decapitations' (20 January 1993). Or, as the royalist Jean-Claude Casanova put it, the debate reflects a search for a 'lucid and serene version of the past' (*L'Express*, 14 January).

The turning point in this discussion came in 1989, when the bicentenary of the French Revolution coincided with the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Historians of all persuasions seized the moment to condemn the French, Russian and all other revolutions as the work of bloodthirsty maniacs which could only lead to totalitarianism. Since then, the intellectual climate has been dominated by a horror of anything that smacks of radicalism. In this climate people can become more receptive to wildly distorted views of history; so if it was only the revolutionary masses' bloodlust that cost Louis XVI his life, perhaps he wasn't such a bad chap after all. And this is indeed, from left to right, what the finest minds have been saying.

Louis XVI did implement a lot of minor reforms, particularly in response to the demands of the third estate—aspitant capitalists whose economic ambitions were held back by feudal ties. But Louis XVI could not implement the abolition of feudal privilege and repression which the masses demanded without cutting his own throat. So the revolutionaries did it for him. They disposed of the king, not so much because of his personal characteristics as because he represented a powerful rallying point for the defenders of the old order. As Danton said, it was not a question of judging the king, but of killing him.

Today, however, Louis is being judged as a progressive with liberal ideas on race, the Jewish question and (occasionally) women's

rights. One West Indian royalist present at the commemoration felt sure that 'he would have abolished slavery'. But the king's high level of culture could not save him from the 'rabble', and so he became another senseless victim of the revolutionary terror.

The revisionism that took off in 1989 has led to some outrageous claims for Louis XVI's progressiveness. (The best that anybody could honestly say of him was that he was a bumbling fool caught in the wrong place at the wrong moment in history.) But most of the new lawyers for the king's defence would still describe themselves as republicans. It is just that, as Alain Decaux of the Académie Française put it in the right-wing *Figaro Magazine*, 'Louis was one of the necessary links in the long chain of kings, emperors and republics that have made France' (23 January 1993).

'The sacred being'

The 'serene' view of history does not want violent breaks with the past, it wants harmony and continuity. For Casanova this is important because 'with Louis XVI, the sacred being that incarnated French unity disappeared forever'. He may say that because he is a royalist, but he has a point in relating the renewed debate about Louis to the problem of disunity.

For the past half-century, right wingers in France as elsewhere have sought to unite against the 'red menace'. Now, deprived of an external focus for unity, they fragment further. This can be seen not just among royalists, but within the mainstream right which is having enormous difficulties agreeing what to do when the Socialist government loses the March elections. This uneasiness pervades all sides of the French political establishment, to the point where they believe the whole nation is coming apart. Issues which have divided the French suddenly become important again. The problem is, do they try to set the record straight and defend Louis, or do they keep quiet for fear of provoking more division? And so the debate goes on.

The old royalists can congratulate themselves for having gained five minutes of respectability. But their quaint battiness will not win any big battles. Although polls suggest that only nine per cent of the French today might condemn Louis to death, fighting for funny wigs and Fergie clones is not a priority. Yet, in the search for a new way of projecting the French identity into the future, even an idea as outdated and ludicrous as a royal family can briefly become good coin again. ●

'Political correctness' is in vogue in Clinton's America. But James Heartfield finds that PC is less of a challenge to oppression than an accompaniment to it

It's official: America is PC, 'politically correct'. President Bill Clinton has an ethnically diverse cabinet that 'looks like America'. He has enraged the military with his campaign promise to stop discrimination against homosexuals in the US forces. And January's inauguration featured a gay marching band.

Clinton himself is PC. He is the first president to have attended family therapy sessions, as well as birthing classes. He listens carefully to his wife, Hillary, a successful woman in her own right. In his campaign speeches Clinton warned that America was becoming too exclusive in its attacks on minorities, 'them', to the point where 'we've nearly themmed ourselves to death'. His appointments of black and Hispanic officials, and of more women to senior posts, suggest that he is out to redress the balance.

Is a PC presidency a good thing? All the noises from the White House suggest a kinder, more caring America, out to put a reputation for racial strife and moralising 'family values' behind it. On closer inspection, however, political correctness looks like little more than a new etiquette to accompany oppression. PC affects to compensate for discrimination, but in reality it trivialises the problem.

New niceties

Political correctness first made an impact on college campuses. To be PC, as in 'the politically correct thing to say is...', meant that you observed the new niceties of respect for ethnic and gender diversity. On campus, terms that had become tainted were shunned for not being politically correct: 'black' gave way to 'African-American', or the more poetic 'people of colour'. Feminists objected to forms of address that were considered patronising and over-familiar.

College authorities, keen to keep the peace, formalised the new manners in speech codes. The anodyne preamble to the college code of conduct would embrace such values as diversity and respect for difference. The terms now considered derogatory were banned. Famously, the University of Connecticut even ruled 'inappropriately directed laughter' out of order.

American conservatives protested that PC speech codes

were the 'McCarthyism of the left'. PC, they warned, would engulf the country, until it was impossible to speak freely for fear of the PC thought police. Today they must think their nightmare has come true. Yet, while Clinton's election has put the stamp of approval upon PC, racism and 'family values' remain secure in the USA. Why?

In politically correct speak, tortuous circumlocutions abound, everything is a euphemism. Not disabled, but 'differently abled', as though command of a wheelchair was just another kind of an ability to walking; not black or poor, but 'culturally disadvantaged'. When Queer Nation 'outed' Clinton

vote, hold property independent of their husbands, and to divorce. Chivalry and etiquette not only existed alongside the oppression of women, they reinforced it. The special treatment women could expect in polite society only underscored their inequality in society at large.

In Clinton's America newly framed moral codes dictate respect for ethnic diversity on the one hand, and for women on the other. But the special treatment that ethnic minorities and women can expect among the politically correct only serves to fix their inequality in American society.

Political correctness has transformed the American women's movement from a campaign for equality into one of respect for womanhood. The overwhelming concerns of feminism have become derogatory forms of address, sexual harassment and 'date rape'. All of these features of women's vulnerability arise out of a position of inequality in society. But political correctness is not about fighting social inequality.

PC campaigns which focus upon problems like the sexual harassment

The PC

appointee Donna Shalala, she was in a quandary—how to deny the charge (she's not that PC) without suggesting that she thought homosexuality a disadvantage. She said that she 'did not have a different lifestyle'.

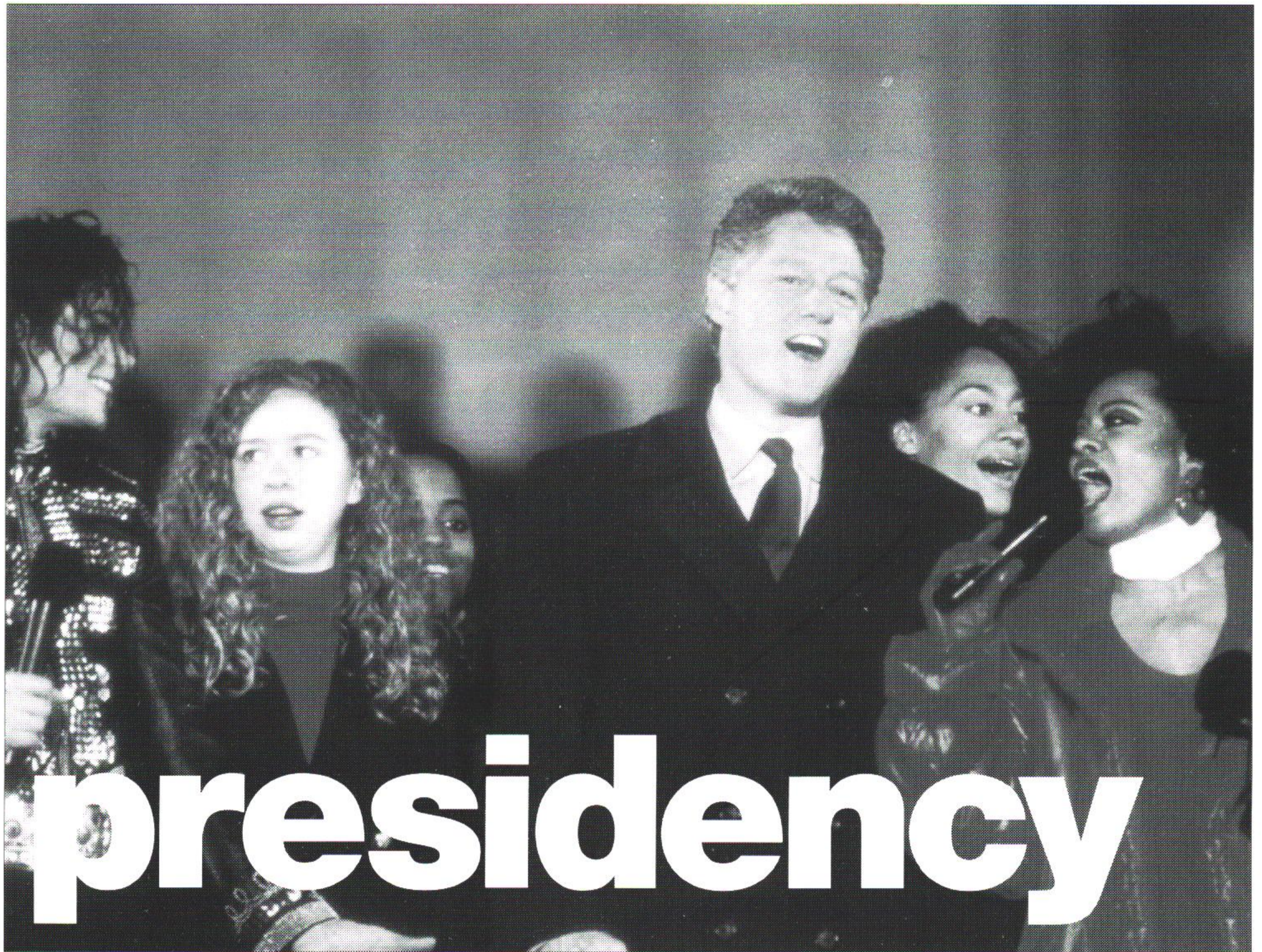
The strangled terminology of PC-speak shows that it is concerned with appearance, not substance. Like the awkward host who does not want to offend a guest by drawing attention to an ill-fitting toupee, the politically correct brazen the issue out with empty compliments. By implication the problems of discrimination are in the eye of the beholder alone and not problems of society at all. Oppression is made a trivial matter of the prejudices of a few uncouth individuals who lack the manners to make allowances for the differently advantaged.

In Victorian England moral codes dictated respect and protection for womankind. A gentleman should open a door for a lady, lift his hat to her and certainly never curse in her presence, or worse still impose his unwanted attentions upon her. At the same time women were denied rights to

of professional women only serve to trivialise the issue of social inequality. Indeed it is possible to argue that such campaigns serve to reinforce the perception that women just are the weaker sex. The PC demand for special respect for women is shared by conservatives who think it uncouth to take advantage. PC meets family values.

Politically correct respect for ethnic diversity also comes with a heavy price, supplanting another aspiration for equality, racial equality. The emphasis on respecting diversity distracts from the failure to achieve real equality of income or status for American blacks. Token political representation in city administrations has little impact when economic power has been moved out to the suburbs. Affirmative action programmes guaranteeing diversity at work only confirm the expectation that blacks require special assistance. More importantly, they do not work.

Political correctness not only trivialises oppression, it can strengthen the hands of the middle



presidency

class moralisers. Americans certainly balked at the sort of right-wing moralising that dominated last year's Republican Party platform with its near-hysterical demand for a return to 'family values'. But the Clinton administration promises its own brand of politically correct sermonising against the immoral and uncouth poor.

Tipper Gore, wife of vice-president Al, has led the campaign against sexually explicit lyrics in rock and rap music. She persuaded record companies to put stickers on the front of records with offensive words. All of this was done in the name of women, as many rap records carried sexist lyrics. Not surprisingly, however, 'offensive' was defined according to middle class values, and attention quickly turned to Ice T's 'Cop Killer' and other 'inflammatory' black music. Demands for censorship followed, backed by such champions of PC as Dan Quayle. Ice T wrote Tipper a song, 'KKK Bitch'.

By reposing social problems in terms of personal responsibilities, PC tends to reinforce the conservatives' argument that the poor are to blame

for their own poverty. The conditions of the poor are seen as a product of their own prejudices and personal failings rather than conditions arising out of society.

Personal blame

The way that political correctness turns to personal blame is illustrated by the stereotype of black sexism. Condemnations of sexism find a ready audience if the perpetrator is black. The trial of boxer Mike Tyson for rape, the senate hearings of judge Clarence Thomas over the sexual harassment of Anita Hill, all fit the politically correct stereotype. Black men are held responsible for the breakdown of the black family because they lack a sense of personal responsibility and respect for women. Bill Clinton endorsed this view in his campaign promise to force absentee fathers (popularly known as black men) to shoulder financial responsibility for their children.

All of this professed PC concern with the problems faced by black women only serves to present black poverty as the product of personal

irresponsibility on the part of black men, rather than of the failure of the American system.

The example of 'black sexism' shows how political correctness can end up blaming the least powerful people in society for America's problems. The oppression of women is reduced to an issue of personal manners rather than social inequality, and the impoverished black men of the ghetto are found guilty while the authorities get off scot-free. Here the sermonising of the PC lobby joins with plain racism to summon up the caricature of black vulgarity.

Because moralising treats social problems as individual failings, it always tends to reinforce the status quo, and that is as true of PC moralising as it is of the conservatives' family values. The PC preoccupation with language and symbolism reflects its apologetic nature. The Clinton generation of ruling Americans are concerned not with equality, but with covering up the appearance of inequality. The tortuous terminology arises out of attempts to mask the real injustice in American society. ●

Abortion in the USA

Bill Clinton delighted pro-choice campaigners by overturning five pieces of Bush anti-abortion legislation within days of taking office. He rescinded a law banning federal funding of clinics offering abortion counselling, opened the door again to US funding for international family planning programmes and lifted the bans on medical research using fetal tissue.

Feminists breathed a sigh of relief. A year ago it looked as though they were losing the abortion debate in the USA. Last June the supreme court, packed with anti-abortionists by the Reagan and Bush administrations, agreed to review a legal case which would decide whether restrictions on access to abortion imposed by the state of Pennsylvania were constitutional. Many feared that the court might go further and ban abortion altogether.

Massive pro-choice demonstrations besieged Washington. Artists and writers produced bleak portraits of life in a world without legal abortion. Feminists produced videos on safe abortion techniques for underground distribution. Then, to the astonishment of many (especially the anti-abortionists), the court refused to endorse the most important new restrictions and left intact *Roe v Wade*, the 1973 ruling which legalised abortion.

It seemed that the tide was turning in favour of choice. In a poll in *Parade* magazine, 71 per cent of Americans believed that abortion should remain legal and 78 per cent thought that 'pro-lifers' have gone too far in their attempts to stop abortion. Most people are appalled by the bombings of abortion clinics and the tactics of groups like Operation Rescue, who harass women seeking abortions. According to Catholics for a Free Choice, even a majority of Catholics oppose church sanctions against doctors, women or politicians who support abortion.

Kicking themselves

Strident opposition to abortion, with its strong moral message, turned out to be a vote-loser in the presidential election. Republican politicians have since been kicking themselves for making it an issue.

So why the change of mood? Not long ago being against abortion was a must for American politicians of all parties. The last Democratic Party president, Jimmy Carter, went out of his way to declare that he would only favour abortion in the case of rape or incest. George Bush, who was once dubbed 'Rubbers' because of his enthusiastic support for family planning clinics, dropped his own more liberal abortion views when he became Ronald Reagan's running mate in 1980.

Nancy Morton traces the retreat of the 'pro-life' crusade

Opposition to abortion was so widely accepted that some sort of concession to the anti-abortionists became essential for politicians of all political persuasions.

Supporting 'family values' and opposing abortion were important for aspirant politicians as a sort of code for the American way of life. To appeal for traditional family values was to appeal to the traditional way of doing things, an evocation of life as it should be. The all-American family was the bedrock on which society was built, in need of defence against sixties liberals who believed in sex without responsibility and women's rights. Anyone who disagreed wasn't just wrong—they were immoral!

In the eighties opposition to abortion was an important part of the conservative backlash against liberal values. If there were problems in society, the moralists argued, it was because nobody knew the difference between right and wrong. And what issue could be more clear-cut than the sanctity of the unborn? It was time to put America on track again with this most important of issues. Liberals, feminists and all pro-choicers were attacked for trying to undermine the American way. As well as helping to put the Democrats on the defensive, the Republican right's crusade against abortion was also useful in assuring Reagan of the support of the well-organised fundamentalist religious groups.

But there is a big difference between rhetoric and reality. While the rhetoric of restricting abortion could consolidate the 'moral right', its practical consequences were difficult to negotiate.

The decisions to ban the use of Medicaid, (federal-funded healthcare for the poor) for abortion, and to restrict other state funding for abortion services were moral victories that turned sour. The authorities could ban abortion, but they couldn't ban sex and pregnancy. Middle class women could afford to travel and pay for private abortions in clinics in the more liberal states. The restrictions were a problem for the poor who also continued to get pregnant—but now they had to have their babies. The prospect of the increase in births among teenagers, especially black teenagers in the inner cities, filled the middle class moralists with dread. Abortion may be repugnant but teenage motherhood—the expansion of the hated 'underclass'—was seen as even worse.

One in five

Teenage pregnancy is perceived as a big problem in US inner-city areas, with over a million such pregnancies every year. One in five teenage girls already has one child, and a quarter of these will have another within two years. In Baltimore there is an entire high school, the Laurence Taquin School, for students who are pregnant



Battle of the pros and antis: the antis are out of touch with the mood of post-Cold War America

or already have children. Worries about population growth among the poor, especially poor blacks, have prompted legislators in such conservative strongholds as Kansas and Louisiana to propose offering higher welfare payments to women who agree to use the new contraceptive Norplant, a device which is inserted into the arm and lasts up to five years.

Sharp end

The poor were at the sharp end of the abortion cutbacks, but tighter state restrictions began to hit middle class America too. Professional women did not take kindly to the idea that—even if they paid for it—they could not receive abortion advice in state-funded clinics. The notion that in some states an educated woman might require her husband's written permission for an abortion was abhorrent to a generation that had grown up in the sixties. And the consequences of forcing minors to obtain parental permission became tragically apparent.

Karen and Bill Bell from Indiana, were interviewed by the *Times* last year, after their daughter, Becky, died from complications following an illegal abortion. Becky was unable to have an abortion without obtaining her parents' permission—which she would not ask for. Mr Bell admitted that he had supported the change in the law which denied Becky the ability to have a safe, legal abortion, but he now understands its consequences. 'She died for a law

we would have voted for', he said: 'If it was not for that law she could have had a safe and legal abortion.' (5 May 1992) It has become clear to many Americans that being against abortion in principle is one thing, but when it comes down to themselves or their children, they definitely want the facilities to be available.

The pro-lifers' loss of the initiative in the USA has been facilitated by the breakdown of the system of Cold War politics. First Reagan and then Bush were able to use the 'us and them', 'good against evil' framework of Cold War ideology to polarise American politics and put their opponents on the defensive around carefully selected issues. Abortion was one of them. Today, however, it is easier for people to judge issues on their own terms, instead of through the distorting lens provided by Cold War politics. Now being strongly against abortion can even lose you votes.

In November's presidential elections, the more the Republicans banged the moralising anti-abortion drum, the more they appeared strident and out of touch. People were concerned about their livelihoods, and there was little enthusiasm for a resurrection of the 'good versus evil' moral counterpositions which had worked so well for the Republicans in the eighties. Clinton reaped the benefits.

So is the right to have an abortion safe under Clinton? Don't count on it.

Laws banning abortion outright are unlikely, but measures giving the authorities more control over who can and can't have them will continue to trickle through.

Don't trust them

Nor will Clinton be under any public pressure to liberalise abortion controls, whatever his or Hillary's private views. Although most Americans are against outright bans on abortion, public opinion still resists abortion on demand. Polls show that 78 per cent favour a waiting period and support many of the other measures which states have taken to make abortions more difficult to obtain. The anti-abortionists may be on the retreat, but the wider conservative mood in America ensures that most people do not regard the ability to terminate an unwanted pregnancy as a basic right that every woman needs. As long as this is the case, anything can happen.

Clinton and his vice-president, Al Gore are formally in favour of choice. But we should be wary of trusting any politicians with women's rights. 'Rubbers' Bush dropped his principles and oversaw the biggest-ever rollback of abortion rights. The pro-choice Gore voted against government funding for abortion when he was under pressure in congress. Should we have any more confidence in Clinton? ●

'Fettesgate' fall-out

Kirk Williams on a case that has helped to criminalise gay men in Edinburgh

In the early hours of 19 July last year somebody broke into the Fettes headquarters of Lothian and Borders Police in Edinburgh and stole some files from the offices of the Scottish crime squad. It was the start of what became known as 'Fettesgate'.

The fall-out from the affair has included reporters being arrested, a TV documentary being banned by the high court, and all manner of rumours and stories about dirty deals in high places. The most important development, however, is that what began as an embarrassing break-in for the police has become a debate about whether homosexuals can be trusted in public life.

Some of the files stolen were said to include details of an 'alleged homosexual ring' at the heart of the Scottish legal system. As a result, 'Fettesgate' has sparked a virtual witch-hunt against homosexuals, especially those in the legal profession.

Scottish newspapers have wallowed in smut and innuendo: rent boy-and-judge stories (always good for circulation), gutter journalism on the seediness of homosexual life, the words 'gays' and 'criminal' constantly presented as two halves of a whole. Homosexuals who are publicly named are always 'well-known' or 'prominent' on the gay scene, with the implication of promiscuity.

ALF smokescreen

The embarrassing break-in at Fettes (the intruder gained entry to the police HQ through an open window) was initially blamed on the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), since files on ALF activists were said to be missing. But rumours were soon flying that other files had also been taken. Investigations into local supporters of both the Irish republican movement and Loyalist groups were said to be missing. So were details of police surveillance in Lothian Regional Council offices, local pubs and top people's shop Jenners.

As the police came under public criticism they decided to blame the messengers. In dawn raids in Chatham in Kent and Ayr in Scotland they arrested journalists from *Scotland on Sunday* and the *Scottish Sun*. Both newspapers had run stories on the break-in and claimed to have seen some of the stolen files. Newspaper editors were up in arms at police intrusion and harassment.

By early August, however, the press had something else to write about. Stories began to circulate (from 'unnamed sources'), that police believed the ALF angle was a smokescreen. The real intruders were said to be 'criminals on the fringes of the Edinburgh gay community'.

The papers were now less interested in who stole the files than in what was in them. The word was that they contained police reports on an alleged homosexual ring in the Scottish legal system, a 'magic circle' said to be involved 'in massive fraudulent deals and conspiracies to pervert the course of justice'.

The language and innuendo associated with the gutter press has been displayed in some of Scotland's 'quality' newspapers. *Scotland on Sunday* (9 August 1992) talked of 'informers in the netherworld where the capital's gay and criminal fraternities overlap', and reported rumours that the break-in was masterminded by a 'Mr Big' who wanted a file on 'a gay fraudster'. The paper said that the thieves had got hold of a 'secret dossier on top gays'.

The *Herald* (11 August 1992) described the 'gay scene' operating 'like freemasonry...on a clandestine self-help basis'.

The press really licked its lips in September when the 'secret dossier on top gays' turned up on their desks. Under a banner headline 'Gay threat to justice', Edinburgh's *Evening News* claimed that the file contained police investigations into 'influential gays in the Scottish legal profession'. The report supposedly named a judge, two sheriffs, prominent lawyers and advocates, local businessmen and members of Edinburgh's 'criminal fraternity' who, it suggested, were all part of a 'gay conspiracy'.

The police report was also said to detail five criminal cases which the crown prosecution office had decided to drop. The *Evening News* story suggested a homosexual link between the cases: that some of the prosecutors were homosexual, and that some of the defendants were either homosexual themselves or knew that gay lawyers and advocates could be blackmailed into dropping the case.

The *Scotsman* suggested that the police report was a draft of one which had subsequently been dropped because of the lack of 'hard evidence'. But it ran a story based on the report anyway. The lack of evidence didn't slow down the rumour machine.

'Magic circle'

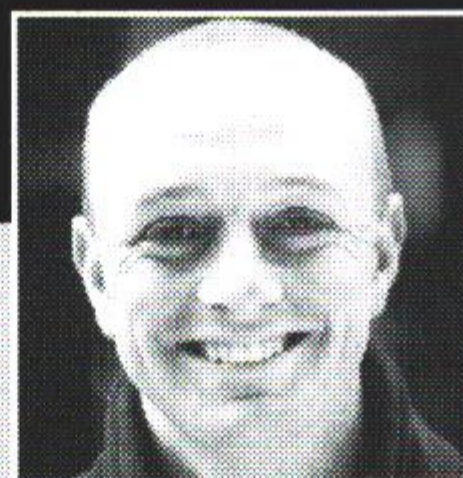
The stories of homosexual 'magic circles' and 'gay conspiracies' have had an obvious appeal to a police force frustrated at losing prosecutions. They are tailor-made too for papers which love scandal-mongering, especially about gays. And they have also attracted some Scottish Labour MPs, who have been to the fore in demanding investigations into how 'homosexual relationships in private lives may have influenced people holding prominent public office in the judiciary' (Tam Dalyell, *Evening News*, 11 September 1992). The outcome of all this has been a predictable increase in public hostility to homosexuals.

At the end of January 1993, a report commissioned by the Lord Advocate's office concluded that there was no evidence of a 'magic circle'. The response revealed that the damage had already been done. The *Daily Record* ran a banner headline declaring that 'Law was not bent'. The *Evening News* said 'Gay plot is ruled out'. The *Scotsman* wrote about 'Lawyers cleared of gay conspiracy'. Gay, bent, plot, conspiracy: you didn't even have to read between the lines to see the links being made.

The facts about that break-in may never be public knowledge. But one thing is clear. The primary victims of 'Fettesgate' are not the embarrassed Lothian and Border police, the journalists arrested or the Scottish legal system, but homosexuals in Edinburgh. A nudge-nudge campaign led by the Scottish press and backed by some Labour MPs has seen to it that gay men in Scotland are likely to suffer even more bigotry and distrust in the future. ●



PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER



It is all a conspiracy

First the unmistakable smell: a wet greasy anorak entering a centrally heated building. Then the rustle of a plastic bag, the clearing of the throat....Yes, it's that man again. If you thought it was a conspiracy, you were right. When he's not at the next table in the pub or on the bus seat behind you sucking loudly on a Fisherman's Friend, he's here, queuing for a conspiracy convention. He sneers at the camera crews. 'This has been going on for years', he confides in a loud stage whisper. 'The press are only here because of the prestige of an international conference.'

Dream on. There had been some interest in 'The First International Conference that Exposes a Global Deception', but most reports overlooked the 'prestige' and concentrated on the rather disappointing ticket sales (100 sold for the 12 000-seat Wembley Arena). Let's be honest, the press are here to take the piss. But then they would, wouldn't they? After all, who controls them?....Exactly. *They* do. And who are *they*? Capitalists? Communists? Jews? An impressive array of international experts are here to set the record straight.

'Most children who disappear don't end up being sacrificed by Satanic cults', says Vladimir Terziski (BSc physics, MSc electronics), as though he resents having to waste valuable seconds dismissing such nonsense. No, they are taken to subterranean camps in the Brazilian jungle, where Dr Mengele experiments on them. 'Like the film *The Boys from Brazil*', he adds helpfully.

Vladimir believes that, for years, the brightest Earthlings have been abducted and taken to an underground colony on the moon, which is why top scientists keep disappearing (and presumably why Mr Terziski is still here). There are also Vatican-funded colonies in the Andes and elsewhere. He has plenty of pictures of garages and military installations, but none of the underground parks and waterfalls which he describes so dramatically.

Vladimir believes that all scientific developments are kept from the public for a century. He draws our attention to an alien from a recent American billboard advertisement, which he 'has a feeling' is real. He refers repeatedly to *Star Trek*, because this is the most accurate picture we have of what life is like on the moon colony. This is no coincidence—it is one of the millions of pieces of information that the Illuminati put among us, to communicate with their people on Earth, safe in the knowledge that the rest of us will believe it to be fiction.

Vladimir has only two hours to speak, so he rattles through his findings at great speed. The Nazis colonised the moon. The Rockefeller Institute funded space ships, hence the moonbase named 'Rockefeller'. In the fifties, men spent the night on the moon colony before travelling on to Mars the next day. He shows a diagram of the vehicle's journey. Its trajectory contradicts the laws of physics, which proves it is true (a hoaxer would have carefully stuck to backward theories of Earth science, you see). The leading government magician David Copperfield can make the Statue of Liberty invisible. Pardon? But we are already moving on, with a film clip of an 'anti-gravity device' which he 'has a feeling' would have worked (but was sabotaged), and a government-funded flying saucer which was designed to fail, so as to discredit the idea of anti-gravity machines.

It's all going well until, during a film showing creatures emerging from the green surface of the moon, somebody sniggers. Vladimir looks up darkly. The sniggering spreads. There are clearly Illuminati agents in the hall. Finally one breaks cover. 'Sir', he booms in perfect human tones, 'this is a joke documentary made by Anglia TV'. Vladimir slowly raises his head to confront the enemy in our midst. 'I could talk for two hours on this "fake documentary"', he says bitterly. 'There is no way a science fiction author could work this out. I have a feeling that what we are seeing is a representation of a project that took place 100 years ago.'

The film continues. 'This is 1952....' the narrator tells us. 'We believe it is nineteen sixty-two...', corrects Vladimir. The laughter grows. Vladimir is angry. 'This is a *film*, it is not the real thing!', he snaps. Then he breaks into chilling squeals of laughter. He is about to make a joke. 'You know, in this *annus horribilis*, the British need the PR boost of a moon landing, heh, heh...even if it is really the Illuminati!' The audience falls silent. There are no more jokes. Most of the agents leave.

A slightly paranoid atmosphere begins to sour the event. 'Members of the international elite *here today*', begins the next speaker, David Summers, letting the sniggerers know that he knows, 'realise that the best way to hide something is to bring it out in the open. Secret governments don't always operate from a secret bunker. They sit in parliament. George Bush is one of the biggest criminals to walk the Earth. 100 000 Iraqi troops were shot while retreating. We are told about Iraqi "nuclear sites" but we are never told where they are'. He goes on to explain how Saddam Hussein and Bush are former allies, how Bush organised CIA drug smuggling, then fronted the 'war on drugs' and double-crossed General Noriega.

So far, most of this is true, but people are beginning to fidget. He's about to lose them when, like an escapist with five seconds left to break out of a chained sack, Summers produces Henry Kissinger and a Masonic conspiracy leading back to the elite which controls our minds through the 'New World Order'.

But who are *they*, these Illuminati, with their 'New World Order'? Eustice Mullins, a 'disciple' of Ezra Pound, finally explained. The US Federal Reserve financed the First World War and backed the Bolsheviks in order to bankrupt Russia. Stalinists took over the US Democratic Party and Trotskyists took over the Republicans (hence the Reaganites hated the Soviet 'evil empire' because 'Stalin had murdered their god'). So the communists are sabotaging the free market, using the Federal Reserve system.

There you have it. Communists backed by Nazis on the moon. The weird beards next to me had read about the conference in *UFO News* and wore open sandals with socks. They seemed well satisfied. One was telepathic, and I hoped he wasn't reading my mind. I escaped outside to talk to the Wembley staff. 'They're all mad in there', said one, 'they reckon Saddam Hussein and George Bush used to be on the same side'. Heads shook sorrowfully.

Now Dr Mengele camps, that's different. They've got them in Bosnia now—it's been in all the papers. ●

As Spike Lee's much-hyped film opens in Britain, Emmanuel Oliver considers why Malcolm X has become the black icon of the nineties

The resurrection of

After completing *Jungle Fever*, director Spike Lee got in an early plug for his next venture: 'All that we have done at *Forty Acres* and *a Mule* [Lee's production company] has prepared us for our next film, certain to be our biggest yet and the most important—*Malcolm X*.' Lee was right to suggest that *Malcolm X* would be his most important film. But its importance has less to do with Lee's considerable talents as a Hollywood filmmaker than with the current canonisation of Malcolm X.

Spike Lee's film is the culmination of the iconisation of Malcolm X in recent years. At least a dozen new books on Malcolm X have appeared, while old favourites are doing a roaring trade. Sales of Alex Haley's famous biography of the black leader have increased three-fold in the past three years; editions of Malcolm X's speeches are selling well. Malcolm X has become a hero to the rap generation, hailed by artists as disparate as Public Enemy and Arrested Development. Even Gerry in *Eldorado* has been seen sporting a colourful Malcolm X number.

Why, 27 years after his death, has a man who was adored in the ghetto, but hated and feared by the black middle class, and seen as an outsider by black political groups, suddenly become the

figure that everybody wants to claim as their own? The current fixation with Malcolm X has little to do with the man himself, and a lot to do with the times in which we live.

There was nothing particularly exceptional about Malcolm X, either personally or in his politics. Much has been made about his journey of self-fulfilment from Malcolm Little, a petty criminal, to Malcolm X, a feared and respected black spokesman. But there were others, such as Adam Clayton Powell, who came from equally humble beginnings to become charismatic political leaders. He was certainly a great orator—but so were many black leaders of his day, from Martin Luther King to Stokely Carmichael. As for Malcolm X's politics, it was the usual mixture of nationalist rhetoric, religious fervour and social aspirations that fuelled many militant black leaders in the sixties.

Malcolm X gave voice to black rage, particularly the anger of black working class youth from the northern ghettos. Ignored by the leaders of the civil rights movements, the anger of working class northern blacks erupted in violent riots in cities across the USA. It was that anger and rage, and the determination of blacks to challenge their oppression, which propelled Malcolm X on to the national stage—and made him feared

and hated by middle class blacks and the political establishment. Today, ironically, it is the absence of militant black struggles that has allowed for the resurrection of Malcolm X.

The Los Angeles riots last April revealed that there is still plenty of rage in the black ghettos. It is not hard to see why. There may be a few more middle class black faces in Bill Clinton's administration, but American society increasingly brands the majority of impoverished black people as a criminal 'underclass', made up of 'street terrorists' (teenagers) and 'welfare queens' (single mothers). Blacks are bitter about being treated as second class citizens. Unlike 30 years ago, however, there is little belief that this anger will be transformed into a political movement.

Lacking effective leaders or 'role models' today, many within the black community plunder the past to find their heroes. As a result, figures from the past are assuming a religious status. Malcolm X's biggest qualification for this role is that he is dead. Severed from reality, he has become a symbol for black aspirations.

In her introduction to *By Any Means Necessary*, Spike Lee's account of how the film was made, novelist Terry Macmillan writes of her fear that her young son may become 'one of those young men...hitting the pipe or making

Malcolm X, the movie

Malcolm X stands in the tradition of the great Hollywood biopics. In many ways it is Lee's safest film so far. He has taken no chances with it, and sought to offend nobody. But Lee's strengths as a film-maker make *Malcolm X* a very watchable epic.

Lee gives us the full range of Malcolm—the impish country boy getting his first conk, the coked-up gangster and the towering figure of the spokesman for the Nation of Islam. The one passage in the film that is difficult to stomach is Malcolm's conversion to Islam, which Lee depicts with religious fervour.

Denzel Washington, fast becoming the black Kevin Costner, fits well into the title role. At times he struggles with the sheer weight of portraying his

hero, but often you are left wondering whether you are watching the actor or the real Malcolm.

The film opens with the videotape of the vicious police beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles; it was the acquittal of these officers that sparked the riots last year. It finishes with pictures of racist brutality from the sixties, and finally a shot of Nelson Mandela repeating a famous Malcolm X vow to carry on the fight for equality, although he couldn't bring himself to say 'by any means necessary'. Lee's message is that little has changed for blacks since the days of Malcolm X, but that the struggle continues. ●

Malcolm X opens in London on 5 March

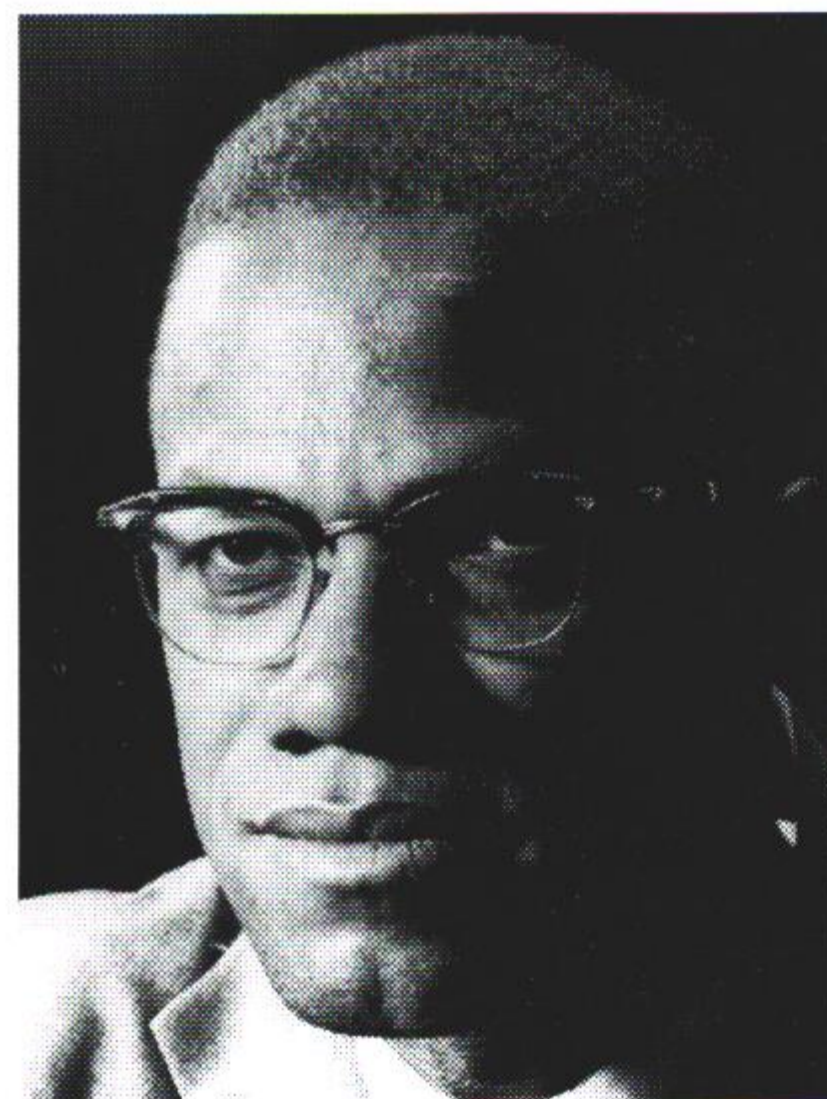


PHOTO: GUILD FILM DISTRIBUTORS

Malcolm X

babies without bearing the responsibility'. Then she thinks of Malcolm X: 'I pray that when he grows up he has one-tenth of Malcolm's courage, insight, wisdom.' The man who started life as a drug pusher, extortionist and gangster has been reborn as a new black saint.

In the absence of the political ferment which pushed him to prominence in the sixties, Malcolm has become a figure-head for many sections of black America: the urban black youth with a personal survival strategy based on the message 'by any means necessary'; the black businessman who feels legitimised by Malcolm X's call to 'create our own employment'; the middle class black who likes to berate the black male for failing his family, and for whom the happy image of Malcolm and Betty (his wife) provide a positive role model. All of them can invest in the mythical Malcolm their own prescription for the contemporary black malaise.

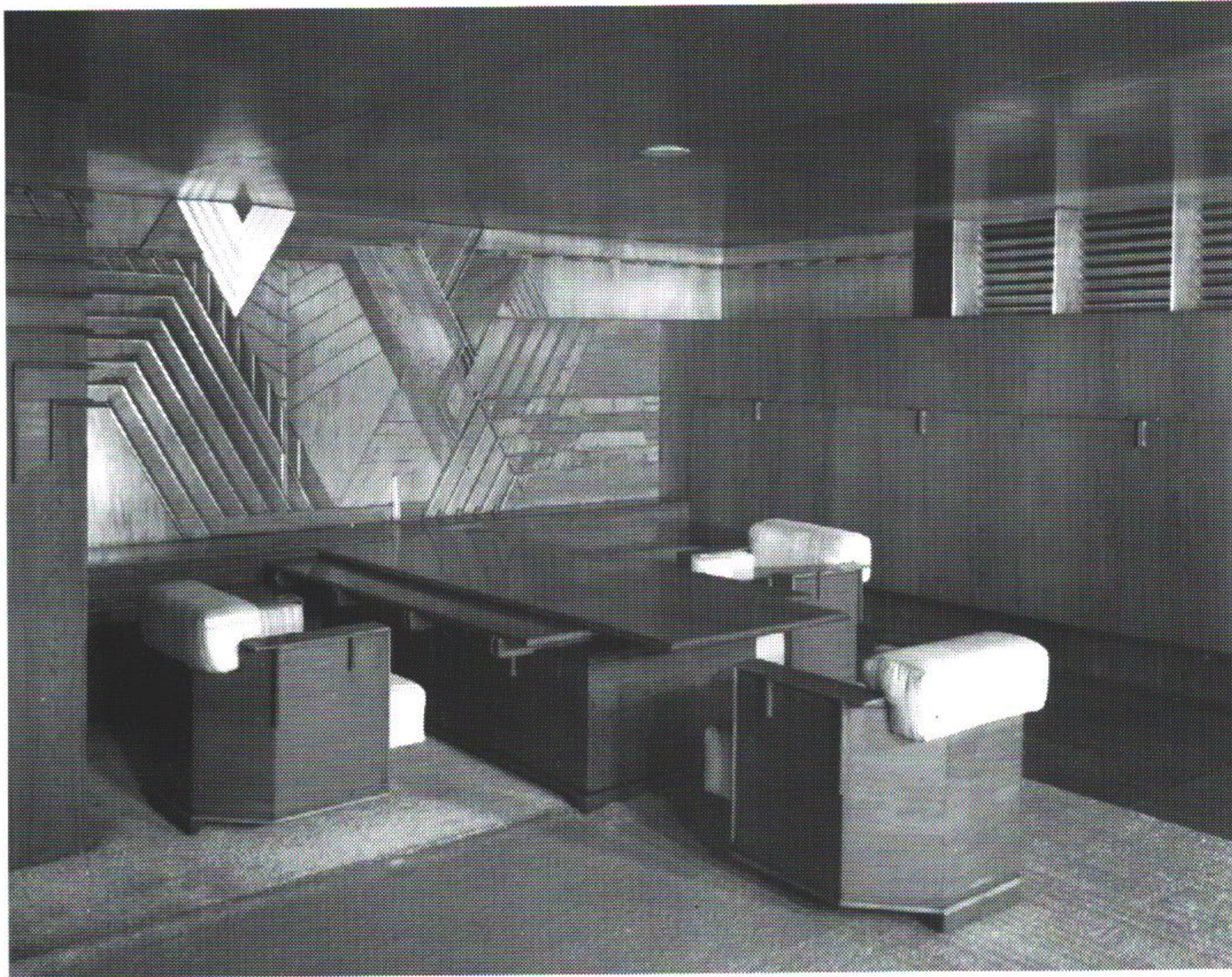
It is ironic that even those who were openly hostile to Malcolm X when he was alive now seek to claim his legacy. Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam (the organisation which eventually assassinated Malcolm X), feels no embarrassment in invoking the name of the man for whose death he campaigned in the sixties. The conservative Bill Cosby, who was busy in the sixties perfecting his 'Dr Huxtable' image, helped to fund Lee's film—as did that other well-known black revolutionary, Michael Jackson.

Malcolm X appeals to white America too. Racists point to his early life as a hood to damn all blacks as criminals. The more sophisticated conservative is likely to emphasise the role of the family and self-help. If Malcolm X, after such an unfortunate start in life, could drag himself up by the bootstraps, then so can every other black person in the USA. The implicit argument is that blacks who remain in the ghetto have only themselves to blame.

Malcolm X has become for the black community what John F Kennedy is for liberals—a figure who can transport them from the grim realities of today to a mythical age whence hope springs eternal. It is testimony to the lack of belief in contemporary America. ●

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PHOTOS: VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

Richard Stead on the rediscovery of Frank Lloyd Wright

A romantic modernist?

Frank Lloyd Wright is today acclaimed as one of the foremost architects and designers of the twentieth century, his stature confirmed by the recent opening of a new gallery in London's Victoria & Albert Museum dedicated entirely to his work. When Wright was at the peak of his powers in the interwar years, he was a relatively marginal figure. So why should his reputation be revived a quarter of a century after his death?

At first sight Wright might seem an unusual architectural hero in an age which fetes the postmodern aesthetic. Postmodern architecture plunders the past willy-nilly, drawing upon different elements in an ad hoc fashion. Wright, on the other hand, developed early in his life his concept of 'organic architecture', in which all the elements were essential to the concept of the overall whole. Yet this organicism grew out of an 'art and craft' philosophy, a harking back to the romantic tradition, which is what appeals to the postmodern architects of today.

Wright is a unique figure in that he straddled the pre-modern arts and crafts tradition and the modern movement. In his use of contemporary material—such as concrete—and in the way he used it, Wright was undoubtedly a modernist.

Emphasising the natural qualities of the materials he used, Wright ensured that the grain in wood and the shape and colour of brick and stone became essential elements of any work. Even when using concrete he preferred to leave it uncoloured, so as to give it a rougher, earthier feel.

Much of the open interior brickwork and plain concrete columns of 1960s houses and public spaces crudely drew its inspiration from Wright's ideas. His stress on the natural qualities of materials gave his work a simplicity that was echoed by the design structures themselves. He often limited the number of rooms, even in his largest commissions, preferring to have rooms overlapping or flowing into one another and only separated by screen-like dividers.

At the same time, however, Wright was also part of a much older folksy tradition. He was a contemporary of the great modernist architect Le Corbusier. But Le Corbusier's assertion that 'we claim in the name of the steamship, of the airplane, and of the motorcar the right to health, logic, daring, harmony, perfection', would have horrified Wright. Much of Wright's work was fuelled by a distaste for urbanisation and what he considered to be the brutalisation of the modern world. The rural landscape,

and in particular the desert, feature very strongly in Wright's *oeuvre*. While Le Corbusier often used prefabricated buildings and repeated designs, much of Wright's work was for one-off designs and as such recalls the age of the artisan. In this, he was as much a traditionalist as Prince Charles.

The combination of modernism and romanticism can be seen in the Kaufmann office, which forms the centrepiece of the V&A gallery. In 1934 Wright was commissioned by Edgar Kaufmann to renovate his office. Trying Kaufmann's patience to the limit with his 'artisan' approach, Wright finally completed his commission four years later.

The office is a basic rectilinear shape with one corner jutting into the room creating a recess, from which a large table protrudes. The recess wall is decorated with an intricate mural of plywood with an inlaid light fitting. Completely designed and decorated in cypress wood, the decoration, lighting and furniture are an integral part of the room itself. They are used to define and organise the space. It is a creative use of space that marks Wright, for all his romantic sensibility, as an architect of a different order from today's post-modern cut-and-paste merchants. ●



Sex and Rolf

What's gone wrong with men? This month the Marquess of Blandford ('the junkie peer') rang Richard and Judy's phone-in on *This Morning* and whinged about his father's refusal to cuddle him. The unloving father has become the emotional foundation of every mainstream movie from *Strictly Ballroom* to *Beauty and the Beast* (her ineffectual father hands Beauty over to the Beast, who is himself the epitome of the angry-but-vulnerable-and-useless modern father).

This is before we even mention Woody Allen. Then there is J Edgar Hoover, the forbidding Stern Father of Western culture, who turns out to have been a transvestite. Suddenly the whole Untouchable, macho purity of the G-Man is exposed as a camp, gang show. The nation seems to have dropped politics in favour of a kind of vast oedipal psychodrama. What are the attacks on the monarchy and the rumours about John Major but attempts to demean the strong parent? Major and the Queen are discredited—like our own parents—by the exposure of their sexuality. Surely these events make *The Good Sex Guide* the most crucial TV programme of our time.

The Guide (ITV) takes the uselessness of men as its central theme. The programme includes lots of interviews with members of the public, but these are never shown as couples. Men ('fellas' as the presenter calls them) and women ('girls') are asked for their views separately. As a result you never see anyone in a sexual relationship, only a forlorn pageant of lonely people in unlikely settings talking wistfully about the sex they are not getting. They never talk to or touch each other on screen. Sex itself is thus reduced to an operation performed by men upon women, a question of surgery, and incompetent surgery at that. It is left to Margi Clarke to liaise between the sexes ('No fellas, this is what you've gorra do...').

The show seems to be saying that sexual frustration and inability have reached crisis proportions. We are in a sex emergency. Like *Comic Relief* or *Challenge Anneka*, *The Guide* is studded with TV celebs giving up their valuable time to help us sort out our problem. The sense of urgency is intensified by the appallingly low standards of these celebrity sketches. It is as though there was simply no time to rehearse or think of something funny. They had to 'Act now, before it's too late!'

The most worrying sign is the presence of Tony Robinson, the Rolf Harris of his generation. Are we so remedial that we need a presenter from children's BBC to help us through?! Yes we are, says *The Guide*. For while the celebs speak with benign expertise about orgasm, ecstasy and fulfilment, the ordinary folk are left to grumble with diagrammatic bluntness about impotence, premature ejaculation and being too small. In a bizarre twist that brings all these themes together, one 'member' of the public is suing the producers for showing his willy without his permission. He was filmed at his gym, where he thought the cameras had been set up to shoot...Lady Di!

The Guide set out to cash in on the vogue for sex education videos, wrongly assuming that people bought these because they needed education. In fact, people bought them because they needed sex. The 'education' videos are incredibly explicit, and feature incredibly beautiful young people who are a transfiguration and a celebration of the couple on the couch at home. There is nothing celebratory or sexy about *The Guide*. More or less everyone on the show is in a cardigan or buried under layers of foundation. The question is not where to touch them, but why anyone would want to, unless it was unavoidable, in a crowded lift perhaps, or on the tube. The programme constitutes the

most gross and disturbing underestimation of any audience (and of TV) since *Eldorado*.

Much of my own effectiveness as a father I put down to my early (and continuing) devotion to Rolf Harris. Thanks to him, whenever I am in a tight corner, I can wobble a board, make a lagerphone, eat Hula Hoops from each of my finger-tips or catapult chocolate buttons into my mouth from my palm. If times are really hard, I can sing 'Two Little Boys' and get tearful compliance. On *The Word* this month, Rolf performed this role of kindly liberator for a whole generation.

In Greek myths, the first Stern Father was Chronos, the Titan father of Zeus and, significantly, the figure of Time. Zeus had to slay Chronos in order to free himself, to give himself some space. On *The Word*, Rolf performed his version of 'Stairway to Heaven' and slew Chronos for a second time.

'Stairway' is the most requested rock song of all time. It is also one of the most masculine, with its phallic, thrusting guitar, its muscle-bound percussion and its monumentally pompous lyric. Here is a song that not only represents, but actually enacts the tyranny of the Stern Father. At the time of its release, it must have been the occasion of many a rift between father and son—rock more than anything else was the instrument and symbol of the generation gap.

Pomp rock created a particularly cruel generation gap because it bugged not only the parents, but also the younger brothers and sisters. My generation started telling Led Zep fans that they were old beyond hope when they were in the sixth form and we were in the fourth. And now that those children are parents themselves, the song pounds out its banal tattoo, a hideous reminder of the baby boomer's refusal to grow up, its grim, sad clinging to youth. Behind that refusal, of course, is a deeper fear, the fear of becoming the Father, of daring to stand alongside the Father.

Rolf slaughtered this song, and—like Alexander—cut through the knot of neuroses it represented. He ditched the drums and guitar, in favour of the wobble board and didgeridoo—the gentle instruments of childhood. He warbled the lyrics so that they stood exposed, ridiculous and vulnerable as genitals.

'Oooh', he sang, 'it makes me wonder'. Then he turned to the backing singers and said, 'How does it affect you fellas?'. 'Oooh', they shrugged, 'it makes us wonder'. 'Fascinating', said Rolf, and at that moment, the kindly, loving father vanquished the stern, forbidding one.

It was like waking from a nightmare and finding yourself in the warm, strong arms of a loving parent. It made you feel that love was possible, and more important than surgery. It was a healing moment for TV too. The next day, everyone was talking about it. The first time I can remember this happening for years (except the morning after *Anna Lee: Girl Detective* when everyone was saying, that is it, I will never turn the TV on again, so help me God).

Rolf went the Marquess of Blandford route and appeared on Richard and Judy. There was a telephone poll to see which version of the song people preferred. I can tell you that Rolf's 'version' (which is actually a deconstruction) is now officially definitive. This morning I found that I have accidentally taped over it and I am glad. The moment will now sing forever in the crystal streams of memory and never gather dust upon my office shelf. The single is at number nine as I write and no doubt this will be seen as a Rolf revival, but I want you to know that Rolf, like your father, always loved you and never really went away. It's just that now you're old enough to appreciate that he was better than Led Zep all along. ●

Not a novel idea among them

Alan Harding on the debate about new British novelists

I would not want to be Bach, Mozart, Tolstoy, Gertrude Stein or Joe Hill. They're all dead. The great books've been written. The great sayings have all been said.' So wrote Bob Dylan in the sleeve notes for his 1965 album, 'Bringing it all back home'. I remembered Dylan's sneer at the pomposity of the arts establishment as I looked on at the latest spat among British literati.

The debate started in January when the booksellers Waterstones published its list of Britain's 20 best young novelists (qualification: you must be under 40). When Waterstones produced a similar list 10 years ago, among the names were such luminaries as Salman Rushdie, Martin Amis and Julian Barnes. This time the list, chosen by a panel which included Rushdie himself, Booker prize-winner AS Byatt, and Bill Buford, editor of *Granta* magazine, was made up largely of minor writers like Hanif Kureishi and Esther Freud or complete unknowns such as Anne Billson, Adam Lively and Helen Simpson.

No sooner had the names been revealed than the backlash started. The *Sunday Times* (which had been given an exclusive because the organisers naively believed that it would be sympathetic) compared the new crop of novelists unfavourably with Waterstones' previous list. The *Guardian's* James Wood moaned that 'anybody can do anything' in today's novel and besides 'anything has already been done'. Established figures like Martin Amis and Gilbert Adair proclaimed that they had never heard of, let alone read, many of the authors.

Rushdie immediately retaliated in the pages of the *Independent on Sunday*, calling the *Sunday Times'* article 'as supportive as a fatwa'. He wrote an even more vitriolic letter to the *Guardian* dismissing its literary editor, Richard Gott, as a 'superannuated foreign correspondent'.

The first thing to remember in making sense of this clash of tempers is that the Waterstones' list is not a gauge of new talent, but a publicity stunt and a marketing ploy. Even more than the Booker and Whitbread prizes, the Waterstones list helps to hype the names and sales of a few authors, putting more money into both their and Waterstones' pockets. Unlike the prizes, however, the Waterstones list barely manages to cover

its commercial intent with literary aura. Publishers have to pay a fee to have their books considered (supposedly to cover the cost of promoting them). When, in the fifties, the radio DJ Alan Freed accepted money for playing certain records, the authorities called it payola. When Waterstones receive payment to put forward certain books, it is called literary promotion.

If literary promotion helps sell books, then controversy helps sell newspapers. In the case of the *Sunday Times* it also helps to maintain its reputation for philistinism and disdain for the liberal literary establishment. Not so long ago the Murdoch paper launched a campaign against the 'literary mafia', whose members it claimed reviewed each others' books in the national press to mutual benefit. The *Sunday Times* has also attacked the Booker Prize, most of whose winners and judges, it suggests, come from a small cabal of writers associated with Malcolm Bradbury's creative writing course at the University of East Anglia.

Both Rushdie and the *Sunday Times* miss the point. Waterstones' list certainly demonstrates the dearth of new talent in Britain today—but so it did a decade ago. The only author of unquestioned world stature on the 1983 list is Rushdie himself. Martin Amis, Julian Barnes and Kazuo Ishiguro can be considered major talents. The rest are distinctly second rate.

The fact is that British novel-writing has been in decline for a long time. In the

wake of the Waterstones list many reviewers played a new parlour game of imagining whom such a list might have contained 50 or a 100 years ago. Kingsley Amis noted that in 1940 the list would have to include Graham Greene, Elizabeth Bowen, Rosamund Lehmann, Henry Green, Christopher Isherwood and Evelyn Waugh. Amis' list tends to confirm that even 50 years ago British literary talent was pretty thin on the ground.

Nick Hornby took us back to 1850: 'Bill Buford and his judges would have been arguing about the relative merits of Trollope, Disraeli, Charlotte Bronte, Mrs Gaskell, Thackeray and Charles Dickens.' Now, you might say, we are getting somewhere. Hornby's list seems to indicate both how far British novel-writing has declined and how far back you have to go to reach the golden age of British novels.

The novel no longer takes pride of place as a literary or expressive form—and rightly so. The best and most imaginative British talent is to be found elsewhere—television (Dennis Potter), short stories (Adam Mars-Jones), travel writing (James Fenton) or journalism (Nick Hornby). More importantly the best writing is not to be found in Britain at all—authors like Chinua Achebe, Gabriel Garcia Marquez or Toni Morrison now dominate the imaginative landscape. Far be it from me to sound politically correct, but I reckon we would be better served by African poets and Latin American storytellers than by second-rate British novelists.

Another Annus Horribilis?

A national competition for aspiring cartoonists on the monarchy in 1993



Steve Bell © The Guardian 1992

Judges include Steve Bell from *The Guardian*, Jeremy Banx from *The Financial Times*, Steve Platt, Editor of the *New Statesman*, and Spitting Image.

What kind of a year do you think the Queen, Squidgy and the rest of the royals are going to have? Send us your cartoon interpretations, predictions and prescriptions for the royals in 1993.

Winning entries will be published in *Living Marxism* and the *New Statesman* magazine, and exhibited in Birmingham and in London and on a national tour. The overall winner will be given a commission by the *New Statesman* and a major national newspaper. Entrants should submit a slide, or photocopy with dimensions of their cartoon (non-returnable), a stamped addressed envelope and their full name, address and telephone number to the address below. Closing date for entries is March 5th 1993. Finalists will be invited to exhibit their work at the Angle Gallery from April 17th 1993. Work on show at the exhibition can be offered for sale.

Competition supported by



Organised by the Angle gallery, The Arcadian, Ladywell Walk, Birmingham B5 4ST. Telephone 021 622 7187.

MARXIST

REVIEW OF BOOKS

Khalid Morrison examines the retreat of Britain's radical social historians

Enthralled by tradition

English Questions, Perry Anderson, Verso, £39.95 hbk, £12.95 pbk

The Invention of Tradition, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), Canto, £6.95 pbk

Customs in Common, EP Thompson, Merlin, £25 hbk

British social history is widely credited with the original project of writing history from below. Where previously history had been a list of kings and queens, social history restored the place of the common people in making their own history. Most of the social historians were allied to the left of the labour movement, some started out as members of the Communist Party Historians Group just after the war. Their number include Christopher Hill, who remains the authority on the English revolution and the seventeenth century, EP Thompson, whose *Making of the English Working Class* is the definitive work on working class self-organisation in the eighteenth century, and Raphael Samuel, editor of the *History Workshop Journal*.

In more recent times the project of social history has been less clear. Social historians have been accused of imposing socialist interpretations upon the past, seeing incipient working class social movements where the real relations do not justify it. Much of the criticism comes from more conservative historians, and while some of their doubts are malevolent others have struck home.

Principally, however, the project of social history has suffered from its own self-doubts. Confidence in the forward march of the labour movement seemed uncontested in the early years of social history, and reinforced its sense of purpose. In the context of an apparently consistent advance in the standing of working class organisations, the Labour Party and the trade unions, social history's subject, the common people, was self-evidently an agent in its own right.

Today the very existence of the working class is often called into question. Certainly there is nothing self-evident about the proposition that history ought to be written from below. There is little in contemporary experience to reinforce the sense that the common people are agents of their own history. As a consequence, social history appears more anachronistic.

The authors reviewed here—EP Thompson, leading figure in the pacifist organisation European Nuclear Disarmament, Perry Anderson, former editor of the *New Left Review*, and Eric Hobsbawm, ideologue of the now

defunct Communist Party and *Marxism Today*—are all trying to deal with the faltering of the forward march of labour. *The Invention of Tradition*, the entertaining collection of essays Hobsbawm has edited with Terence Ranger, and Thompson's *Customs in Common*, stand in their own right as history. Perry Anderson's collection of essays also, though more pointedly polemical, has its own virtue in the history of ideas. Nonetheless all three are coloured in their approach by the problems of social history, principally the problem of explaining how the common people appear to have failed to make their own history.

For these historians, under the influence of the labour movement's setbacks, the idea that working people are agents of social change has been subordinated to a newfound interest in tradition. The sense of change that informed the earlier social history is in abeyance. Instead, in a variety of ways that is registered in these works, we find a new emphasis upon continuity, or at least the appearance of continuity. The greatest flaw in all three of these otherwise excellent books is that they end up fetishising tradition and granting it greater force than it really has.

Anderson's *English Questions* is most direct in viewing the failure of the British working class to create an alternative outlook by reference to the grip of tradition upon British society. The essays collected here trace Anderson's own investigation of the problem in a series of articles published between 1964 and 1991. Throughout, Anderson returns to his initial thesis that Britain never made a complete break from its aristocratic past, a traditional outlook that holds both British capitalism and socialism back.

The Invention of Tradition is at once more academic history and more playful politics than *English Questions*. The essays collected gently mock the gravitas of tradition by demonstrating that time-honoured customs from clan tartan to the coronation parade were all made up by somebody at some point, usually rather later than you might think. The book has useful essays on the romantic creation of Welsh and Highland traditions, as well as the martial ►

customs of colonial India and Africa. It ends with an overview on mass-produced traditions in Europe by Eric Hobsbawm.

Thompson's *Customs in Common* is closest to the original conception of a social history as history from below. It is also the most weighty, the outcome of Thompson's 20 years of research into what he calls the 'moral economy' exacted by the eighteenth-century plebeians against their patrician masters' agrarian capitalism. Thompson too is concerned with tradition, but the traditions of the lower orders. For him, plebeian customs are conservative, in that they cite supposedly ancient, customary rights, but also a site of resistance to the new incursions of capitalism.

Anderson's collection begins with 'The origins of the present crisis', first published in the *New Left Review* of January 1964 as a sobering intervention into the discussion of social history. Unlike earlier historians of

reality on its head, arguing that the persistence of traditional authority indicates that the English capitalist class 'did not have to overthrow a feudal state in the nineteenth century, and it did not succeed in becoming sole master of the new industrial society' (p31). In Anderson's view then, traditional authority was due to the persistence of aristocracy and the incomplete nature of the capitalist struggle against the old political forms. Instead he argues, imperialism consolidated an alliance of the traditional society with the new capitalist class.

Here Anderson invests tradition with an authority it does not have. But furthermore, he sets out a project of challenging the traditional aspects of British society, separate from the contest between capital and labour. Traditionalism, he argues, does not just hold back the labour movement, but also unalloyed capitalism. 'The unfinished work of 1640 [the English revolution] and 1832 [the reform acts] must be taken up where it was left off' (p47). In effect, the programme of modernisation must take precedence over the goal of socialism.

The overestimation of the problem of tradition is not entirely innocent. At the time Anderson was writing, modernisation was the programme of Harold Wilson's Labour Party, which won the 1964 election promising the 'white heat' of the technological revolution. As the essays that follow 'Origins of the present crisis' show, however, Anderson has retained the outlook that modernisation must precede the articulation of an independent working class alternative. Indeed, the two targets of ruling class tradition and the weaknesses of the labour movement are often merged in Anderson's reading: 'The block vote', he suggests 'was always the working class version of the rotten borough' (p349).

At first sight Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's collection of essays *The Invention of Tradition*, first published in 1983, is a helpful alternative to the fetishism of tradition that overwhelms Anderson's *English Questions*. In his introduction Hobsbawm emphasises the contingency of tradition where Anderson emphasises its strength: 'We should not be misled by a curious but understandable paradox: modern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed namely human communities so 'natural' as to require no definition other than self-assertion.' (p14) Hobsbawm's argument could be aimed directly at Anderson, whose work has tended to confuse the affectation of century-steeped tradition with the real thing.

The Invention of Tradition is an effective debunking of much that is assumed to be authoritative about traditional authority. Once you read that the clan tartan was invented by Sir Walter Scott, as part of the pageant laid on for George IV's state visit to Edinburgh in 1822, you need never be impressed by the cultural nationalism in Scotland again (p19). It is a happy release from the dead weight of past generations.

The Invention of Tradition is also distinct from the social history pursued by Hobsbawm's former associates in the distance it establishes between its subject and the reader. We are not invited to identify with the characters that are paraded before us, but perhaps instead to mock them a little. As David Cannadine puts it in his essay on the monarchy: 'Like all cultural forms which may be treated as texts, or all texts which may be treated as

They have been dazzled by pomp, where Joe Public is not

the left, Anderson set out to explain why the labour movement was losing. Until then labour history, if it had an impact beyond scholarship, was written with an eye to encouraging the left with a sense of its long road to power. Anderson, writing after '13 wasted years' of Tory rule was facing up to the problems and asking himself why the project of the left had faltered.

With this new approach came different concerns. Anderson looked critically at labour movement institutions and sought out their weaknesses. He also modified the traditional concern with history from below to look at the apparent strength of authority from above, asking: how did the British establishment survive?

Anderson's approach was refreshing after years of lionising the labour movement, and many of his insights into its weaknesses are to the point. The leadership of the labour movement had, in its formative years become imbued with the outlook of the British ruling class on the issue that mattered—imperialism: 'the most popular spokesmen of the left, were all in their different ways vocal imperialists' (p25). That did not mean that the working class was complicit in the exploitation of the Empire or even gained from it materially. It meant that 'they were, undeniably, deflected from undistracted engagement with the class exploiting them' (p25-6). Sharing in the imperialist ideology, the working class found an illusory common ground with the ruling class.

Turning from the weaknesses of the left Anderson looked at the strength of the establishment. He emphasised the longevity of the British establishment, its uninterrupted rule (free from the ignominy of foreign invasion) and the strength of tradition: 'Traditionalism—veneration for the monarchy, the church, the peerage, the City, etc—was the natural ideological idiom of the landed class as soon as its monopoly of power was threatened.' (p31) This is a strong argument, but not wholly correct.

Anderson's concentration upon tradition does indicate the strength of the British ruling class. However, he turns

cultural forms, 'thick' rather than 'thin' description is required.' (Citing the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, p105) Cannadine means that we are going to look at a lot of detail and comparisons instead of following a narrative reconstruction.

In its own way, *The Invention of Tradition*, also makes tradition more authoritative than it really is. The very idea that traditions can be invented is wrong. It underestimates the way that tradition rests upon a consent to grant all the parading and emblems the status of the venerable past. This fact is best illustrated by Cannadine's own example of the coronation parade.

For dramatic contrast Cannadine compares some critical comments indicative of the contempt for the monarchy back in the 1800s with his times. In 1820 the *Black Book* wrote:

"Pageantry and show, the parade of crowns and coronets, of gold keys, sticks, white wands and black rods; of ermine and lawn, maces and wigs, are ridiculous when men become enlightened, when they have learned that the real object of government is to confer the greatest happiness on the people at the least expense." (p101)

Forty years later Lord Robert Cecil commented on Queen Victoria's opening of parliament that 'some malignant spell broods over all our most solemn ceremonials, and inserts into them some feature which makes them all ridiculous' (p102). But, writes Cannadine (in 1983): 'Today in England the situation is the exact reverse...no head of state is surrounded by more popular ritual than Queen Elizabeth II.' (p 102)

In the space of just 10 years the tradition would appear to have disinvented itself. Our views today are closer to those in the 1800s. Whether the country can afford a monarchy is open to question. Prince Charles especially must be wondering what malignant spell inserted his telephone conversation with Camilla Parker-Bowles into the headlines.

The 'thick description' favoured by Cannadine fails in that it tends to fix the detail without criticising it. Cannadine looked at the apparent popularity of royalty, albeit, as he acknowledges, for their charm rather than in dread. Instead he could have asked why the value of royalty was being re-emphasised in the eighties. While other institutions of social consent were in retreat, the unions, the Labour Party, even the BBC, royalty bore the weight of popular involvement in the nation as they had not done for years. As recent events show, an overindulged, extended family lacks the authority to symbolise the integrity of the nation alone.

Invoking tradition is a much more defensive operation than Hobsbawm and Ranger's book allows. Traditions generally fix some already achieved consent and make it symbolic. The collapse of Labour as a party of the ordinary man removed the stake in British society that helped engender popular respect for British tradition in the past. Today, each traditional authority invoked is in turn revealed as being without substance, so strong is popular cynicism. To that extent Hobsbawm and Ranger too have been dazzled by pomp, where Joe Public is not.

EP Thompson's *Customs in Common* deals with a very different kind of tradition, or custom. For Thompson it is the customs of the common people that

provide a defence against the traditions of the ruling elite.

Customs in Common is a history of eighteenth-century resistance to the encroachment of a patrician elite by their plebeian opposites. Thompson's command of eighteenth-century history is exemplary, but, as the introduction indicates, his concerns are modern. There Thompson writes: 'We shall not ever return to pre-capitalist human nature, yet a reminder of its alternative needs, expectations and codes may renew our sense of our nature's range of possibilities.' (p15) His purpose, then, is not simply academic, but also to loosen the grip of the present by showing us how things have been different in the past.

The eighteenth century is instructive for Thompson because of its 'moral economy', which defended the needs of the plebs against the incursion of the political economy of the patricians. The moral economy is framed in terms of ancient custom, but rests upon the everyday expectations of ordinary people. Thompson cites the 'perambulations', organised marches along traditional routes to break up the new enclosures of common land, at one point breaking down the walls around Richmond Park. He details forced sales of grain, imposed upon overcharging farmers. Intriguingly, simple theft of the grain was less common than its seizure for sale, with the diminished proceeds returned to the owner at the end of the day.

Thompson's point is that apart from the political economy of the newly capitalised agrarian elite, there existed a site of opposition framed in custom that made up a moral economy of the lower orders. The evidence of custom cited against law is compelling, but Thompson allows that the term 'moral economy' was not coined until the late eighteenth century. Furthermore both of the examples he cites are after the event—the romantic conservative Robert Southey and the Chartist Bronterre O'Brien. This is necessarily so because the customs he describes are 'non-rational; they do not appeal to "reason"' (p9). Rather they are the spontaneous defensiveness of a social group under attack, citing, and elaborating, the way things were to fend off unwanted change.

This non-rational invocation of custom is a poor example for today. Looking at the struggles of these embittered folk you can sympathise but there is nothing that reaches beyond their defensiveness as a lesson for us. Indeed Thompson says as much, rejecting a too self-consciously feminist interpretation of his original concept of the moral economy: 'These women (and these men) were for themselves and not for us: they were proto-nothing [parodying the term proto-industrial].' (p320) There is nothing that lends this ancient struggle a progressive character. Resistance takes the plebs further into an imaginary past rather than projecting them into the future.

Thompson's non-rational moral economy is perhaps the only way to retain an approach of history from below when overwhelmingly we are faced with history made from above. In the end it reads more like anthropology as we are engrossed in the exotic customs of this alien people, our ancestors. Thompson's defence of the customs of selling your wife at market (a kind of popular divorce) or harassing cuckolds and scolds with 'rough music', a parade of pot-banging and effigy-burning, are spirited. But rough music and the wife auction are today little more than folklore for us and degrading for the victims. On the other hand, they are, perhaps, a more dignified kind of separation than is customary in the royal family.

Sex, Art and American Culture, Camille Paglia, Viking, £16.99 hbk

From 'Madonna is the future of feminism' to 'the wild, infectious delirium of gang rape', academic-cum-pundit Camille Paglia is never short of the quote guaranteed to stick a poker up any serious liberal's arse. The Italian motormouth entered the media major league with her intervention in the date rape controversy surrounding the trial of William Kennedy-Smith in 1991. She enraged the 'sugar-coated Shirley Temple' feminists: attacking them for their 'sex phobic' trivialising of the real problem of rape; and insisting that 'it's women who lose' from the breakdown of the old sexual hypocrisy of the double standard. Well, half right Camille, like most of this entertaining collection of essays.

She is a ferocious slayer of sacred cows, laying into the middle class, Waspish naivety of contemporary feminism; the liberal American churches' vanilla image of gays— a '1950s country club...trimmed-lawn view of sex'; or Robert Mapplethorpe's sanctimonious and insipid defenders, who try to neuter his work by pretending that it is something other than 'a scandal to all their progressive and humanitarian ideals'. She is equally sharp in exposing the self-serving political pretensions and low professional standards of the post-Foucault generation of academics.

But Paglia's iconoclasm would be more convincing if she did not parade so many totems of her own—especially tiresome are her precious 'sixties generation' and all those eternal truths of nature. The plea for standards is merely ironic coming from someone so brazenly subjective. Nonetheless her bite is often just as bad as her bark, and she is deservedly the enemy of all PC book reviewers everywhere.

Peter Ray

BAD or, the Dumbing of America, Paul Fussell, Simon & Schuster £6.99 pbk

Paul Fussell's definition of BAD includes anything and everything 'phoney, clumsy, witless, untalented, vacant or boring that many Americans can be persuaded is genuine, graceful, bright or fascinating'. His book is a spirited, humorous attack on what he sees as a peculiarly American habit: 'to elevate the heartless by a worthy laying-on of the pretentious'.

From engineering (the flawed Hubble space telescope) to restaurants with valet parking, to weather forecasting (shower activity instead of rain), Fussell takes the reader on a tour through the BADlands, USA. He cites the Reaganite newspaper *USA Today* as 'a remarkably pure model of the BAD principle: it is empty at the centre but has a technically showy surface. It represents an exemplary triumph of presentation over substance'.

The causes of BAD, according to Fussell, are advertising, television, technology, 'the collapse of public secondary education', and American 'isolation from traditions of the past and resonances of European culture'. The result, he says, is 60m illiterates and a dumb culture.

Although *BAD* is filed under humour, it is an offshoot of the deadly serious debate about American decline.

Fussell addresses the prospect of 'a nation in which tens of millions are so culturally and spiritually empty'. Fearing that the USA has been 'perhaps irreversibly idiotized', he sees BAD as 'an understandable reaction to the national emptiness and dullness...a quest for the illusion of distinction and value'. The stakes are high: 'a minor cost of the dumbing is the transfer of American economic power to Japan. A major cost is the wiping-out of the amenity and nuance and complexity and charm that make a country worth living in.'

Fussell has himself been tainted by BAD. He repeatedly writes 'stigmata' instead of 'mark'—for example, 'pretentiousness and euphemism are thus the stigmata of verbal BAD'. He's BAD enough to use 'contemporary attendant phenomena' as a euphemism for 'causes'. His mis-hits are not only semantic. BAD America is an old target, invented 40 years ago by jealous Brits. Fussell's explanations of BAD are just plain bad. To say that illiteracy is linked to falling educational standards is merely to state the obvious—without explaining why. Likewise, television may reflect ideological exhaustion, but it cannot create it. Education and television are simply the most convenient scapegoats for commentators who know something's wrong but don't know what it is.

Andrew Calcutt

Patagonia Revisited, Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux, with illustrations by Kyffin Williams, Jonathon Cape, £8.99 hbk

Patagonia, in South America, has come to mean many different things in the literary imagination. For Ferdinand Magellan it was the land of Giants, for the outlaw Butch Cassidy it was the last refuge, for Shakespeare's Setebos in *The Tempest*, it was home. For the authors, the late Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux, Patagonia represents 'the Ultimate, the point beyond which one cannot go' (p7).

What Chatwin and Theroux end up describing is the transformation of the idea of 'the Ultimate' in the transition from Renaissance through to modern literature, as it is described in the changing treatment of Patagonia.

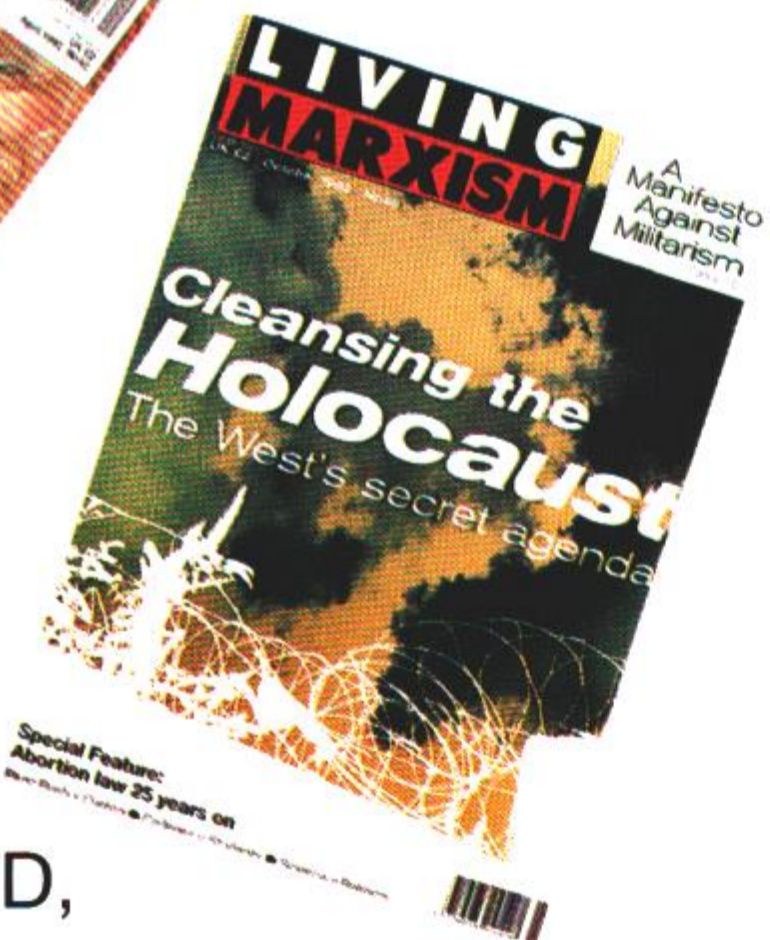
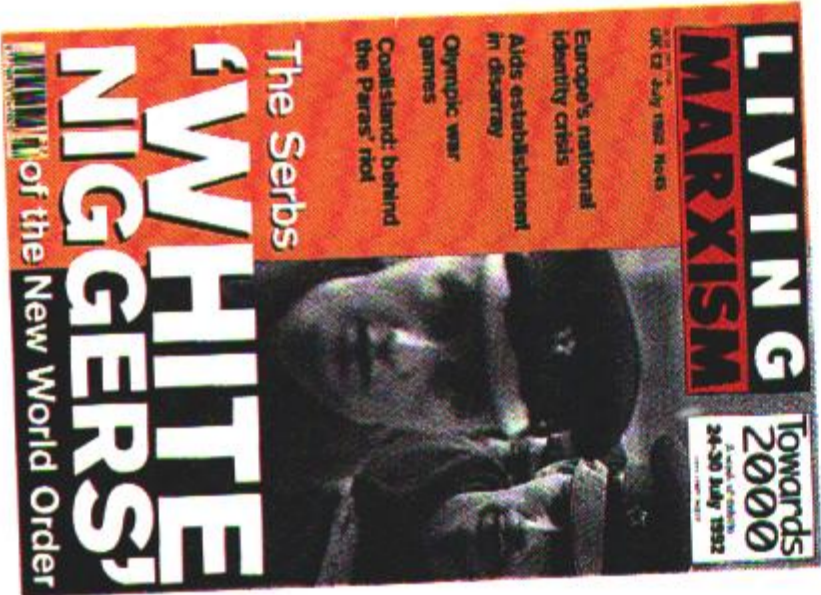
To Magellan and other early explorers Patagonia was infested with eight-foot giants, a feared place. Their discoveries inspired the Renaissance poets to talk of a new Antichthon, a new hell on earth (p52).


Three hundred years later, Darwin described these giants as the 'most abject, miserable creatures I anywhere beheld', standing at most six-foot high (p34). But just as the scientific mind was demythologising Patagonia the romantics found a new focus for the Ultimate, as something inward, a state of mind. WH Hudson wrote in 1893, 'in Patagonia the monotony of the plains...the universal greyness of everything...the absence of animal forms...leave the mind open and free to receive an impression of nature as a whole' (p22).

At a time when green politics elevates the romanticisation of nature into a political programme, Chatwin and Theroux have usefully reminded us that we see in nature what we need to, according to the prejudices of the day.

Dan Lowe

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