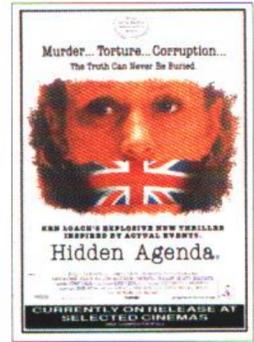


# LIVING MARXISM

THE  
FRAMING OF  
**MOSS SIDE**  
AND OTHER CRIME PANICS

US \$5 DM7 FF25  
UK £2 May 1993 No55



# BAN

# NOTHING

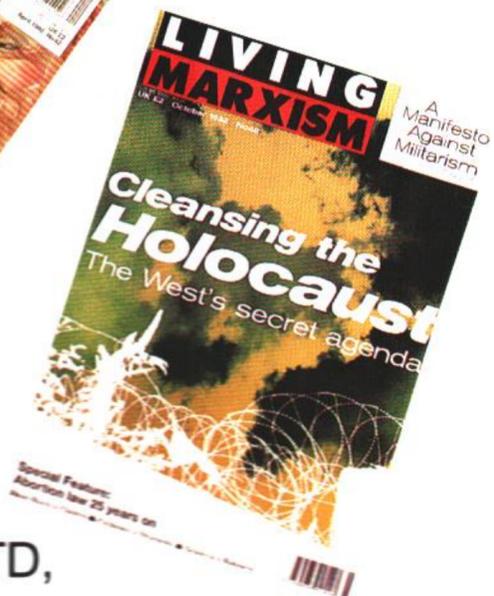
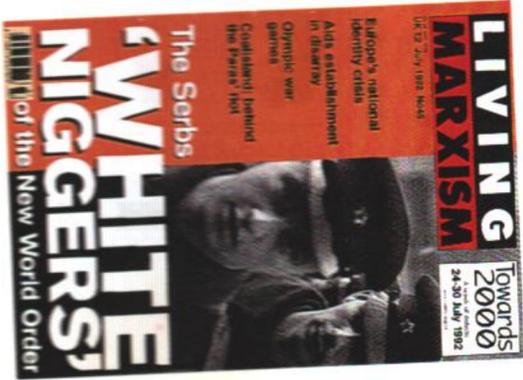
Who's making the news in Bosnia?

Where will the West strike next?

Plus: Warrington ● Medved ● Video surveillance



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# CONTENTS

- 4 **Editorial**
- 6 Letters
- 8 **Where will the West strike next?** *Eddie Veale*
- 10 Towards 2000
- 12 **Who's making the news in Bosnia?** *Joan Phillips*
- 17 Ann Bradley
- 18 After Warrington *Sharon Clarke*
- 19 Loyalist murders *Fiona Foster*
- 21 What the West sees in Russia *Theresa Clarke*
- 22 Anti-fascist backfire *Craig Owen*
- 23 Miner matters *Mike Freeman*
- 24 **Prime time for crime panics** *Frank Füredi*
- 28 The framing of Moss Side *Jason Powell and Colm Murphy*
- 30 Glasgow blade runners *Simon Kray*
- 31 Liverpool lament *Alan Renehan*
- 32 Labour blames the parents, too *Kate Lawrence*
- 34 When were the good old days? *Tracey Lauder*
- 35 You've been framed *Andrew Calcutt*
- 36 Carjacking in the USA *Daniel Bryan*
- 37 Toby Banks
- 38 **Living:** American football?; Medved makes censorship PC
- 42 Frank Cottrell-Boyce on TV
- 43 **The Marxist Review of Books**

## The need for a new ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

For some time now, *Living Marxism* has argued that militarism is the number one problem of our times, and pointed to the dangers of Western intervention everywhere from Somalia to Yugoslavia.

This is a theme which we will be pursuing even more purposefully in the months ahead, putting the case for a new anti-war movement to oppose the militaristic trends in world politics today.

There are three new anti-militarist initiatives which we are asking *Living Marxism* readers to support.

**The pamphlet:** *The Empire Strikes Back* by Mike Freeman is out now (see page 22). It draws together the key themes developed in *Living Marxism* over the past four years, and lays the political foundation for a new anti-war movement.

**The conference:** Discussion at the week-long Towards 2000 conference in July will focus on the theme 'Where will the West strike next?' (see page 10).

**The demonstration:** On Saturday 7 August in London, the Campaign Against Militarism and the Irish Freedom Movement are organising a national demonstration and festival against militarism and Western intervention (see page 9).

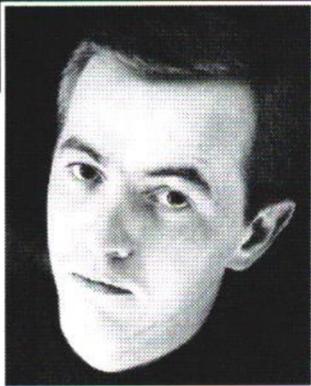
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**Mick Hume**

# Ban nothing

**T**hese days it seems as if everybody, from the left and right alike, wants to censor something.

The Mary Whitehouse lobby are no longer the only ones wishing to ban screen violence. Hollywood stars, too, now want less murder in the movies. Meanwhile, the Anti-Nazi League demands a ban on the film *Romper Stomper*, and Labour-run Glasgow council bans it, presumably because it believes that pictures of Australian skinheads beating up Vietnamese immigrants will incite the people of Scotland to do likewise.

A similarly broad consensus in favour of some sort of censorship can be spotted on many other issues. So Tory heritage secretary Peter Brooke's efforts to stop the Red Hot Dutch TV channel from broadcasting in Britain have been applauded by feminists who want pornography outlawed.

After the Warrington bomb, radical Channel 4 cancelled plans to show Ken Loach's film *Hidden Agenda* (about a British shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland) even before the *Sun* had time to accuse it of giving succour to terrorism.

And while American reactionaries like Colonel Oliver North and the Los Angeles Police Department campaign for bans on anti-police rap records, the British pressure group Outrage demands that the BBC ban anti-gay ragga stars from *Top of the Pops*.

At *Living Marxism*, we stand for a ban on nothing. Nothing at all. No cutting of pornographic or violent films, no controls on the scandal-mongering press, no policing of the airwaves. No political

censorship, no blasphemy laws, no bans on 'indecent' or 'offensive' material.

It says a lot about the anally retentive times in which we live that such a basic anti-censorship attitude should today be considered extreme.

People of a critical, questioning outlook appear to be members of a seriously endangered species. Instead, individuals and groups from all sides are operating in an increasingly conservative fashion. Those on the left and the right might find different things intolerable (although not always), but what they all seem to have in common is a very low tolerance level, and a high-handed propensity to censor.

Instead of encouraging the fullest possible exchange of arguments and clash of ideas, the fashionable thing today is to demand a clampdown on what you consider unacceptable opinions, to scream 'shut up' and stick your head back under the duvet. This ban-happy attitude reflects a bad case of narrow-mindedness, one which assumes that making a problem go away is the same thing as solving it. It is rather like the outlook of the City of London businessmen who have got the council to build a steel fence around Lincoln Inn's Field, as a 'solution' to the problem of homeless people sleeping on the grass outside their office windows.

The fact that many from the left are now part of the consensus for censorship indicates just how far things have gone. Not so long ago, they would have been to the fore in fighting against bans. Now they are often the ones demanding more. They do not seem to realise that calling for censorship, on whatever grounds, can

only invite further intrusion by the state into our lives, and hand the authorities the right to dictate what we can do. And who do you suppose is going to benefit from that?

Interference by the state poses an increasingly serious problem for many working people. From video surveillance of our streets to the new crackdown on single parents, the authorities are gradually extending their control over more and more aspects of our lives. They do not need any excuses to poke their noses and notebooks into any more corners. Yet they are being offered invitations to throw their net wider still, thanks to all those now calling for more censorship. The state will exploit those invitations to strengthen its political control over society.

Of course, most people who support bans of one sort or another will say that they do not want political censorship. They are merely asking for controls on the obscene or the offensive. The question is, however, who decides what is 'obscene or offensive' in our society? It is the powers that be—the cabinet ministers, the judges, the police chiefs and the other pillars of the establishment—and they will define and redefine these terms in whichever way they see fit.

Take pornography. The authorities might agree with the new puritanism of anti-porn campaigners, and take steps to ban Red Hot Dutch as obscene. But they will also extend the definition of obscenity to suit their own purposes. In which case, the gay rights groups demanding bans on ragga musicians will find that homosexuals are far more likely victims of any wave of censorship. And magazines like

*Living Marxism* could be next in line to receive the official stamp of disapproval as 'obscene and offensive'.

There was a prime example of the dangers involved in asking the state to ban what we consider offensive in April, when a handful of moronic anti-abortion crusaders from America came to Britain to make trouble. Some pro-choice campaigners called upon the government to deport the offensive Americans as unwanted aliens. But granting the government such moral authority to deport or exclude people from Britain on political grounds is a big mistake. It is a safe bet that the typical person deported as an offensive alien in future will not be a wealthy, white, Christian evangelist campaigning against abortion.

The risk of inviting state interference is only part of the problem with the widespread calls for censorship in the nineties. An equally negative effect is the creation of a pinched and censorious political climate, in which meaningful criticism and debate is sidelined.

Faced with dangerous ideas such as racism, the tendency today is to try to shut them up rather than to expose them. That might appear effective. In fact it is idiotic, since it allows influential, reactionary arguments to go unchallenged. The Glasgow council ban on *Romper Stomper* might have pleased the Anti-Nazi League, but it will have done nothing to undermine the prejudice against Asian families in Glasgow.

The effect of censoring arguments instead of confronting them is to suppress any serious critical thinking. That in turn helps to create an atmosphere of repression and conformity, in which anything that steps outside the increasingly narrow confines of the mainstream is frowned upon. It means that the questions which matter—about what the government

## Who decides what is obscene or offensive in our society?

is doing to the unemployed at home, or to the Serbs or Iraqis abroad—are rarely even asked, never mind properly answered.

The uncritical climate in Britain is best symbolised by the media, much of which today is extraordinarily tame even by its own supine standards. All the talk about the possibility of imposing new controls on the press, and of barring newspapers from covering public scandals, has had its effect. It has resulted in an even more blinkered media worldview, and ensured that important events at home and abroad are discussed only in terms laid down by the authorities.

Some may have breathed a sigh of relief recently when the government seemed to draw back from imposing a more extensive system of press censorship. But with the media operating under such a strict code of self-censorship, who needs bans and statutory controls?

There has never been a more important time to challenge censorship and encourage critical thinking on every front. Our motto for today should be 'Question everything, ban nothing'.

Our aim ought to be to raise a critical voice in every discussion, to breathe some controversy and life back into the

corpse of political debate, and to say that which the new breed of censors (official and self-appointed alike) finds offensive.

*Living Marxism* is a magazine for everybody who wants to show them what they can do with their bans. This year we have taken some important steps to challenge censorship and break out of the confines of mainstream debate—most notably, through our sponsorship of the Selective Silence exhibition.

That exhibition of photographs of atrocities committed against Serbs, which had been banned by the British government under United Nations sanctions, caused a public furore when it was staged in London in March. It has since been on a successful tour of other British cities, and is on its way to Europe. This is the sort of censorship-busting initiative which we hope to repeat, with your support.

In an age when the censor seems to be king, let us uphold the right to be offensive, and refuse to bow before their sacred cows. Contrary to what some people think, civilisation is not at risk from women's magazines which want to publish pictures of an erect male member. But it is in danger from flabby Members who want to dictate what we can and cannot watch, hear or read.

If you would like more information about *Living Marxism* readers' groups in your area, write to Penny Robson, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or phone (071) 278 9908

## The truth about Yugoslavia

It would appear that in her article ('A selective silence', March) Joan Phillips was attempting to bring the full truth of the war in Croatia to light. Unfortunately, the article turned out to be another dissection of the truth. Phillips only selected those truths (and some mistruths) which she wanted published, thereby showing that she is biased toward one side. Some statements she made deserve more scrutiny, especially in the light of the introduction to the article which states that '*Living Marxism* takes no side in the Yugoslav conflict'.

Phillips takes exception to a recent news article about the discovery of a mass Croatian grave near Vukovar, saying that attention should be focused on 'what is happening to the Serbs in Krajina today' rather than 'focusing attention on what happened to Croats in Vukovar more than a year ago'. Apparently there is a double standard here, for the photos that go along with the article contain pictures of Croat Ustashe atrocities that took place over 40 years ago, as well as the massacre of Serbian civilians in Gospic in 1991 (a case that got plenty of coverage in the USA, where I was living when the story broke in January 1992). Phillips seems to be saying that if it is a matter of Serbians victimised by Croats (or Muslims), it should be reported no matter when it happened. On the other hand, any atrocities committed by Serbs should basically be ignored.

Phillips insists that more attention should be given to the present plight of the Serbs in the Krajina region. Fair enough. But would she also insist that the plight of the Croats and other non-Serb residents of the Krajina regions should also be reported? For example, in Baranja, in Eastern Croatia, Croats and Hungarians are being threatened, beaten up and sometimes killed to this day. This is an attempt by the Serbs to scare them out, which has been quite effective. Baranja's population before the war was two-thirds Croatian and Hungarian, and one-quarter Serbian. It is now almost exclusively Serbian.

Finally, I take exception to Phillips' implication that Serbian-run camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina are some sort of media fabrication. I find this quite insulting since I personally know people who were in these 'non-existent Serbian death camps' who have suffered beatings, torture and rape. Phillips' flippant and irresponsible comments are reminiscent of the anti-Semitic assertions that the Nazi death camps were conjured by some sort of international Jewish conspiracy.

Phillips concludes her article by stating that 'it is time to demand the truth'. Indeed it is. The whole truth.

Edo Bosnar Zagreb, Croatia

I have read your articles regarding the wars in former Yugoslavia with some frustration. Whilst I appreciate your attempts to 'break the selective silence' (by addressing the obvious anti-Serbia propaganda in the Western media), and to illustrate the exploitation and aggravation of the situation by recession-struck, enemy-seeking Western powers making play for hegemony, I feel that these arguments have become something of a 'mantra' and the casualty has been any deeper understanding of what is going on.

Whilst it is important to provide evidence on the nature of the anti-Serb propaganda campaign, this should not lead to the conclusion that the Serbs now commit 'supposed' crimes instead of real and horrible ones. Your consistent interspersing of editorial 'riders' suggesting that *Living Marxism* does not support the use of the military for territorial gain by any side does little to undermine the tone of the rest of the articles. Support for the vilified underdog is absolutely necessary, but not to the point that it blinds the discussion. That's reactionary.

Your oft-repeated argument that the West is entirely to blame for the outbreak of war, due to the recognition of Croatia by Germany and of Bosnia by the USA, for their own domestic and international ends, although obviously with truth and weight, is not explanation enough. It set off a power struggle, you say. Well, what is the nature of the power struggle? Who are the players? How is this revolting dogma of nationalism being flamed, that leads presumably ordinary citizens to burn each others' cities to the ground? Why has the West chosen Serbia to be the villains and not Croatia?

In the East they say that when you get beyond the mantra you find understanding, enlightenment. Enlighten me.

Evan English Vauxhall, London

## X-factor

In his article 'The resurrection of Malcolm X' (March), Emmanuel Oliver says 'there was nothing particularly exceptional about Malcolm X, either personally or in his politics'. As a black American I must disagree wholeheartedly. Although Malcolm never got any legislation passed or directly influenced American public policy as Martin Luther King did, we must remember that his work was cut short. Malcolm did not believe that working within the system would ever accomplish anything for the black man in America. Dr King was an accepted black leader in this country, whose message of peace was harmless to the establishment. Malcolm on the other hand was not willing to compromise with the powers that be. To quote from him directly, 'you don't take your case to the criminal, you take your criminal to court'.

During the last year of his life Malcolm made two trips to Africa and the Middle East to garner support for a UN resolution which would condemn America on its own soil for its abuse of the human rights of American blacks. Although this never came to pass, it does show that politically Malcolm X was a man who was years ahead of his time. The author was way off when he played down the significance of this great revolutionary.

Maxwell Pringle Vallejo, California

## Professional bastards?

While the main point of Sharon Clarke's article ('The Great Jobs Fraud', April) was well made (this is not a yuppie slump), the defensiveness about architects, lawyers and other 'middle class professionals' should have been edited, or explained.

'Those bastards', like me, now find ourselves hard hit, if not the hardest-hit. Also most professionals I know are now totally disoriented politically.

The aim of *Living Marxism* should be to avoid such familiar lefty, workerist nonsense, to cut through the popular understanding of what it means to be working class. I trust Sharon Clarke does not mean that salaried professionals have escaped the need to sell their labour power. Or that a fancier house makes a capitalist. Most professionals do consider themselves above 'working class'. Who wouldn't? No-one this side of a revolution chooses to be working class, but it comes as a revelation to realise that you are.

Come on *Living Marxism*, explain this better, expose the lies about self-employment, professional careers, and the defunct myth of a home-owning democracy which may be dead but not yet forgotten. I can accept that us bastards are a burden on the surplus value the employers cream off from the productive labour of the horny-handed producers, but don't tell me I have no role to play in shaping the future. Professionals can fall either side of the fence we are being knocked off. Help more jump your way.

Ian Adams Newcastle

## Child Support Act

Regarding the article by Debra Warner on the new Child Support Act ('An irresponsible act', April). The act's main purpose is to reduce the government's social security bill. However, it has other uses, which might prove even more beneficial to the government in the long term.

The act enables the state to have greater surveillance of private life—and by private, I mean economic rather than sexual life. Both parents will have a vested interest in minimising their own income to the authorities, and

maximising that of the other parent. A good deal of 'black economy' work and trading is likely to come to the attention of the authorities through the mutual 'shopping of each other' by the antagonistic parents, bearing in mind that those parents who were not antagonistic are likely to become so, by the very workings of the act.

I believe the 'surveillance' aspect is central to the act's purpose, hence the setting up of the quasi-political Child Support Agency—the very name reeks of Orwellian doublethink and doublespeak. For one thing is sure from this act, not one child will receive better support due to its provisions.

It is interesting how this government uses 'populist' commonsense attitudes to increase state social policing—in this case, the commonly held view that fathers should support their children; in the case of the mooted workfare proposals, that the unemployed are work-shy scroungers. Mrs Bottomley is even considering rationed resources in the health service to be allocated to the 'deserving' rather than the 'undeserving' ill.

**Deborah Berns** *London*

Debra Warner misses the crucial point about the new Child Support Act: it's not whether a single mother names the absent father, but whether she authorises the Child Support Agency to pursue him for maintenance. Without the mother's authorisation, the agency cannot legally pursue the man, even if they know his name and whereabouts. The woman may then face the £8.80 deduction, but she will have time to consider what to do, and has the right of appeal.

Some women have said they would rather make an arrangement with the father to make up the deduction in return for not authorising the agency—it would be much cheaper for the man, and potentially much less disruptive for the mother. There is no definitive list of what agency officers will accept as grounds for refusing to cooperate. A vital part of defending single mothers is to expand the definition of 'harm or undue distress', establishing precedents for a woman's right not to authorise and not to be docked either.

Your article also fails to mention that the act is a racist attack of the financial kind. One

in five single mothers on income support is black.

Since February 1992 when we launched the Campaign Against the Child Support Act (CACSA), we have lobbied, picketed, published and protested in many ways, including by coordinating a movement of non-cooperation to defeat it. Over 60 organisations are now affiliated to CACSA, and numbers are growing.

Failing to tell your readers about CACSA, and to give accurate information about their rights, reinforces the terrorism the act promotes. Your defeatist argument implicitly follows Ros Hepplewhite's line that the payment of maintenance will become 'inevitable like income tax'. But there's nothing inevitable about it: building a successful movement can defeat it, just as the poll tax was defeated. What will *Living Marxism* do to help defeat it? Rhetoric is not enough—it's actions that count.

**Wilmette Brown**

*Campaign Against the Child Support Act,  
PO Box 287, London NW6 5QU*

### **But it is art**

When Carl Andre creates sculptures, he uses industrial materials such as brick, lead, steel or copper. Kenan Malik, ('The good, the bad and the avant-garde', April) writes that he would have detected no discernible difference had Andre used garden gnomes instead of bricks. But there is a difference.

If gnomes are icons of popular culture, bricks and steel might more accurately be described as common rather than popular. Andre's use of these materials raises issues which, contrary to Malik's observation, do not require 'external commentary'. The traditional metal for sculpture is bronze, a material eschewed by Andre because of its fine-art connotations. Choosing his found or prefabricated materials, Andre assembles them in a grid pattern which is not lacking in aesthetic grace; by placing this grid in a museum context, Andre reclaims a significant space for a radical reinterpretation of the sculptural tradition.

Malik stumbles over a Carl Andre floor piece made from magnesium tiles. Instead of thinking through the novel experience of walking across this artwork, Malik hunts for the opinion of an

imaginary authority in a catalogue. Had Malik observed other visitors, he might have recorded an unusual range of behaviour. Some people walk over the piece, some around it, some hardly notice it, while others hesitate at its edge. The tiles occupy barely a centimetre of vertical space, but this is sufficient to disturb viewers' pre-formed expectations about sculpture.

Malik might have deduced this without recourse to a text. But written material on Andre can be illuminating. Andre worked as a brakeman and conductor on American freight trains. In his words, 'the railroads have all to do with linear masses and a railroad train is a mass of particles...I was continually shifting cars around and making new strings of materials'. Or how about, 'I'm not interested in reaching an ideal state with my works. As people walk on them, as the steel rusts, as the brick crumbles, as the materials weather, the work becomes its own record of everything that's happened to it'.

**Rene Gimpel** *London*

### **Bread and scam**

In addition to Andrew Calcutt's guide to scamming (April), can I say that me and my flatmate nick and resell church candles and make and sell wine and jewellery outside the students unions of Nottingham. In any free time between work and signing on we sell recipes for 'fun food' to *TV Quick* and write baleful letters to *Living Marxism*—an activity that to date has promised no financial reward.

So there are plenty of ways to survive the slump without dropping your trousers, stopping your heart or being run down. Does this letter win £5?

**Jem Brady** *Nottinghamshire*

### **Indecent photograph**

So Charlie Cross from Nuneaton doesn't like the 'Selective Silence' pictures (Letters, April). The government didn't ban the pictures because they are gross. If that was the reason, *Living Marxism* would have had to pull Toby Banks' mug-shot ages ago.

**Paul Liverpool**

(*Living Marxism* bows to public opinion. See page 37)

## **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

Iraq? Iran? North Korea? Cuba? Barely a week seems to go by without Western governments levelling damning accusations against another small state, or threatening to intervene forcefully in another part of the East or the third world.

Eddie Veale identifies the dangerous way the wind is blowing in global affairs

**S**ince early spring, a remarkable series of international crises has made headlines in the West.

Amid growing calls for firmer Western action against the Serbs in the former Yugoslavia, the air forces of America, France and the Netherlands began policing a no-fly zone over Bosnia in April. Other Western powers, including Britain and Germany, committed planes to support the operation.

### Pariah status

Meanwhile the West, led by the US authorities, was issuing threats to take action against several third world nations. Most ominously, North Korea was threatened with United Nations sanctions and international pariah status, after it dared to deny nuclear weapons inspectors access to some facilities which they had already searched six times.

The USA, fresh from its renewed assault on Iraq, announced that Iran too was now 'an international outlaw', and objected to a World Bank loan to the Tehran regime. Various agencies claimed to have discovered some sort of 'Iranian connection' in everything from the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York to the unrest in Egypt. Some also accused Sudan of being an Iranian stooge in the sponsorship of 'Islamic terrorism'.

### Cuban conspiracy

At the same time, US officials suddenly demanded an international oil embargo on Libya, in order to force Colonel Gaddafi to hand over two men accused of the Lockerbie bombing—a demand which came as a surprise to observers who had noted that Gaddafi was now more willing to toe the Western line.

The Clinton administration also considered a draft indictment that would implicate the Cuban government in a cocaine smuggling conspiracy, branding the Castro regime as a 'criminal racketeering enterprise' and accusing the president's brother Raúl of being in league with Colombian cocaine barons. Similar charges were used to justify the US invasion of Panama, and the abduction of General Manuel Noriega, in 1989.

As if all of that were not enough, the Western media has also been full of stories about state terrorism and alleged threats to global peace everywhere from Liberia and Zaire to Pakistan.

Why have the Western powers, and particularly the USA, become such keen advocates of foreign intervention? They always claim that they are motivated by humanitarian and peace-keeping principles. Yet their principles seem remarkably flexible.

Everybody recalls how the Americans went into Somalia a few months back to save it from starvation and warlords. Yet soon after the US marines had stormed up the beaches under the bright lights of the major television networks, Somalia slipped out of the news. It has since slipped into worse chaos, while the Americans prepare to leave.

### Not on prime time

Remember Panama? Since the high-profile US invasion force arrived to save them from General Noriega and the drug barons, and destroyed their city in the process, the people of Panama have suffered more than ever. But not on primetime television.

The real reasons why the Western powers are driven to intervene more and more today have nothing to do with alleviating the suffering of downtrodden people in the third world. Instead, they have to do primarily with resolving the crisis facing the ruling elites in the West itself.

The combined impact of economic slump and political crisis has seriously undermined the legitimacy of governments and institutions in every Western nation. From the American Republicans to the French Socialists, ruling parties have collapsed in disarray. There is no longer public enthusiasm for any political movement in the West. Italian ministers are widely regarded as Mafiosi, members of the British royal family are seen as deadbeats, and the high and mighty of every other nation are held in similarly low esteem.

Against this fraught background, the ruling classes of the Western nations are desperately seeking new ways in which to rebuild their authority and so reassert their control over

society. Increasingly, they are focusing on foreign affairs as the arena in which they believe they can make most impact. After all, it must seem far easier to send a few planes overseas, or despatch a threatening letter to a third world president, than to tackle the deep problems at the roots of the economic slump at home. In this way, the domestic crisis of Western capitalism is relocated on to the international stage.

The USA, as the leading player in global affairs, provides the clearest example of the process. Bill Clinton spent his presidential election campaign calling on America to 'come home', contrasting his own concern with the domestic economy to George Bush's dalliance in foreign affairs. Since Clinton came to office, however, what have been the major concerns of his administration? Somalia, Bosnia, and Russia. Clinton has more chance of asserting his leadership and authority over there than he has by attempting to solve industrial stagnation and social decay in the USA itself.

Once America or any other power gets involved overseas, it unleashes another dynamic towards further intervention—the increasing rivalries among the Western nations themselves. With the end of the Cold War having removed the anti-Soviet cement from the Western alliance, differences among the Western nations over everything from trade to diplomacy have come to the surface. None of them can afford to stand idly by while their 'allies' impose their authority on the global stage. When the USA intervenes in a foreign issue, the rest of the Western powers are unlikely to be far behind, and the crisis becomes internationalised.

The 'humanitarian' Western powers do not really care too much about the local issues involved in the various countries where they interfere. They are simply looking for convenient pretexts on which to launch interventions which are motivated by wider concerns—primarily the need to demonstrate Western authority and control.

So America's shortlived concern about hunger in Somalia does not appear to stretch to the millions starving in the rest of Africa. And the recent campaign against North Korea

on the nuclear issue ignores the massive proliferation of arms among other, pro-Western states in the East Asian region. It is worth recalling that Iraq has already been flattened by the USA, Britain and their allies, on the pretext of taking out nuclear weapons facilities which nobody had ever seen.

### Who knows?

Seen in this context, it becomes clear why the question 'Where will the West strike next?' is so hard to answer. The Western powers themselves do not know where it will be. One coup or food shortage somewhere may be seen as a suitable pretext for intervention, another somewhere else may not be. The justification and the location of intervention changes all the time. What remains constant is the accelerating dynamic towards more self-serving Western interference in the affairs of peoples in the East and the third world.

Only one thing seems to appear in the media more often than reports of Western intervention today. And that is demands from liberal commentators for the Western powers to interfere even more, and even more forcefully. Naively mistaking the humanitarian rhetoric for reality, these people call upon the Western powers to solve the world's problems.

Then, when Western governments reveal their cynical motives by quietly dropping one intervention and moving on to the next, leaving a disastrous mess behind, the liberal critics can only call upon them to try harder next time. Those who are concerned about ending war and suffering should be trying to ensure that there is no next time so far as Western intervention is concerned. ●

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## **National demonstration and festival against militarism and western intervention**

**Saturday 7 August 1993, London**

**Called by the Campaign Against Militarism and the Irish Freedom Movement  
Telephone (071) 278 9908**

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# Where will the West strike next?

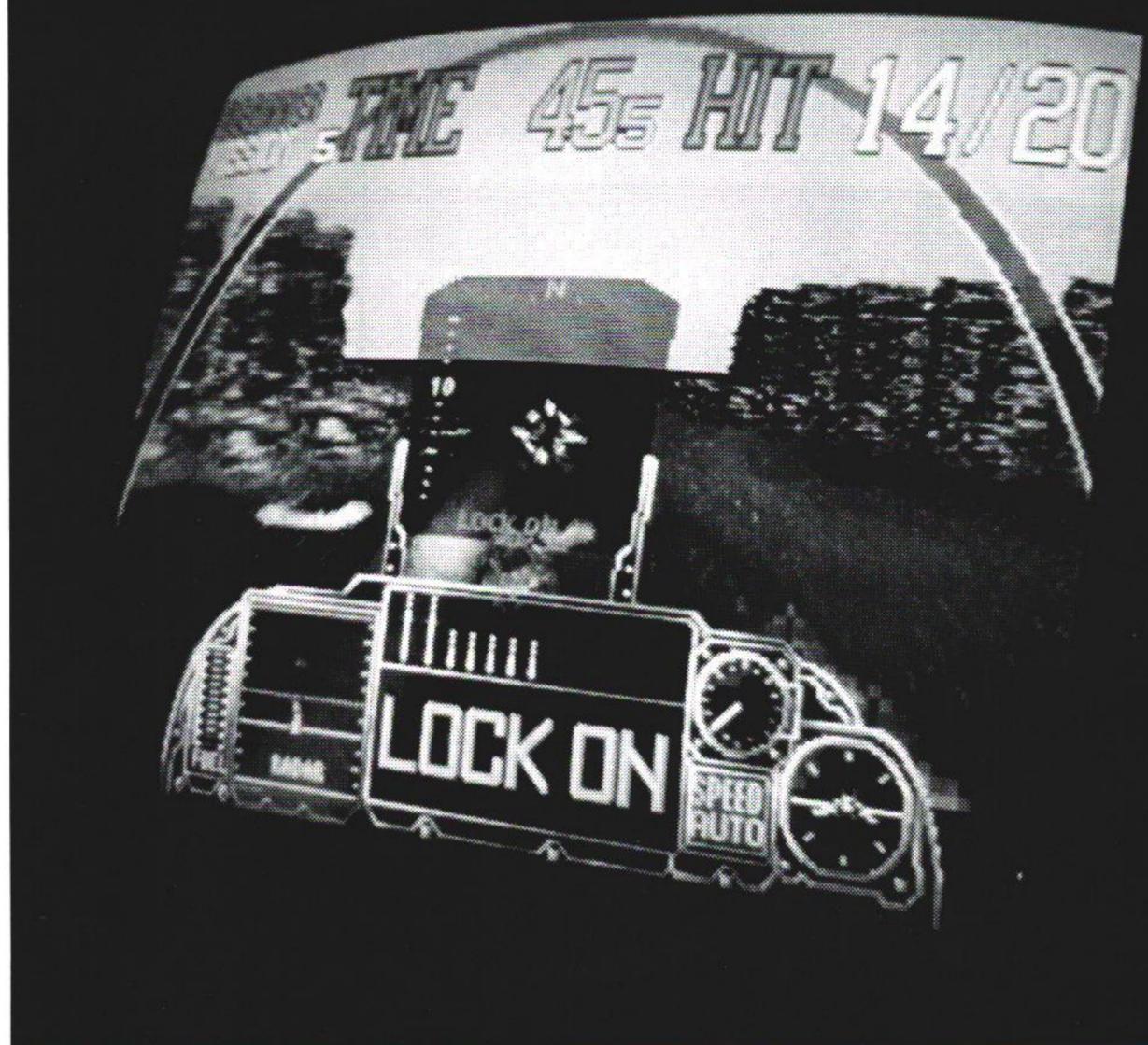
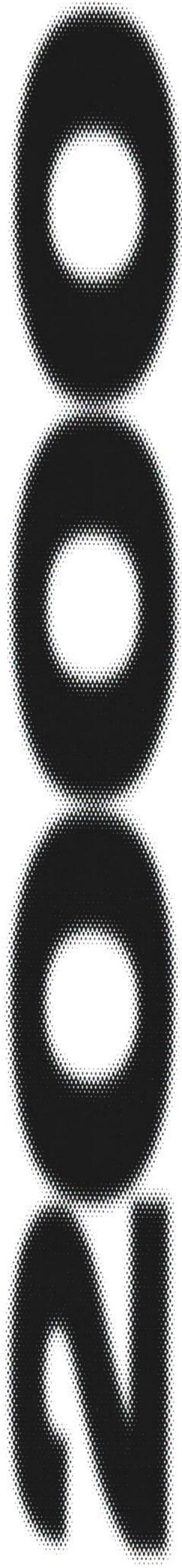


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**Friday 23 July—Thursday 29 July 1993**  
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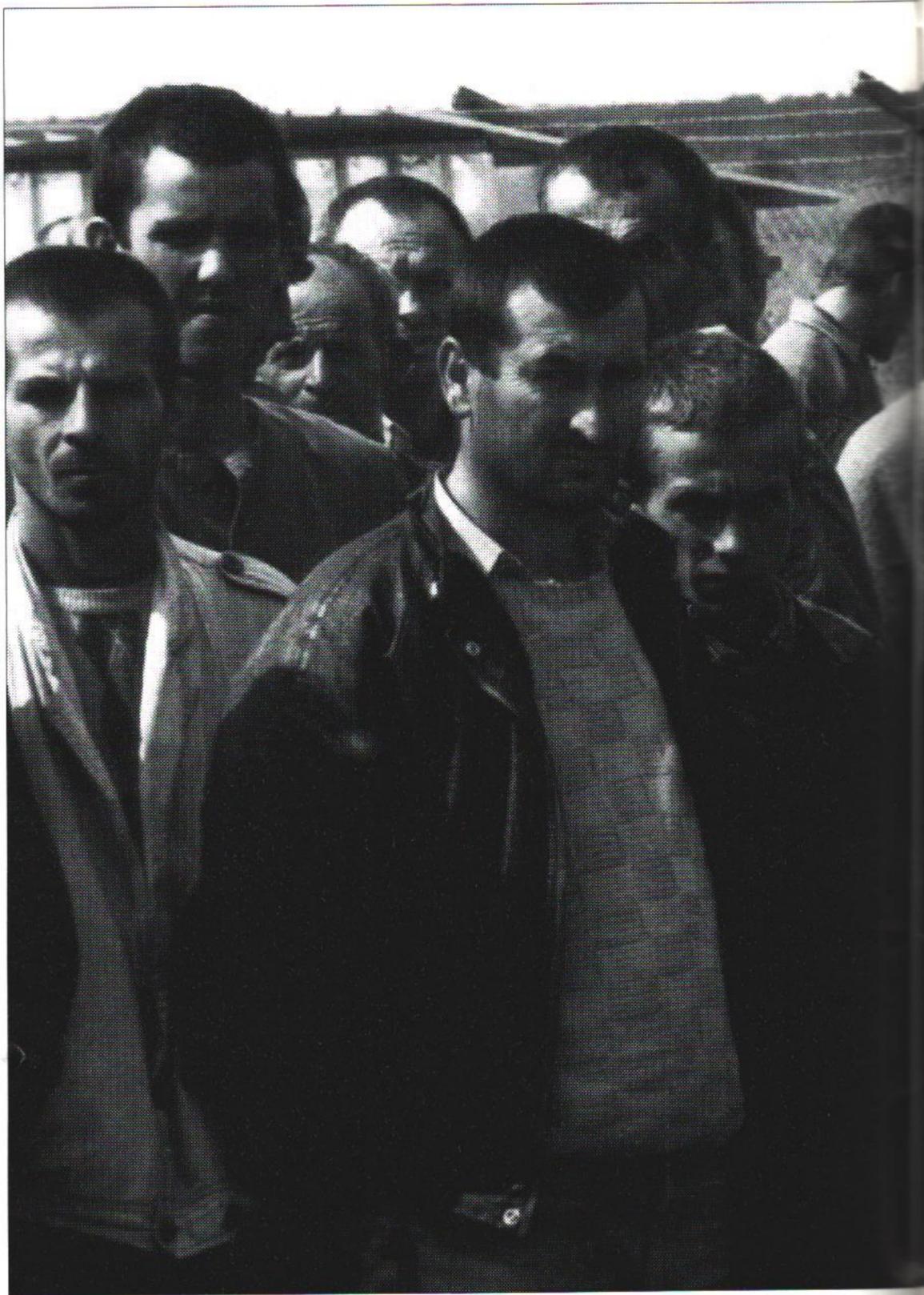
In Britain and America, all of this year's media prizes for international reporting have been won by journalists covering the war in Bosnia. The award-winning stories about 'death camps', 'ethnic cleansing' and 'rape camps' have helped to turn international public opinion against the Serbs and in favour of Western intervention.

Joan Phillips has consistently criticised media coverage of the war in Yugoslavia. She went back to Bosnia to investigate two stories which raise questions about the way in which that war is being reported. One is about a British mercenary fighting with the Muslims in Bosnia. The other is about an American journalist who has just won a Pulitzer prize for his stories about Serbian atrocities

**R**obert Loftus, a British mercenary, first went to Bosnia in September 1992 to fight with the Muslims, because he believed media reports blaming the Serbs for all that was happening there. Ironically, the tables were turned once Loftus arrived in Bosnia. He became a source of stories about Serbian atrocities for any journalist who would listen. From his position behind the Muslim front lines near Tuzla in north-east Bosnia, the British mercenary seems to have shot off his mouth more than his 7.62mm weapon.

Loftus liked telling stories so much that he kept an extensive diary detailing his activities and his links with various foreign journalists. The diary was found by Serbian soldiers after a battle with the Muslims on Mount Majevisa. The story of the British mercenary and his Western media contacts became a major news item in Serbia.

According to the Serbian news agency, Tanjug, Robert 'Lofthouse', from Nottingham, England, was captured in January by Serbian forces on Mount Majevisa, where he had been fighting as a mercenary with the Muslim Bosnian defence force



(the Serbs got the misspelling of Loftus' name from an envelope addressed to him in Nottingham). They claimed that Loftus had been passing black propaganda to various Western news agencies.

Predictably, the British Foreign Office is saying little about the Loftus affair. Officials were keen to suggest, however, that Loftus was not a mercenary, but a humanitarian relief worker. However, aid workers do not generally carry automatic weapons.

The Tanjug story is contradicted by the fact that Loftus turned up in Britain in April. He had been wounded in the head, but not captured by the Serbs. Instead, it would seem that they found his diary, the envelope, photos and other personal effects, presumably abandoned in a disorderly retreat by the Muslims with whom Loftus was fighting.

Loftus' return to England was presaged in his diary. Among the final entries, there is a reference to 'some unfinished business in Nottingham':

# Who's making the news in Bosnia?



Not a holiday camp, but not a death camp either: the Serb-run Batkovic detention camp in eastern Bosnia

'I ran from the mistake I made because of shame. But having come close to death several times has made me think that life is too precious to run away from and come what may I will answer to my peers for my stupidity.' (6 November 1992)

Loftus was running away from the police. Having returned to Nottingham in April, he then disappeared again. At the time of writing, his whereabouts are unknown.

There's a lot that remains murky about the Loftus story. But there are some things of which we can be certain. Robert Loftus was a mercenary who passed on hearsay stories about Serbian atrocities to Western journalists.

Loftus admits in his diary that he was a mercenary, receiving money for fighting with the Muslims. He records in his diary that he had contact with Western journalists. And his diary reveals that he had no hard evidence for his atrocity stories.

'Well it's back to the front line again', begins the first entry in the diary, 'cleaning weapon and getting ready to say hello to the Chetniks [in the Muslim or Croat usage, a derogatory term for any Serb] with a full clip....I am once again stuck on an unknown hill surrounded by Omir's men whom I have nicknamed the wild bunch. They are guys who hate the Chetniks very badly. They carry Kalashnikovs and grenades and once they get tanked up on the local brew, slivovich [sic], they start shouting, waving their weapons about and in between spitting a lot they shout "motherfucking Chetniks"' (24 September 1992).

## Behind lines

Most of the entries describe the mind-numbing routine of camp life, which revolved around eating (macaroni), drinking, farting, smoking, spitting, playing poker and sleeping. Since he didn't speak Serbo-Croat, Loftus was even more bored than the others (he kept saying he would have to learn the 'Bosnian' language, which shows how little he did learn). His days off were spent drinking: 'As usual on my leaves I got pissed on the local brew and as usual woke up with a hangover.' (1 October 1992) All in all, between the bouts of boredom and the drinking binges, Loftus was living in an atmosphere ripe for story-telling and rumour-mongering.

Loftus spent most of his time well behind the Muslim lines. His diary records no instance of him being involved in direct fighting. Instead, the Muslim commanders kept him back in camp, where he soaked up his comrades' tales from the front. One of his commanding officers, Rasmir, told Loftus what his role would be:

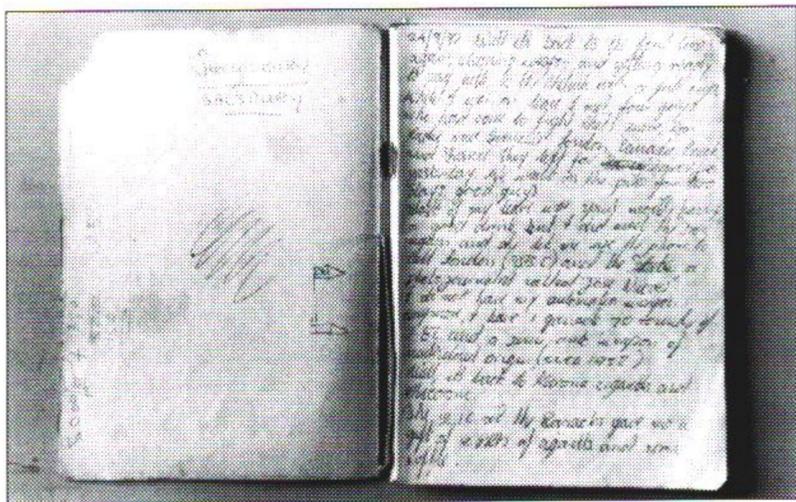
'Rasmir sat me down and told me the reason why he wants me to stay alive. He said as a Westerner I will be able to tell the truth about the war in Tuzla and the surrounding battle areas....For the first time in my life I have a purpose. No more wasted years.' (22 October 1992)

Loftus was happy to be used as part of the Muslim propaganda effort. As his diary makes clear, the 'truth' about the war that Loftus told to any journalist who would listen came from behind one side's lines and was based on hearsay rather than hard evidence.

Loftus may have had reasons other than a desire to help his Muslim friends to pass on dirt about the Serbs to Western journalists. He was always broke; a mercenary's pay didn't go far. His days off were spent on the phone to Barclays Bank in Nottingham trying to transfer money to the Bank of Tuzla, and scrounging hotel ►

rooms, food, drinks and cigarettes (he wasn't impressed by the local brand, 'Karona', which he got in his rations).

Perhaps thinking that passing on information would pay better, or at least earn him a few free drinks, Loftus began to contact Western journalists. On 24 September he says his leave 'was spent mostly having a good drink, but I did meet the Doc again and she let me use her phone to call London, BBC, and the States—a photo-journalist called Josie Nieves.'



reporters he contacted was an American, Roy Gutman.

On Tuesday 13 October, Loftus notes having 'phoned Roy Gutman journalist for *Newsday*' while on leave the previous day. Gutman is mentioned again on 15 October:

'Remember to find Mr Tanovic's phone number/ Zagreb Roy Gutman -re-Marlboro + whiskey'

The other reference to Gutman in the exercise book is on the inside cover of the back page, where his name appears next to a table of four figures (presumably deutschmarks) totalling 950.

Gutman is *US Newsday's* European bureau chief, who has just won America's top press award, a Pulitzer Prize, for his reporting of the war in Bosnia and Croatia. Gutman's stories about Serbian 'ethnic cleansing', 'death camps' and 'mass rape' have established his reputation as one of America's leading journalists.

In Serbia, however, Gutman's

says Gutman about his initial contact with Loftus. 'I also told him that unfortunately I wouldn't be able to use it. There's no way that I could take something from Tuzla from somebody who is not an official and who I didn't know anything about.'

Gutman says he took one tip from Loftus about a poison gas leak from a factory in Tuzla, and checked it out with other sources. In the end, says Gutman, 'I learned that nothing had happened. We know that Tuzla is sitting on a bomb, a chlorine bomb, but in this instance nothing happened'.

There is no evidence that Gutman used any information from Loftus for his stories. The *Newsday* reporter also denies that he paid Loftus money. What about the sums printed alongside his name in the back of Loftus' diary? 'I have no idea why that would be there', Gutman told me. 'You can check my bank statements if you want.'

Gutman says that he would not take unsubstantiated information from an unreliable source like Loftus. So what were the sources for his stories about Serbian atrocities?

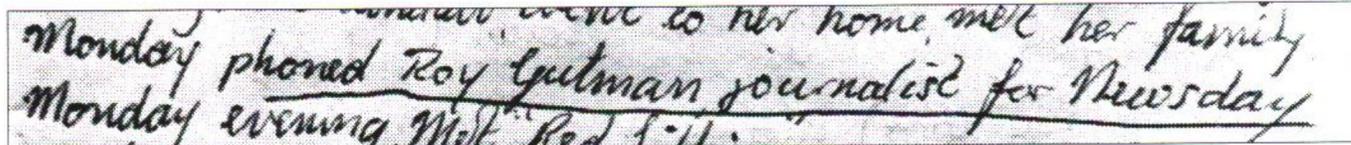
Gutman was the first American journalist to accuse the Serbs of running 'death camps' for Muslims and Croats in Bosnia. In early August 1992, one of Gutman's reports appeared on the front page of New York's *Newsday* under the headline 'Death camps'.

This was a very serious charge for a journalist to make. We were being asked to accept that the Serbs were operating camps in which they were systematically exterminating people. Through the use of the term 'death camp', Gutman was inviting comparisons with the camps run by the Nazis during the Second World War, in which six million Jews were slaughtered. Indeed, in some of his articles Gutman made direct comparisons between the activities of the Serbs and the Nazis.

### The evidence

The allegation made by Gutman and other Western journalists that the Serbs were running Nazi-style death camps in Bosnia caused an international outcry and helped to polarise world opinion against the Serbs. The publication of these stories led to calls by the US government for a war crimes investigation and punitive action against Serbia.

What was the evidence on which Gutman based his 'death camp' stories? When he spoke to me in April, the *Newsday* reporter insisted that the Serbs were lying when they accused him of writing horror stories about places he had never even visited. The Serbs were referring to Gutman's stories about Serbian camps at Omarska and Trnopolje near Banja Luka in northern Bosnia. In fact, as Gutman says, he did



Loftus' diary, and a reference to Roy Gutman

On 27 September, Loftus says, 'we had a talk about the Chets using CS gas. I must try and get the news to England for the press. I wonder if they know about this "new" Chetnik tactic'. There is no evidence that the Serbs or anybody else have used gas in Yugoslavia. But the poison gas story did appear in the Western press and on TV in September 1992. It is an example of how camp fire rumours can be transformed into fact by a loquacious mercenary like Loftus.

### 'I was thrilled'

Loftus clearly fancied himself as a reporter. He asked his contact in Tuzla, 'Mr Smiles', 'if I could try my hand at journalism' (13 October). His diary is full of anti-Serbian stories, written like tabloid news reports. 'The Chetniks have butchered women, children and the old', he writes on 14 October. 'They have raped young girls and are torturing and killing people who are in concentration camps.' Loftus substantiated none of these stories. They were based on rumour, not on direct evidence from eyewitnesses, never mind anything Loftus himself had seen. They are the kind of stories that always accompany war, collected in his camp and in the barracks and bars of Tuzla.

Loftus wanted people in the West to hear his version of what the Serbs were doing. He was busy writing letters, sending photographs and phoning journalists. One of the

name has been dragged through the mud since allegations about his supposed relationship with Loftus were first broadcast by the Serbs.

When the Serbian military authorities in Banja Luka obtained Loftus' diary, they eagerly publicised the fact that the British mercenary had been in contact with the American reporter. (Indeed, they went further, making outlandish charges against Gutman for which there is no evidence.)

Gutman admits that he spoke to Loftus on the telephone several times. He is matter of fact about his name appearing in Loftus' diary: 'My name gets mentioned in many places. I give my card to lots of people. I haven't got a problem with people phoning me.'

When Gutman first went to Tuzla, in the summer of 1992, there were no journalists there to speak of. He left his card with a lot of people and asked them to keep in touch. Somebody must have given Gutman's card to Loftus after the mercenary arrived in Tuzla in September.

'The guy called me out of the blue', recalls Gutman. 'And to tell you the truth I was thrilled when he phoned.' Loftus was eager to make media contacts, and Gutman, keen to keep in touch with what was happening in places like Tuzla, was pleased to have a local contact.

'I told him the main thing he should do was to try to get information out of Tuzla about what was happening there',

visit Omarska and Trnopolje. But not until September, *after* he had written his first 'death camp' stories.

When Gutman first went to Banja Luka in July 1992, most journalists were spending their time behind Muslim lines in Sarajevo. The Serbs in Banja Luka were flattered to receive a visit from a top US reporter. They offered him every assistance. Indeed, it was they who suggested that Gutman visit the prison camp at Manjaca with a delegation from the International Red Cross.

Gutman's 'death camps' accusation did not appear in the story he wrote for *Newsday* about Manjaca, but he did evoke the Nazi experience: 'Manjaca is one of a string of new detention facilities, which an American embassy official in Belgrade, the Serbian capital, routinely refers to as "concentration camps". It is another example of the human rights abuses now exploding to a dimension unseen in Europe since the Nazi Third Reich.' (*Newsday*, 19 July 1992) The opinions of US diplomats, reached from the vantage

this capital of Serb-conquered north Bosnia, houses a death camp where Serb authorities, with the backing of the army, have taken thousands of Muslims. Hepatitis is reportedly epidemic, and other diseases are spreading rapidly. The witness quoted the camp commander as warning the inmates that they will never leave it alive. The reports could not be independently confirmed.' (*Newsday*, 19 July 1992)

These hearsay reports could not be independently confirmed, Gutman admits, yet they are used nevertheless to support the contention that Omarska was a death camp. Gutman had not spoken to the witness quoted, but got his information second hand from an official of the Muslim relief agency, Merhamet.

Within weeks, Gutman had accused the Serbs of operating 'death camps' at Brcko and other places, in addition to Omarska. As well as being carried by *Newsday* and picked up by CNN, his stories were published in the British *Guardian* and other papers.

### Animal feed

On 5 August, Gutman was interviewed from Zagreb by a Canadian radio programme, *The Journal*. Asked to elaborate on his 'death camp' reports, Gutman did not back off from the idea: 'I think in at least two cases, one could speak of death camps, that is to say, a detention centre where people are sent with the intention that they will not come out alive. I've reported about two of them. One is called Omarska, the other one is at Brcko. I've interviewed several people who were at Omarska and one who was at Brcko, and I came away with the conclusion that these really were death camps.'

What were the facts on which Gutman based his Brcko and Omarska stories, run in the *Guardian* on 5 and 6 August?

On the basis of one testimony from an alleged former inmate of Brcko, Gutman named Brcko as a death camp, and the *Guardian* used the same emotive expression without quotation marks in a headline to Gutman's story (see 'Survivors tell of Serb death camps', *Guardian*, 5 August 1992). According to Gutman's eyewitness to the alleged slaughter at Brcko, Alija Lujinovic, after killing 90 per cent of the 1500 prisoners at the camp, the Serbs rounded up the townspeople, and made the surviving prisoners drive them to a plant where they were cremated for animal feed. Lujinovic said he witnessed the murder and mutilation of male prisoners and the gang rape of women. This single testimony was backed up in Gutman's account by a highly partisan source—

the Bosnian Muslim government's Commission on War Crimes—which claims that 3000 people were killed in Brcko during a six-week killing spree by the Serbs.

There are two main sources for Gutman's stories from Omarska. The first is a Muslim man who asked to be identified as 'Meho', who alleged that armed Serbian guards executed prisoners in groups of 10 to 15 every few days. "They would take them to a nearby lake", said Meho. "You'd hear a volley of rifles. And they'd never come back." Meho's allegations were backed up in Gutman's article by speculation from an official source, which does not help to establish the truth or otherwise of the allegations made. "I think if these places are not death camps", said Pierre Andre Conod, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross delegation in Zagreb, "we might have access to them".

A man who wanted to be known as 'Hujca' was Gutman's other source for his story about Omarska, which suggested that Serbs at the camp were engaged in 'slaughter on a huge scale'. According to Hujca, who said he was held in a warehouse at Omarska for 12 days in May 1992, Serbian guards killed Croat and Muslim prisoners by slitting their throats or shooting them through the mouth. Hujca admits that he 'did not witness the killings' himself, but on one occasion saw eight corpses covered with blankets. On other days those who had buried the dead told him what they had seen. Hujca had been a fighter with the Muslim Bosnian defence force, a source of many tales of Serbian atrocities.

### Much surmise

Gutman also quotes another source who gave a hearsay account of how prisoners held in a huge open pit at Omarska were taken away by guards and never came back. This source was another member of the Bosnian Muslim defence force, Fahrudin Ganic, who had not been in the Omarska pit, but was repeating a story supposedly told to him by a 15-year old Muslim boy held in the pit for over a week in June 1992 (see 'Muslim held in packed warehouse adds to stories of systematic killings', *Guardian*, 6 August).

What does all this add up to? It adds up to two eyewitness accounts, two hearsay accounts and much surmise by Muslim and other officials.

We are being asked to accept the existence of death camps on the basis of Gutman's judgement of the truthfulness of his two eyewitnesses, Meho and Alija, and of the two hearsay accounts from Hujca and Ganic, the accuracy of which Gutman obviously ►



17 dead, not much said: the graves of Serbs massacred at Serdari

point of their hotel rooms in Belgrade, are here presented as evidence that the Serbs were running Nazi-style camps in the war zones of Bosnia.

In the same edition of *Newsday*, Gutman wrote a story about Omarska, another camp near Banja Luka which he had not visited, but which he nevertheless felt confident about calling a 'death camp': 'There are mounting indications that Omarska, a town near



could not test by talking to the burial crews who talked to Hujca or the young boy who talked to Ganic. In addition, Gutman's articles are peppered with comments by Muslim officials and Western relief agency sources which do not assist us in establishing whether these are truthful accounts.

## The death camp stories rely on hearsay and double hearsay

All in all, we are being asked to believe an awful lot on the basis of very little evidence. The death camp stories are very thinly sourced. They are based on very few accounts from alleged survivors. They rely on hearsay and double hearsay. They are given the stamp of authority by speculation and surmise from officials.

Gutman is not guilty of lying. The *Newsday* reporter did not try to hide the fact that his stories were thinly sourced. He was careful to state his sources and did not try to make them look more impressive than they were.

Yet when these stories were published, there was a dramatic disparity between the emphasis given to the accusations of Serbian atrocities, and that given to the riders concerning thin sources. The banner headlines were about 'death camps', the sentences admitting that 'the reports could not be independently confirmed' were tucked away towards the end of the article.

### Not the only one

On the basis of these stories, the world now believes that the Serbs were running death camps in Bosnia.

Gutman was not the only journalist to accuse the Serbs of running 'death camps'. In fact, the *Newsday* reporter is representative of a general trend in the coverage of the war in Bosnia.

In Britain, the 'death camp' story hit the front pages on 7 August, the day after ITN's Penny Marshall and Ian Williams filed their Bafta-award-winning reports from Omarska and Trnopolje, where they had seen some underfed prisoners, barbed wire and photos of beaten inmates. 'Belsen 92' accused the headlines in the *Mirror* and the *Star*, which said the Serbs had executed more than 17 000 Muslim and Croatian prisoners.

What are the facts about the Serbian camps in northern Bosnia? Nobody on the Serbian side ever claimed that these camps were holiday homes.

As Nada Balban, the spokeswoman at Omarska pointed out to another prize-winning British journalist, Ed Vulliamy of the *Guardian*, 'No one is proud. There is shame here' (7 August). But nor did the Serbs accept that these were 'death camps'.

Manjaca was a prisoner-of-war camp run by the military authorities according to the Geneva Convention. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had access to the camp from the start. Critics of the camp may have been right to suggest that many of the 4000 prisoners had not been involved in the fighting, and were being held for prisoner exchange purposes; the same thing was happening to Serbs in Muslim and Croatian camps.

Trnopolje, run by the civil authorities, could not even be called a detention camp, never mind a death camp. Many of the inmates came to Trnopolje voluntarily to escape the fighting in nearby villages. Their relatives and friends from the local villages were allowed to bring them provisions, and some prisoners were even allowed to visit the village themselves to buy food. Many people who left Trnopolje later said they regretted it. Who ever heard of people saying that they wish they'd stayed in a 'death camp'?

### Equal blame

Omarska, also run by the civil authorities, was an old iron mine and ore processing plant, where conditions were bad. The Serbs claim that Omarska was an 'investigation centre', where prisoners were interviewed to establish whether they should be sent to Manjaca or Trnopolje or put on trial.

After the storm about death camps had blown over, aid workers and former prisoners said that the attention focused on the camps had been misplaced. They claimed that most Muslims and Croats had been detained in small makeshift jails where the treatment of inmates ranged from mild to brutal. The Red Cross pointed out that although international condemnation had focused on the Serbs, the Croats and Muslims were running camps too and must share equal blame for abuses carried out against prisoners.

Prisoners at Manjaca, Omarska and Trnopolje did not get enough to eat. Some were beaten. And some were killed, no doubt. But none of this can make the 'death camp' charges stick. Anybody would think that the Serbs had invented prison camps, or that Western journalists had never heard of holding people prisoner in a war.

It is worth recalling that ITN was invited into Omarska and Trnopolje by the Serbs. If they had really been running 'death camps' would they have opened them up for inspection

by the world's media? With hindsight, it appears that the Serbs allowed themselves to be set up over the camps story.

At Banja Luka, they are still seething at the way the Western media handled the story. 'Let me tell you the real story of Omarska and Trnopolje', said Captain Milos Solaja of the Serbian army press centre. 'The ICRC has proof that these were normal prisons. The whole world can say what they like, but the ICRC knows the truth. If you want to believe something, it doesn't matter if you have no evidence. The media had their own agenda before they set foot in Omarska.'

### Three months later

Western reporting of the war has been so one-sided that ordinary Serbs do not believe that their story will ever be told. Some of them remember Roy Gutman for the stories he didn't write as well as those he did. In September 1992, Gutman visited the scene of a massacre of 17 Serbs in the village of Serdari near Banja Luka. When the Serbs later accused him of saying nothing about what he saw at Serdari, Gutman protested that a story about the massacre had appeared in *Newsday*—on 13 December.

Why did he wait almost three months to report a massacre of Serbian civilians in a place which he had visited? After all, he wasted no time before writing stories about Serbian atrocities in places he had not visited, on the basis of secondhand statements.

Gutman told me that he was not convinced by the truth of the story at the time. He visited the village on the afternoon of the massacre, but the corpses had already been removed. He admits he saw some blood and the smouldering houses, but was not allowed to see the bodies in the morgue. He suspected that something 'fishy' was going on when the Serbs played him a recording of a radio conversation they claimed to have intercepted, in which Croats and Muslims boasted of how many Serbs they killed that day at Serdari. Unconvinced, Gutman delayed writing the story for several months until he spoke to a source who had been involved in carrying out the massacre.

I too went to Serdari. As I walked through the gutted remains of the village, Zivko Novakovic, a local Serb who had carried out the corpses on the morning of the massacre, asked me, 'Are you not afraid for your job if you publish this story?'. As we left the village, Drago Djukic, another local Serb, asked me if the story of what happened to the Serbs of Serdari would find its way into print. 'How big will it be', he pressed me, 'something in the margins?'. ●



# Spanner and screw

**S**peaking personally, I can't understand why any man would want to have his foreskin nailed to a board or have a fish-hook shoved into his penis. I understand the associations between pain and pleasure but this sort of stuff is not for me. If a guy ever handed me a scalpel during the lingering moments of foreplay, I'd be up and away faster than you could spell masochist.

But whatever your sexual preference, one thing is clear. The law lords ruling that those who do enjoy consensual sexual torture are open to prosecution is not only an expression of small-minded sexual prurience, but also an example of the state further insinuating itself into our private lives. Lord Templeman laid his cards on the table when he summed up the ruling on what has become known as the Operation Spanner case: 'Society is entitled and bound to protect itself against a cult of violence. Pleasure derived from the infliction of pain is an evil thing. Cruelty is uncivilised.'

I agree that cruelty is uncivilised but I question whether a bench of law lords has the right to tell me what's cruel and what isn't. I've never considered the judiciary a particularly compassionate institution. On a scale of cruelty, it's arguable that the judiciary causes more human suffering in a day than those few 'sexual deviants' could do in a month of Sundays.

There are lots of things society needs protecting from—poverty, unemployment, homelessness are just a few obscenities that spring to mind. By contrast, the notion that a group of middle-aged, middle class chaps constitute a cult of violence and a threat to society seems bizarre.

The exact nature of the threat was never spelled out by the law lords, but the implication is that society needs protection from depravity, and that the law must decide what is and is not morally acceptable.

After all, if the authorities were to tolerate these perversions from a bunch of professionals including a lay preacher and a teacher, where would it all end? Given a licence to do just as we wish, what might you and I get up to?

The most revolting aspect of the case is the liberal chorus in support of the ruling. Number one on the nausea scale was the former editor of *Oz*, the radical, outspoken, occasionally banned publication of the sixties and seventies. Time was when editor Richard Neville championed the fight against censorship laws. He recently wrote a nasty piece in the *Guardian* explaining that they all went too far and that libertarian 'do as you please' thinking is at the root of today's moral decline. He not only accepts that there has been a moral decline, he accepts the blame for it. Furthermore, he bleats that the establishment is not taking the moral lapse seriously enough. He is shocked that it has taken the law lords quite so long to rule against chaps whose idea of fun is a fish-hook through the scrotum.

While the state prescribes what you can and can't do with your lover, former radicals applaud. There's an obscenity for you.

At least Andrew Puddephat, general secretary of Liberty, could see the issue at stake. He may not have the hip reputation of the *Oz* clique

but he managed to condemn 'the way the judgement legitimises intrusion by the state unnecessarily into people's private lives'. And state intrusion is exactly what's going on here.

It is becoming increasingly acceptable for the state to regulate every aspect of our lives. *Living Marxism* has pointed out that the James Bulger murder exposed how much of our lives is watched by surveillance cameras. Now it's accepted that the state should have the right to peer in though the bedroom curtains. Next on the agenda is increased regulation of what we watch on TV.

The proposed ban on Red Hot Television is an example of the same puritanical censoriousness as the prosecution of sado-masochists. Furthermore, it's already threatening to achieve an even greater consensus of support than the Operation Spanner ruling. It will be interesting to see what Liberty has to say on this, because liberals have been calling for bans on porn for over a decade.

Heritage secretary Peter Brooke reckons the 'sexually explicit content of Red Hot Television is unacceptable....It repeatedly offends against good taste and decency'. Even if you accept that the Conservative Party in general, and Peter Brooke in particular, should

arbitrate on matters of good taste and decency, you have to ask yourself why the government is so keen to prevent us viewing 'housewives bursting at the seams with volcanic passion'. Is the volcanic sexual passion of housewives any more offensive than the orgasmic enthusiasm of advert housewives for Ariel washing powder?

I find the presentation of housewives as mindless morons concerned with nothing more than 'household smells' infinitely more offensive than a close up of a Dutch

woman's crotch. A reported 25 000 British households have already paid £700 to obtain the transmitter required to view the porn programmes. When it was announced that the sale of these things might be banned, sales sky-rocketed. It seems that a fair proportion of the British public find it more stimulating than offensive, and why shouldn't they?

Is pornography a threat to society? Is it likely to deprave and corrupt? A broad-based moral lobby says it is. Ever since feminist writer, Robin Morgan, declared that porn was the theory and rape the practice, radicals have been happy to support reactionaries like Mary Whitehouse calling for bans on porn. Peter Brooke is worried about porn's effect on kids; feminists worry about its effect on rapists. All ignore the fact that for every rapist who claims he got the idea from porn there's another assailant—like the Yorkshire ripper—who claims to have been instructed by God to attack women. Nobody calls for a ban on the Bible.

Pornography may or may not be something you want to watch. You might or might not want to set fire to your dick or sew up your labia. But whatever your standards of 'taste and decency', whenever the state steps in to regulate what people can do it opens one more door into all of our lives and sets a precedent for greater interference and control. ●

## The state is peering in through the bedroom curtains

# No peace without freedom

Sharon Clarke questions the dominant response to the Warrington bomb

PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK



**T**he British authorities and media responded to the Warrington bomb which killed two boys in March by pointing the finger of blame at the British left.

Alongside the familiar condemnations of the IRA came

reports of a new police offensive against 'extreme left-wing groups' (*Sunday Times*) or just 'Reds' (*Sunday Telegraph*) said to be suspected of involvement in the IRA campaign in Britain. These stories smack of an attempt to find some post-Cold War work for the idle hands of the British security services. They should act as a warning sign of how the state is now seizing every opportunity to silence dissent and extend its political control over British society.

It is ironic that the authorities should seek to hold the British left responsible for Warrington in this way. The problems which lead to such bombings certainly do begin in Britain—but with the British government, not left-wing groups. The authorities over here must bear ultimate responsibility for the casualties which the Irish conflict creates on both sides of the Irish Sea.

## 'Evil psychos'

What is the true cause of the violence? The key phrases used to describe the IRA in the post-Warrington discussion were 'evil psychopaths' and 'terrorists'. Look at the bombing as a snapshot of destruction, in the way that the authorities want us to, and those words might seem to make sense. But look at what happened in Warrington in its proper context, and they do not.

The IRA has been conducting its military campaign in Britain and Ireland for more than 20 years. There are people involved in the Irish republican movement today who were not born when that campaign began. And they still have the support of a large enough section of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland to sustain their campaign, despite all of the measures that the British state has taken against them.

How can all this be explained away as the work of a few 'evil psychopaths'? Are we to believe that generations of Irishmen and women are somehow 'born bombers'? Or that entire districts of Northern Ireland are populated by violent lunatics?

Irish republicans must feel that they have good cause, to take such action for so many years. And the cause is freedom. Freedom from being ruled by a foreign power—Britain. Ireland may not be Africa or India, but British rule on Irish soil remains a form of colonialism all the same. It is

imposed on the nationalist community against its will, and enforced in classic colonial style by an occupying army of 30 000 troops and paramilitary police, backed by draconian laws and no-jury courts.

Of course the authorities present things differently. In their version, the British forces are neutral peace-keepers in a feud involving both republican and Loyalist gangs. As the republican movement has become more isolated of late, so the British have been better able to portray the conflict in this way. The reality is, however, that there are no neutrals in Northern Ireland.

## Two sides

When it comes down to it, there are only two sides in the Irish War: those who support British rule, and those who want to end it. On one side stand the British forces and administrators, and the Loyalists fighting to protect the relative privileges which British rule brings to their community (Catholics are still more than twice as likely to be unemployed as Protestants in Northern Ireland). On the other side stand the nationalists, and the Irish republican movement which thousands of them continue to support.

The fact that the Loyalist paramilitaries and the security forces are on the same side can best be seen in the cases of collusion, as Fiona Foster reports opposite. But even when the authorities disapprove of their sectarian excesses, the Loyalist gangs terrorising the nationalist supporters of Irish unity are effectively doing the British government's dirty work.

Whichever way you try to look at it, the British colonial presence in Northern Ireland is the *cause* of the problem. The IRA campaign is only a consequence. Those who are serious about finding a solution need to get at the root of the conflict, not the symptoms. As has been said before in *Living Marxism*, if there were no British guns in Ireland, there would be no Irish bombs in Britain.

The British authorities seek to distract from their own responsibility for the conflict in Northern Ireland by branding the IRA as 'terrorists'. It is an emotive label. But what does it mean?

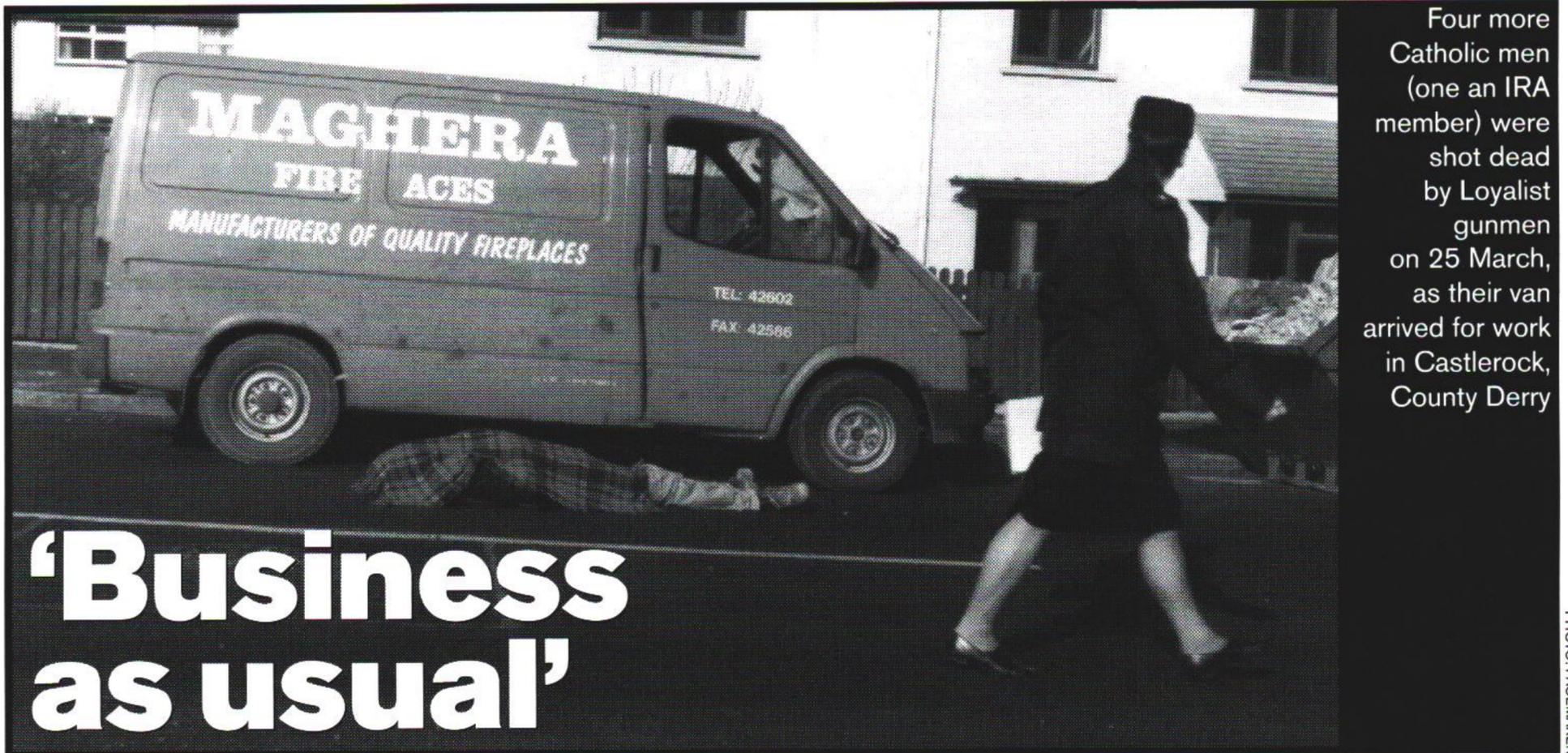
British law defines terrorism as 'the use of violence for political ends'. Yet from the Falklands to the Gulf to Northern Ireland itself, the British government is always using massive force for political ends. This is not called terrorism. Obviously, then, it is not the *violence* which defines whether something is a terrorist act, but the *political end* for which it is used.

If you use violence in pursuit of the political end of protecting British power, you are a soldier. If you do so in pursuit of the political end of Irish freedom, you must be a terrorist.

Around the world, only the oppressed are accused of terrorism and political violence. The oppressors are always called peace-keepers, policemen, righteous crusaders. Typically, in March, the news headlines

reported that Israel was clamping down on the occupied territories after a 'wave of Arab violence' had left 17 Jews dead since December. You had to look long and hard at the reports to discover that the Israelis had killed at least 76 Palestinians in the same period. In similar fashion, the British authorities and media milk the two Warrington deaths for all that they are worth, while playing down what is being done to Irish nationalists.

Strip away the hysteria and the prejudice, and the truth about the Irish War is very different from what we have been led to believe. The British authorities who now call for peace are responsible for causing and sustaining the conflict. They must take the blame for the suffering which it creates. A British withdrawal is the way to bring freedom to Ireland. And freedom is the precondition for a peaceful solution.



Four more Catholic men (one an IRA member) were shot dead by Loyalist gunmen on 25 March, as their van arrived for work in Castlerock, County Derry

## 'Business as usual'

While all eyes were focused on Warrington, few in Britain seemed to notice a new wave of sectarian assassinations by Loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. Fiona Foster reports on the background to the murder campaign—and the evidence of collusion between Loyalist gangs and the security forces

**T**here are people in what is supposed to be part of the UK who cannot go to bed at night without pulling steel shutters across their windows and putting bars across double-locked doors. They fear for their lives from gunmen who have

murdered nearly 100 of their number since January 1990. Yet their plight has not featured in the massive media hysteria about violent crime.

Perhaps that is not surprising, since these people do not fit the media stereotype of victims. They are Catholics from the nationalist community of Northern Ireland. And far from looking to the police to protect them, they believe that the British Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary collude with the Loyalist death squads which murder their relatives, friends and neighbours.

Having lived for years in Birmingham, Fiona O'Hagan might have found the green fields of South Derry liberating. But when her husband stood for Sinn Fein in the local council elections, they had to turn their new home into a mini-fortress. Bernard's predecessor, John Davey, was one of several Sinn Fein councillors shot dead in recent years. 'I made Bernard put flowery wallpaper over the steel shutters in the bedrooms and paint the steel door, to make them kind of blend in.'

While Fiona tried to make life as normal as possible for their three

children, Bernard did his best to stay alive. He varied his daily route to the college where he taught and, to the delight of Unionist councillors, arrived at and left council meetings at different times. 'We tried to protect the kids from things. When they bent down to look under the car they were only imitating their daddy—they didn't know what they were checking for.'

### In their own home

In September 1991, as Bernard O'Hagan walked across the car park to work, he was shot eight times by two unmasked gunmen who walked calmly into the road and disappeared.

Anthony Fox from Dungannon has never made any secret of his opposition to the military occupation of his country. For this he is subjected to constant harassment by the British forces and regular death threats from Loyalist paramilitaries. Last year his 65-year old father and 58-year old mother were slaughtered in their own home by the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).

Anthony had left home two years earlier, after the RUC told the family that the police files on Anthony and ►



his brother had mysteriously 'fallen into the hands' of Loyalist death squads. This kind of visit is now commonplace in nationalist areas.

Anthony's brother-in-law was also murdered by Loyalists last January. Shortly afterwards Anthony was told by RUC officers that he had been the intended target of that attack. 'I see these attacks as part and parcel of Britain's strategy to defeat republicans

## 'The British military can now stand back and let the Loyalists do the job for them'

by deflecting them from fighting the Brits and drawing them into a sectarian feud. In fact they make me and people like me more determined to be rid of Britain.'

Anthony Fox, like many relatives of the victims of Loyalist attacks, is convinced that the security forces colluded in the murder of his parents. British soldiers are notorious for blazing away at teenage joyriders or anybody else who fails to stop at checkpoints. Yet when a car seen to be carrying armed men went through a roadblock on the night of his parents' death, the Army simply put out a radio message to police patrols. Of 12 police cars in the Dungannon area that night 11 had apparently turned off their radios. The one car that responded failed to find the armed men. Within half an hour Anthony's parents were dead.

Fiona O'Hagan is also left wondering why soldiers of the Ulster Defence Regiment were seen in fields photographing their home in the weeks before Bernard's murder. Or how it was that the two men who shot her husband could walk away so calmly down a road known for the heavy presence of police and Army patrols.

### Sick joke

Last year Northern Ireland minister Patrick Mayhew banned the Loyalist paramilitary Ulster Defence Association (UDA), supposedly as a sign of the government's will to deal with violence in an even-handed way. Coming soon after the revelations that UDA killer Brian Nelson was a serving member of the British Army while he planned the murder of Catholics with the full knowledge of his Army handlers, the ban was a sick joke for many nationalists.

The UDA is clearly not too concerned about this cosmetic ban, judging by the 'Business as usual' sign displayed in their Belfast HQ. Their confidence is well placed. Despite a few arrests not one Loyalist has been charged with murder in connection with the killing of 23 Catholics in the mid-Ulster area since 1990.

Meanwhile the security forces arrest republicans on trumped up charges, so fingering them for the Loyalists. Three men from Cookstown were recently charged with 'going equipped for terrorism', after being found in possession of a roll of insulating tape and a pair of washing up gloves. When the three were released on bail, a UVF death squad was despatched to execute one of them. When the UVF discovered that the man they murdered was a friend of the intended victim who had been helping to decorate his house, they said they would be back for their real target.

The British authorities are keen to bury any suggestion of collusion. When Channel 4's *Despatches* programme revealed the extent to which Loyalists and RUC members had cooperated in sectarian murders like that of Belfast lawyer Pat Finucane, it infuriated those intent on strengthening Britain's image as a neutral peace-broker in Northern Ireland. Ben Hamilton, the researcher, was arrested in a dawn raid at his home and charged under anti-terrorist legislation with withholding information. Channel 4 and *Despatches* received hefty fines.

### War obscured

Barry McElduff, leading Sinn Fein member in Mid-Ulster, believes that the government's sensitivity to allegations of collusion reflects a determination to obscure the fundamental conflict in Northern Ireland. 'When the SAS were shooting people in threes, sixes and eights, it was clear that the British military were engaged in a war against the IRA. Having marginalised the republican movement to some extent, they can now stand back and let the Loyalists do the job for them. That way it looks like the paddies are fighting among themselves and the Brits are only here to keep us apart.'

Not only did British Army intelligence pay Brian Nelson £200 a week to work within the UDA, they also allowed him to bring in a consignment of sophisticated modern weaponry from South Africa. It is estimated that these weapons, which the British Army admitted to 'losing track of', have already been used to kill 70 Catholics including those gunned down in the indiscriminate attacks on the Ormeau Road and Old Park bookmakers in Belfast.

Belfast has borne the brunt of Loyalist attacks. Gerard McGuigan is the Sinn Fein councillor for the Ardoyne, a nationalist enclave in North Belfast notorious for indiscriminate killings of Catholics. 'We can't leave the Ardoyne without going through a staunchly Loyalist area', says McGuigan. 'Loyalist gunmen can come in, shoot us and escape back to their own areas. We have nowhere to run, we can't go beyond that street.'

'The risk I run as a Sinn Fein councillor is not much greater than those faced by the most apolitical Catholic. We're all legitimate targets to the Loyalists. Since the war began in 1969 nearly 500 Catholics have been murdered by Loyalists in North Belfast. I see it as a kind of community punishment.'

### Rocket attack

The community is being punished for its continued support for the IRA in its war against the British occupation. Sinn Fein hold three out of six council seats for North Belfast. Days before the last local elections in 1989, McGuigan survived a Loyalist rocket attack on the Ardoyne Sinn Fein office. Last year he and his family narrowly survived a gun and grenade attack on his home. Just after I spoke to him, he was again a target of Loyalist assassins during the latest spate of attacks in March.

When his home was attacked last year, an RUC/Army foot patrol was stopping cars at the only entrance to the estate. Yet the police didn't arrive at the McGuigan home for 45 minutes. The Ardoyne area is kept under constant surveillance by the massive tower on top of the local barracks which allows the police and Army to monitor every movement of this hostile community. Yet Loyalist death squads appear to carry out their missions with impunity.

McGuigan experienced the 'even-handedness' of the British authorities when his application for a gun licence for his personal protection was refused by the RUC and the Home Secretary. 'Ken Kerr, a Unionist councillor who has been convicted of arms offences and who to my knowledge has never suffered an attempt on his life was on *Channel 4 News* brandishing a legally held Browning automatic pistol. Here's me with no convictions and two [now three] very close shaves with death and I'm refused.' Derry councillor Kerr is a leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, widely considered to be a political voice of the UDA.

McGuigan compares the role which Loyalist gangs play for Britain to president FW De Klerk's sponsorship of Inkatha against the ANC in South Africa: 'It's the old colonial device of divide and rule.'

# What the West sees in Russia

Theresa Clarke on how the Russian crisis has come to symbolise Western fears about the future of capitalism

**T**he doom-laden commentaries on recent events in Russia reveal more about the fearful state of mind of the Western elites than about the problems of Boris Yeltsin in Moscow. When the West looks at Russia, it sees the mirror image of itself: economic stagnation, social fragmentation and decay.

Western commentators have expressed fears that the collapse of Russia would seriously undermine the cohesion of the world economy. Bill Jamieson has captured the British mood:

'A Russian apocalypse would dramatically expose our vulnerability....A profound structural change is under way: a shift of global power, the breakdown of an old world order and the inchoate, highly unstable emergence of a new one....Global economic prospects have seldom seemed bleaker; a Russian collapse threatens to take the rest of the world down with it.' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 14 March 1993)

The USA's Russia-watchers are just as gloomy about the possible fall-out from the crisis in the former Soviet Union. William Houston's new book, *Meltdown*, suggests that Russia will be the trigger for a global inflation explosion, precipitated by Bill Clinton under the guise of Russian aid.

Western fears that the collapse of Russia could 'take the rest of the world down with it' are not entirely without foundation. As the former Soviet Union fragments further, so it exacerbates tensions between the major economic powers vying to gain from the new situation. The consequence can only be to increase rivalries and undermine the Western nations' capacity to cooperate in dealing with the global slump.

## Why Clinton likes Yeltsin

The possible collapse of Russia is of particular concern to America. It would accelerate the disintegration of the old US-led world order. And it would especially benefit the economic powers best placed to take advantage of any changes—Japan and Germany.

Japan is eager to gain vital minerals and resources from the former Soviet republics in the east, while Germany has eyes on Russian territory to the west and has already proposed a free trade agreement between the EC and Russia. Japan has invested heavily in Russian palladium and the gas industry. It has also made major investments in Siberia and given financial aid to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is now trying to admit these republics to the Asian Development Bank.

The Clinton administration has been keen to express support for Boris Yeltsin, not because they think him a great democrat, but because they fear the consequences for America of the break-up of Russia. The US administration knows that if Russia goes, Japan could clean up. In response to this danger, the USA has become



PHOTO: PRESS ASSOCIATION

As Yeltsin buried his mother in March, Western Russia-watchers were also in funereal mood

the biggest investor in Russia. Since 1987, Western investment has totalled around \$1.5 billion. Almost half has come from the USA. Anglo-Suisse, Phibro Energy and Conoco have begun oil production in Siberia. Russian gas and oil production is now being aided by a \$2 billion loan from the US Export-Import Bank.

The Americans see more at stake in Russia than simply their investments. US foreign policy-makers and commentators recognise that the implications of the dissolution of the Russian Federation would not be limited to Russian territory. Writing in the *New York Times* recently, Stephen Sestanovich of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies spelled out the American nightmare:

'The eclipse of a pro-Western government in Russia will...reveal the precariousness of the American claim to be the only superpower. As new conflicts arise to which we have no real response and as other governments (including our closest friends) are forced to take more responsibility for their own security, our influence will inescapably wane.' (23 March 1993)

In this dark vision, keeping Yeltsin at the head of a nominally united Russia becomes the symbol of keeping the USA at the head of world affairs.

Western anxiety about events in Russia also reflects wider concerns that the failure to develop the former Soviet Union is acting as an indictment of capitalism. The triumphalism which followed the collapse of the Stalinist bloc has long rung hollow. Instead of the introduction of the market bringing prosperity, capitalism has

achieved little more than third world deprivation, as the changes in the East coincided with a slump in the West.

Russia has become the focus for the West's concerns about its own depression-ridden system. From Britain and Italy to Australia and Canada, there is a growing perception among Western rulers that things are out of control, that all is falling apart. The chaos in Russia is symbolic of the New World Order.

## A terrible advert

Russia and the other new capitalist republics of the East can now become as big a problem for the West as the Soviet Union was in the past. It is ironic that one of the few genuine similarities between the slumps of the thirties and the nineties is the role of the East as an embarrassment to the West. In the Great Depression, Stalin's industrialising Soviet Union appeared for a while to present a positive working alternative to capitalism. Now the former Soviet Union acts as a terrible advertisement for the failures of the market economy.

The prevailing fears about the slump in the West have been relocated on to Russia. More than 30m are now unemployed in the Western world. In the midst of slump, each government has to find something positive to say about a system which has nothing to offer. Within the Western elites, there is emerging what might be called a 'depression consciousness'. They are haunted by fears for the future. From this perspective, if Russia degenerates into a state of war and collapse, it is seen as a warning of what is to come in the West. And that is what terrifies our rulers. ●

# Anti-fascist backfire

Craig Owen relates a cautionary tale from Sheffield

Since its relaunch last year the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) has had a hard job identifying a fascist threat in Britain. So when the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* unearthed a member of the British National Party (BNP) working in a Sheffield job centre, the ANL seized the opportunity with both hands.

In October 1992 the ANL launched a campaign in Sheffield to get Simon Chadwick, identified as the Chesterfield organiser of the BNP, sacked from his job in the Employment Service. The ANL approached Chadwick's union branch, which in turn demanded that management suspend him pending an investigation.

After management refused to suspend Chadwick, the ANL stepped up the campaign. It got local Labour MPs to back the call to sack

him, gave the story to the media, and mounted a picket outside what they thought was Chadwick's workplace. (In fact he had been moved to another office.) Soon after this, management suspended Chadwick and two weeks later sacked him. The reason given was his failure to disclose a previous criminal offence.

If the ANL thought this was reason to celebrate, it had a surprise coming. Immediately following Chadwick's suspension, 16 employees of the department received a disciplinary letter accusing them of placing undue pressure on management. The media coverage had clearly embarrassed the Employment Service. And management now found itself with a chance to deal with a union branch which had long been a thorn in its side.

In December the 16 were subjected to a series

of intimidatory interviews. They were interrogated as to whether they held political meetings in facility time, who else was involved in the campaign and who had contacted the press. In February the 16 were given final written warnings, which means instant dismissal for the slightest misdemeanour in the future. Two union representatives were demoted to a lower grade with a big pay cut, and moved to different offices. Not only had management got rid of two 'surplus' posts, it had also broken up a difficult union branch.

## What's acceptable?

The Chadwick affair illustrates the danger of appealing to management to sack racists or to sort out any other problem for us—especially since the collapse of the old labour movement.

By demanding that management dismiss Chadwick, the ANL campaign handed the employers the moral authority to decide what is and is not politically acceptable in the workplace. It was inevitable that management would turn that authority against what it really considers unacceptable—effective trade union organisation.

At a time of mounting attacks on our jobs and living standards, we need a strategy which helps us stand up to the employers, not helps them to sack more workers. As for racism in the workplace, that is a serious problem we will have to sort out for ourselves (and not by wasting our time chasing a handful of fascists). Asking management to do the dirty work for us will always mean giving them the chance to do the dirty on us. ●

## OUT NOW!

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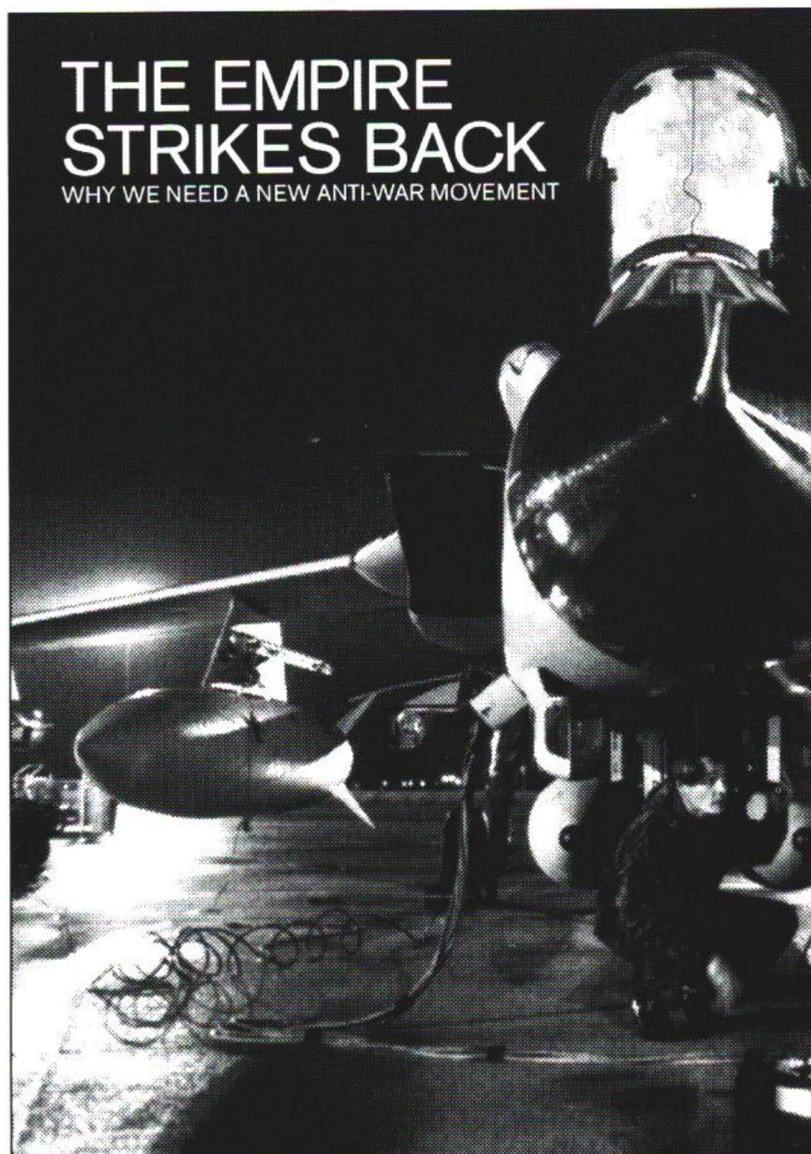
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# Time to strike out anew

The fiasco of the day of action for the miners on 2 April confirms that the old labour movement is a luxury we can no longer afford, says Mike Freeman

The 2 April day of action brought to a closing whimper the cycle of protests unleashed by industry minister Michael Heseltine's announcement last October of 31 pit closures and 30 000 job losses in mining. After a six month delay, the pit closures are likely to proceed along the lines of the original announcement, while privatisation accelerates job losses on the railways and on the buses. If, as Arthur Scargill told a rally in Barnsley on 2 April, 'this is not the end of the campaign, but the beginning', then it will clearly have to be a radically different campaign from that waged by Scargill and his colleagues over the past six months.

Last October's announcement provoked a storm of protest. After months of deepening recession and government failures, the scale of redundancies in mining focused the fears of millions, not least in the ranks of the Tory Party. The result was a backbench revolt against the government and two mass demonstrations in London within a week. While some on the left hailed the long-awaited upturn of the class struggle, the government backed down on the closure plan and announced an inquiry.

On 2 April, most of the remaining miners came out on strike, and so did many railworkers. But, as union leaders had thoughtfully given the employers ample notice and selected a Friday, many workers were given the day off and the occasion was turned into a long weekend. Disruption was slight and the public impact of the event minimal. The *Independent* announced that the 'British disease' had 'changed its symptoms. A country of strikers has been transformed into a nation of skivers' (3 April).

## Heady days

Meanwhile, at the main London rally attended by 400 people, Labour MP Dennis Skinner called for a return to the heady days of the 1970s when miners brought down Edward Heath's Conservative government. Nostalgia was rife. Miniature miners' lamps and other 'heritage' bric-a-brac were on sale from a stall at the back. In Barnsley, Scargill declared that there would be more days of action to a small and apprehensive audience.

In the months between the events of October and April, the debate over the future of the pits has raged. After carefully balancing all the vested interests, Heseltine opted for a package of closing 19 pits and keeping 12 open—if a market could be found for the coal produced. To soften up backbench resistance, Heseltine offered the possibility of 'enterprise zones' in the mining areas. Social security minister Peter Lilley helpfully announced the payment of disability benefits to miners with more than 20 years service who suffered from bronchitis or emphysema. When in the ensuing debate Tory MP



Michael Grylls observed that the miners had been 'exceptionally fortunate' to have been given a chance by the government, you could almost hear a wheeze of gratitude uniting the mining areas.

While Labour's Richard Caborn, chair of the parliamentary select committee that investigated the mining industry, tried to split the difference between Heseltine and Skinner, the Tory backbench revolt crumbled. With only four votes against and three abstentions, the government won a majority of 22, compared with 13 in October. When Labour leader John Smith had his first chance to confront the prime minister on the pit closure plans, he chose to ask him about...the plight of the British film industry as revealed by the announcement of this year's Oscars.

For six months the miners had been spectators as their union leaders had waited for the Tory rebels, the select committee, the Labour front bench, the TUC, the media and assorted celebrities to come to their rescue. It was true that Julie Goodyear (Bet Lynch), Jimmy Nail and Marcelle D'Argy Smith, editor of *Cosmopolitan*, had remained loyal. But the prospect of any action that might save jobs had long since disappeared.

By April the only thriving initiative was the project for twinning petit-bourgeois citadels in the south to mining towns. Cheltenham linked arms with Chesterfield, Southampton with Doncaster, Eastbourne with Newark/Sherwood and Oxford with Barnsley. The Tory voters of the Home Counties who had long looked upon the miners with hatred and fear as the vanguard of the proletariat, now regarded them

as a threatened part of Britain's national heritage, as deserving recipients of charity.

Far from being a 'day of action' to force the government to back down on its mass redundancy plans, the 2 April protest was a token gesture by the union leadership. It was, as the *Guardian* remarked, 'the last gasps of the *ancien regime* of industrial relations'. The degradation of industrial action was clear when the UDM, the scab union that emerged from the 1984-85 strike, announced that it was to hold a ballot on strike action. President Neil Greatrex confessed that he had been 'extremely disappointed': having been 'led to expect favourable treatment', his union had been 'kicked in the teeth'. At the same time the UDM appealed to Nottingham businessmen to close for a day in support of the miners.

## Vegetative state

One outcome of the day of action that has received little comment was the announcement by British Coal that it was going to stop deducting union dues from wages and paying them directly to the NUM. The end of the 'check-off' system means that henceforth the NUM will have to collect its members dues locally. For a union like the NUM, which has been in a persistent vegetative state since the defeat of the 1984-85 strike, the end of the check-off is the equivalent of turning off the life-support machine.

The events of the past six months confirm that workers faced with threats to their jobs and conditions, in mining and in other spheres, will have to rely on their own initiatives outside the moribund structures of the old labour movement. ●

Why have crime and punishment been the big issues this year? Why does the murder of a two-year old today make so much more public impact than similar killings have done in the past?

Frank Furedi links the current wave of crime scares to the fears created by the economic slump, and suggests that, for the authorities at least, focusing attention on crime certainly does pay

# Prime time for crime panics

**T**his year the issues of crime, law and order and morality have featured prominently in the media and have heavily influenced discussion in British political life. In the aftermath of the murder of two-year old James Bulger in Liverpool, the issue of crime virtually monopolised the news. And the debate about the causes of crime and the allocation of responsibility for today's sense of moral decline continues. Unfortunately, too often the consequence of this debate is to demoralise, and to foster a sense of anxiety among those who feel most vulnerable and insecure. It is worth stepping back to reflect on what the crime debate is really about.

Perceptions of crime have little to do with actual behaviour. Fear for our security and a general sense of disorder are not direct consequences of criminal action. It became clear during the controversy surrounding the Bulger case that there is no significant link between the facts of criminality and how people perceive it.

One child was killed, and suddenly every mother was warned to keep a constant eye on her children. The initial reaction made it appear that every child in the United Kingdom now faced imminent danger. When a few specialists and journalists pointed out that in fact the murder of children by strangers was rare, and that during the previous decade there were fewer than a dozen such cases, the reaction was one of incredulity. Serious commentators said that they did not believe these statistics. They were certain that there must have

been more children murdered, and that the figures were understating the truth. In other words their intuition regarding the danger to children would make no concession to the available facts.

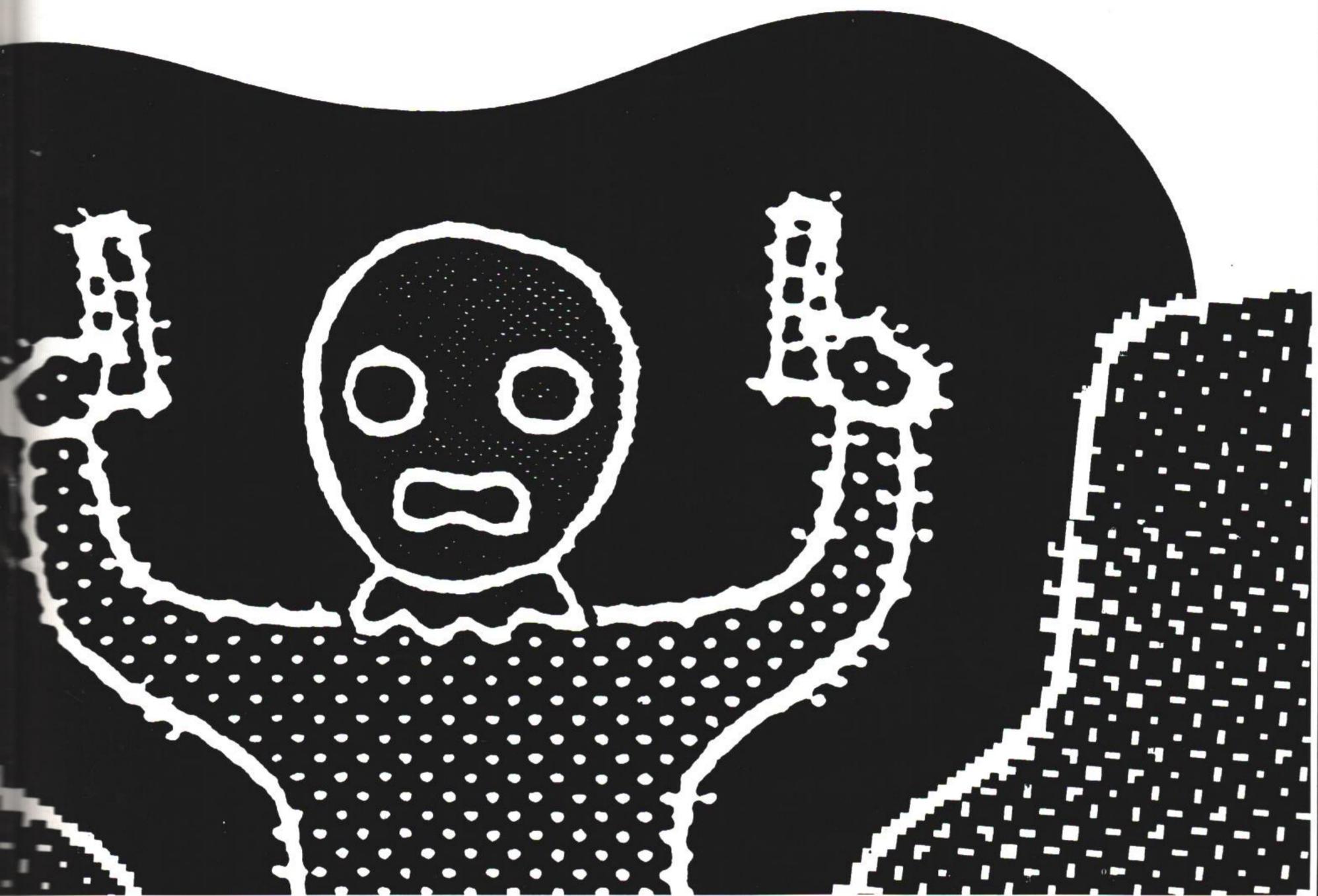
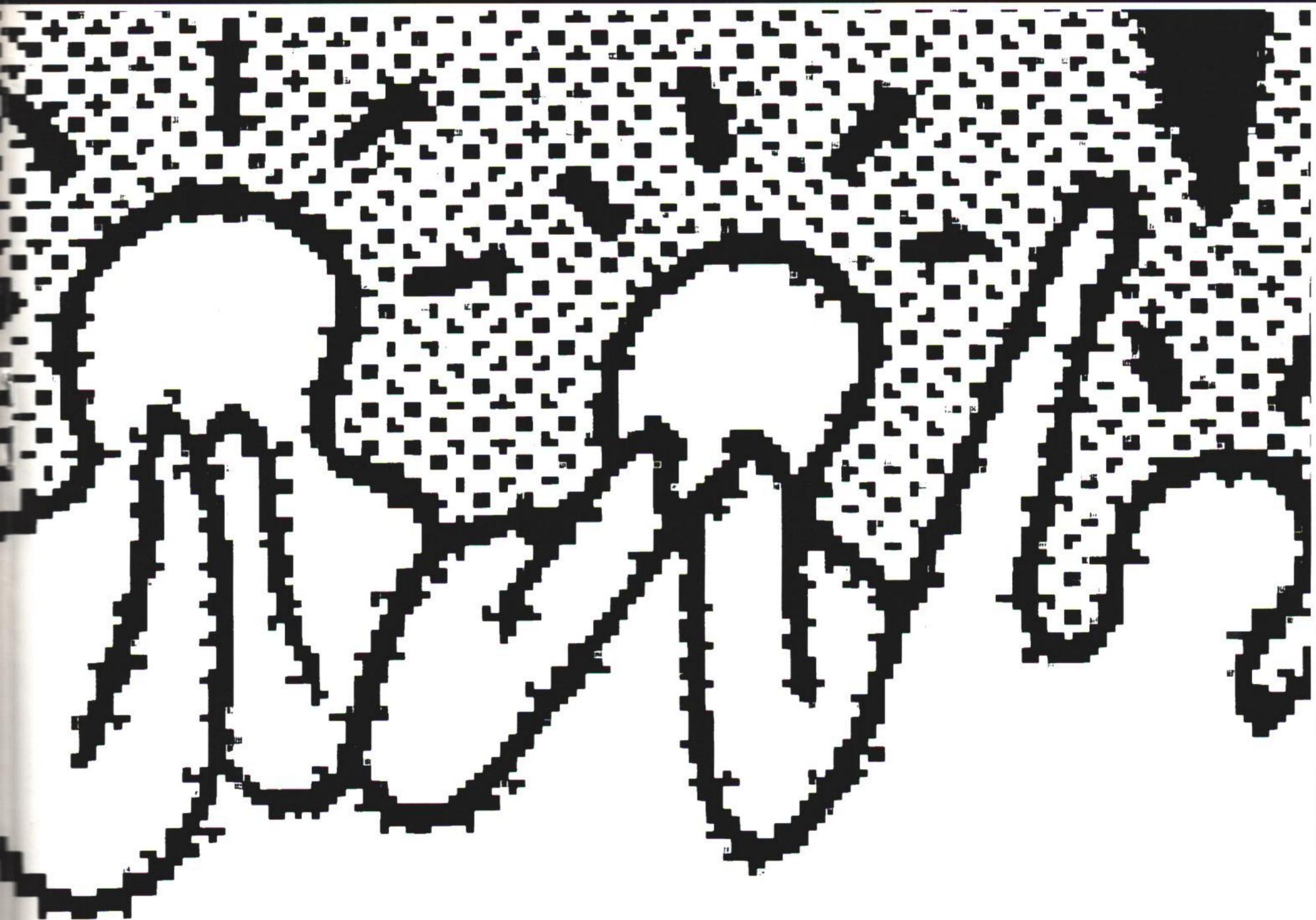
This studied rejection of statistics in favour of raw prejudice illustrates the relationship between perceptions of crime and actual anti-social behaviour. The point here is not to defend crime statistics. Such statistics reveal little about what is really going on in society. The question worth probing is what is it that some claim there is more of while others disagree? In other words, what constitutes crime?

Social theorists have long known that crime has nothing to do with a particular act. The killing of a person, for instance, is not necessarily a crime. In certain circumstances soldiers and police officers are praised and rewarded for such acts. So crime is not about what people do. It is not the act of killing, but particular types of homicide that earn the label of a crime.

Selling a daughter to improve the family fortune is legal, but selling your body to a punter around King's Cross station risks prosecution. Nor do crimes need victims. Consenting homosexuals, individuals consuming marijuana and many others are potential criminals. Nor is crime necessarily about breaking the law. Businessmen fiddling their taxes or involved with major financial rip-offs are seldom considered to be criminals. Their reputations remain intact; indeed we often envy them for their entrepreneurial skills.

Crime and criminality are constructed concepts which play a critical role in the creation of a moral order. Ideas ►







about crime are integral to the evolving norms and values which help the authorities to regulate society. The concept of crime is not so much about anti-social behaviour as about the construction of a socially accepted code of behaviour. In short, to fight crime is to uphold the prevailing order, its morality and its values.

# Law and order politics breed on insecurity

John Major's intervention in the current discussion is telling in this respect. 'There is a distinction between right and wrong', he told the *Mail on Sunday*:

'The public need to draw that distinction in the case of people who are guilty of wrongdoing. If they do not condemn, they may appear tacitly to approve and tacit approval will lead to repetition.' (21 February 1993)

Major's emphasis on 'right' and 'wrong', on 'condemnation' and 'approval' indicates that the 'crime crusade' is about the construction of a public consensus around an accepted moral order. Put bluntly, if the problem is anti-social behaviour then the solution must be the affirmation of society as it exists. That is why the conservative worldview so readily interprets the problems facing society as those of law and order.

### Why now?

In a sense crime is always an issue. Changing behaviour means that what is acceptable and what is not are far from fixed. Views about right and wrong also undergo modification. John Birt walked a fine line when his dubious tax affairs were revealed. He was not right, but as director general of the BBC he could not be wrong. In this case Major chose not to act upon his own call to condemn. But others are condemned and values are affirmed, and as long as society feels prey to child violence, swindles in high places will go 'uncondemned'.

The social construction of crime is a permanent process. The more interesting question is why people

become more anxious about the threat of crime at one time as opposed to another. Again this cannot have much to do with a particular act. A murder of a child in one situation might provoke virtually no public response, while in other circumstances it can become a focus of nationwide concern.

The impact of the present crime panic rests upon the fact that people are experiencing an intense degree of insecurity about the future. Many of the anxieties which they articulate reflect the perception that society seems to be out of control.

### Uncertain future

Imagine the position of the Maxwell pensioners who discovered from one minute to the next that the future they planned had disappeared along with their money. Or what about the bank clerk who was certain that she had a job for life, until the redundancy notices came down from head office. It seems as if nothing can be taken for granted any longer. The wild fluctuation of interest rates means that millions of mortgage holders have little idea as to what financial demands will be made on them six months from now.

Capitalism in Britain is now so out of control that nothing seems to be immutable. It is not surprising that people regard the future with fear. Social surveys suggest widespread pessimism about what lies ahead. Such anxieties foster a sense of atomisation, as people turn in on themselves and look for individual solutions or try to survive through their family. Often this individuation is experienced as the breakdown of communities or the erosion of communication between generations. Nothing seems like it used to be as old conventions fall apart.

### Expecting the worst

Responding to social fragmentation by seeking individual solutions itself helps to reinforce the sense of isolation. And the experience of isolation in turn encourages a sense of vulnerability and suspicion. In this situation we often expect the worst and other individuals can appear threatening. People become particularly sensitive to the threat of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Isolation and vulnerability provide fertile ground for panics about crime. The lack of control which people have over their lives is symbolised by the unseen and unknown criminal. A crackdown on the criminal appears as an attractive proposition because it seems to promise an assertion of control over a threatening situation. That is why society today is so hospitable to law and order crusades, and why panics about crime occur so regularly.

People are receptive to crime panics because they experience the consequences of a society out of control as the fault of individuals who are out of control. The symptom, out-of-control individuals, is confused with the cause, the fragmentation of capitalist society. This perception is prevalent among the different classes of the British public. It means that the usual moans about the deterioration of the quality of life are now likely to be linked to the behaviour of deviants rather than associated with the underlying social arrangements. In these circumstances, conservative law and order politics can find a resonance among those seeking some measure of control over their lives. Cracking down on out-of-control individuals appears to hold out the promise of a more secure existence.

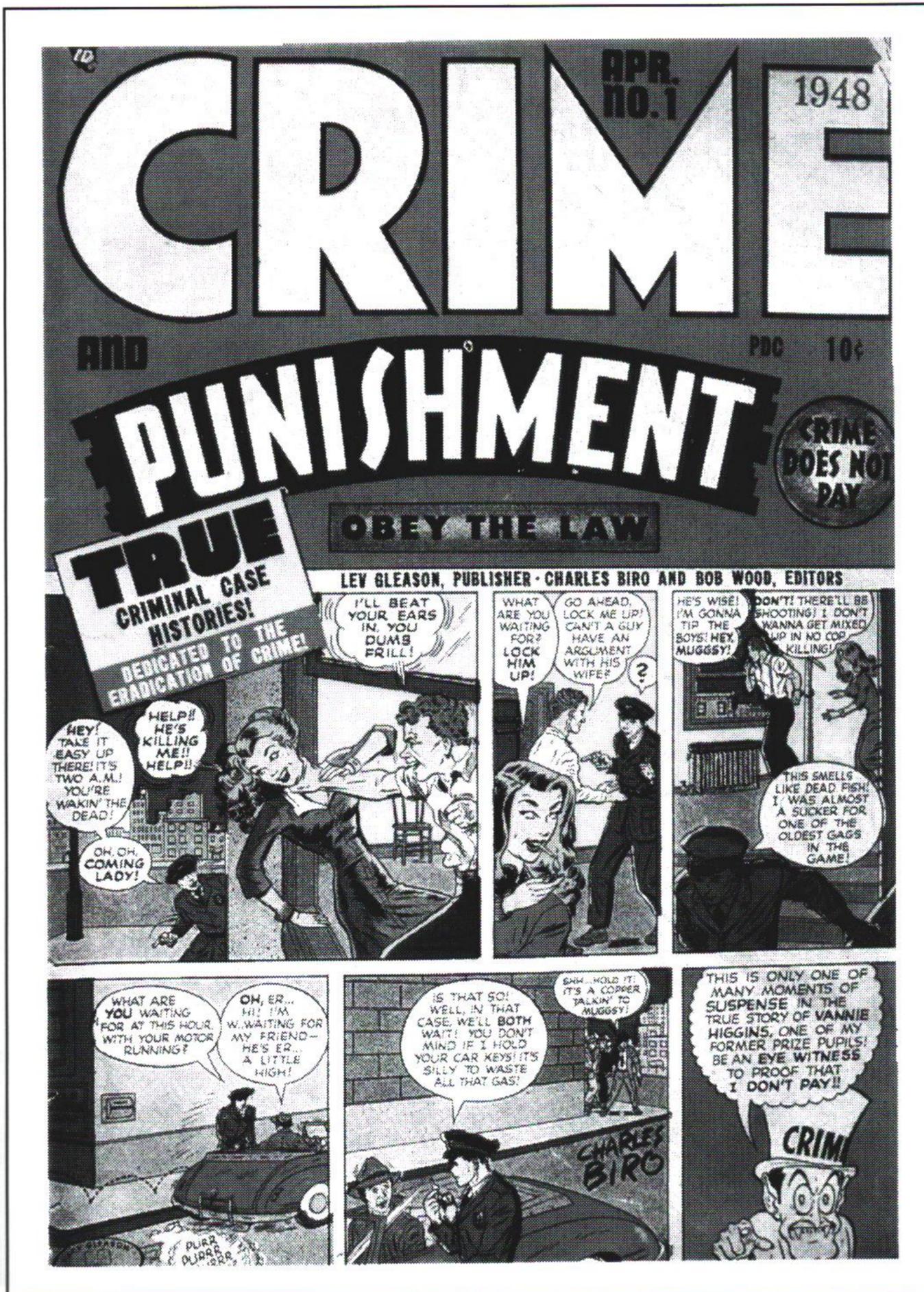
Law and order politics breed on insecurity. They are highly regarded by ruling elites because they assist in the task of social control. The affinity of the British establishment with law and order policies is also influenced by its tendency to interpret the problems of society as those of morality. From this perspective, the problems faced by working people are recast as moral ones.

### The perfect crime

Poverty, unemployment, poor facilities and lack of opportunities are presented as facts of life that do not cause our real problems. Instead moral decline, an inability to distinguish between right and wrong, promiscuity and lack of respect for authority are blamed for the deterioration in the quality of life. In this scenario bad parents, poor teachers and immoral habits are the villains. From the point of view of the capitalists this is an admirable interpretation of our problems, since it absolves their system of its responsibility for the difficulties it creates.

Focusing on crime contributes to the process by which social problems are converted into moral ones. After all, crime is not about a bad society; it is about bad individuals, who have been let down by bad parents and teachers. Moreover, concentrating attention on crime serves to remind us that there are essentially evil forces at work.

Moralists make a special effort to pinpoint the evil content of crime. That is why the authorities like to make so much out of senseless crime. They will highlight essentially petty offences to get their message across. For instance, vandalism and joyriding bring the perpetrator no economic benefits. So how, ask the moralists, could these acts have any social or economic cause? They must be examples of individual weakness and failure.



It should now be clear why, from this perspective, the murder of a child is the perfect crime. Nobody gains anything material from the killing of a child. It can be portrayed not just as senseless, but as the embodiment of wickedness. It serves as proof that unadulterated evil exists, and so strengthens the case for focusing on moral matters rather than social problems.

Incidentally, the fact that very young children have been accused of murdering James Bulger is an unexpected bonus for the upholders of the law and order approach. It can be used to suggest that some individuals are inherently evil, that

criminals are born not made. Rather than blaming society for their acts, it appears to make sense to see society in the role of the victim of evil deeds.

Why is there so little serious criticism of the irrational outbursts of the law and order campaigners? At times their arguments go so far as to depict delinquent children as the main menace to society. It seems as if the most bizarre suggestions regarding children can now be floated without any serious contestation.

The lack of questioning of irrational prejudices about crime reflects the wider absence of critical thinking today. The stagnation of politics means that the contemporary crisis is seldom

interpreted as having something to do with the nature of society.

Of course, people are aware that the recession has undermined their standard of living, and there is a rational fear regarding future prospects. However, in the present climate there is a tendency to experience the crisis of capitalism in a general and unspecific way. So, when people discuss what is going on, unemployment is considered alongside insecurity in the community, breakdown in harmony and crime. There is today a tendency to perceive economic decline through the prism of moral decay. Consequently the depression, the process of social and economic decay, is often perceived as the deterioration of the moral fabric of society. That is why panics about crime are always waiting to happen.

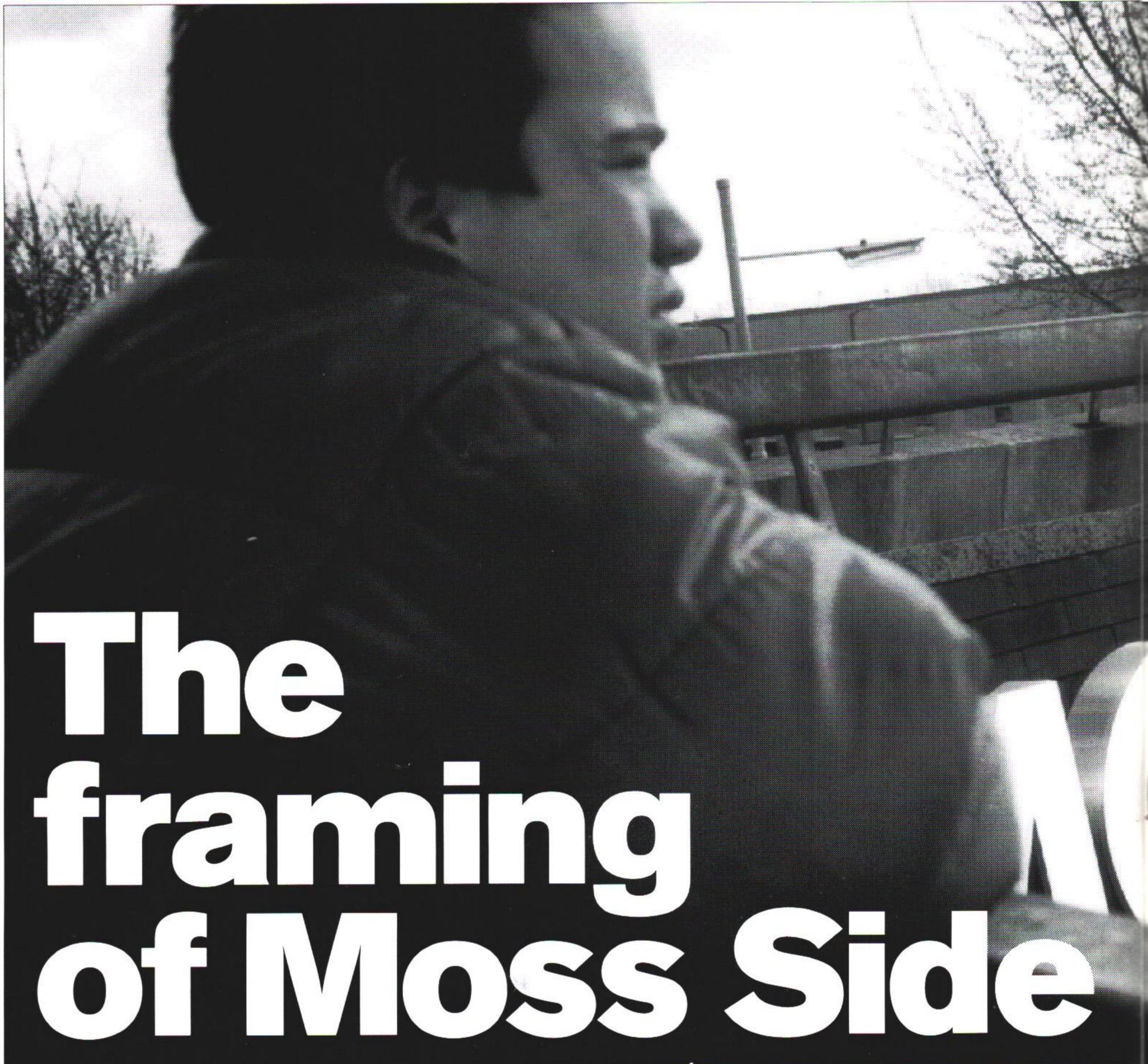
### Distracting the mind

There are limits to the consolidation of moral panics. Like evil, morality is at its most powerful when it is non-specific and ill-defined. Once a 'devil-child' is placed under public scrutiny the absurdity of moral condemnation of a 10-year old becomes self-evident. It is all very well for the media to call for the return of 'family values', but the more these demands are elaborated the more they reveal the intrinsic weakness of this institution.

In the course of pursuing moral strategies the lack of practical consequences also becomes evident. For instance, it is easy enough to target single mothers as a cause of moral decline, but what is society then to do with these women? Shoot them? Forcibly sterilise them? Force them to find husbands? The more the issue is probed, the more it becomes evident that what is at stake is finding targets for moral condemnation rather than tackling real problems.

Moral panics seldom result in a practical crusade, because it would soon become clear that they were not even identifying the right problems, never mind coming up with meaningful solutions. Instead, the role of moral panics is periodically to remind us of what constitutes right and what constitutes wrong.

Today, when there is so much that is wrong with society, moral panics serve to distract the mind. They act as a powerful antidote to social criticism. Since they key into our well-established fears, these panics have a real impact on the lives of those at the sharp end of the depression. As a result, they are distorting the response of many people to the capitalist slump. That is why those committed to the project of human progress have a duty to combat every crime scare, and every attempt to twist the discussion of social problems into a moral panic.



# The framing of Moss Side

The police and the media have created a massive crime scare in Manchester. Jason Powell and Colm Murphy report

In Manchester's Moss Side rival drug gangs vie for trade armed with Uzi sub-machine guns and hand grenades, while junkies and gang members are crippling the local community with persistent robbery ('taxing'), driving out the few shopkeepers who remain. At least, that is what you would think if you believed the sensational reports in the *Sunday Times* and on Channel 4's *Despatches*.

According to the reports, backed up by the police, Manchester City Council, and community worker John Samuels, the predominantly black Alexandra estate is racked by gangs: the Goochies, from Gooch Close, identifiable by their red bandannas, the Doddies, from

Dodington Close, whose bandannas are blue, and, most recently, the 'military-style' Cheetham Hill gang. These last, Samuels told *Despatches*, have their own command structure, with generals, field marshals and lieutenants.

But in Moss Side, people don't recognise the fantasy world described by Channel 4 and the *Sunday Times*. 'There is no military movement organising drugs—it's just one man or two men working together', says David, at the Moss Side Centre. A rasta, Jahson says that 'people might move as friends, but there aren't any gangs. You'll see kids sticking together, then they'll get called a gang'.



A woman dismissed the bandannas—'it's just what young people wear'. Shown the cover of the *Sunday Times* magazine featuring a bandanna worn over the face, Jesse James-style, she exclaimed to her friend, 'where did they find that idiot?'. Inside the notorious bookmakers, allegedly the scene of the drugs trade, the punters are equally forthright: 'If you could buy Uzis for £400 you would see loads of them. It's a pack of lies, there ain't no Uzis 'round here.'

Instead of living in fear of gangs the people of Moss Side are outraged at their treatment at the hands of journalists determined to make the area

a byword for crime. 'It was a hatchet job', said the security guard at the Moss Side Centre. At the bookies, everyone is angry about the way Channel 4 spied on them: 'They came in here with a bag, with a secret camera inside, put it down here on the counter, and left it filming us like animals. That woman who made the programme had better not come back.'

### Right to be angry

Moss Side has a right to be angry. There is a drugs trade in Moss Side, but then there is a drugs trade at Manchester University too. Like any rundown inner-city area it is no fun fair, and no doubt you are more likely

to encounter violence in Moss Side than in the leafy suburbs where newspaper editors and television producers live. But the sensational reports about 'Gunchester', 'Baby Beirut' or the 'Bronx of Britain' present a picture of Moss Side destroyed by the rotten elements in its own community. In the media treatment, it is not the lack of jobs, but moral breakdown that is Moss Side's biggest problem. Through the criminalisation of Moss Side, the local community is blamed for its own deprivation.

### 'Open to suggestion'

Framing Moss Side is easy, if you ignore what the place is really like and substitute a ragbag of unsubstantiated rumours and prejudice. Channel 4's star witness was Ian Harry, supposedly a drug dealer who could make thousands and was not afraid to hurt other dealers to defend his turf. Harry's testimony was all the more chilling because of the broad smile on his face as he described the weaponry at his disposal.

'Harry's a person who has always had learning difficulties', explains Father Phil Sumner, a priest in Moss Side for 14 years. 'So he is very much open to suggestion and is very easily exploited. And that's precisely what happened in the programme. From my experience of him, the idea of him earning up to £2000 a week or beating anybody up is laughable.'

Channel 4's other source, John Samuels, is not from Moss Side, but middle class Chorlton village. A Methodist minister employed by the Moss Side and Hulme Community Development Trust, Samuels' idea of community work was to try to recruit blacks to the police. Unfortunately for Samuels, Moss Side police cannot tell the difference between community workers and drug dealers: last November he was caught in a raid in the betting shop and beaten senseless—while he was putting up police recruitment posters.

### 50 per cent jobless

Since the programme, Samuels has tried to distance himself from the 'Bronx of Britain' vision of Moss Side he described to Channel 4. The Development Trust says he is 'off sick'. Local black people say he is in hiding.

Of course, Moss Side does have problems. Teenage unemployment is more than 50 per cent. The biggest local industry, Youngers brewery, was given planning permission on the agreement that it would recruit from the community. But now it is so heavily mechanised that jobs are few and far between. In the precinct there are more shops boarded up than doing business. But the notion that the drug trade ►



has chased out legitimate business is unfounded. Most of the jerry-built council flats have been evacuated, waiting to be knocked down, as they were falling apart and infested with cockroaches. Leaving aside the depression, there simply are not enough people to keep the Moss Side Centre in business.

As far as local traders are concerned it is not 'taxing' from local gangs that is forcing them out of business. 'It's the council that are the real gangsters', according to a fishmonger. Mike, an Irish record stall holder says that the council has 'doubled the rents and

moved most of our customers out, and they still expect us to find the money. We're all in arrears and the council are just playing with us, they could close us down any time they want—the bailiffs have already shut down shops in the precinct'.

In fact it is the running down of the local economy that gives credence to the panics about crime. Feeling vulnerable and insecure in the face of economic and social decay, many people are prey to the scares about drugs and crime peddled by the media. The further you move away from the centre of Moss Side, and the further

you are from the black youths that are the targets of the crime panic, the more people tend to believe the stories about the gangs.

### Iron grilles

Up the road in Hulme, Maureen Clavin is part of the Irish community that has been in the area for years. Her home is well protected with wrought iron grilles. The back yard is immaculately whitewashed with pots of well-tended flowers. Outside rubbish laps up the back alley. She never goes into the centre of Moss Side. She has never actually been burgled 'touch wood. I was only ever robbed by the man who came to fit the burglar alarms'.

Mrs Clavin is angry that her bike has just been stolen. But it turns out that her biggest grievance is that the bike had to be left chained outside as she waited five hours at the Royal Infirmary for a neuro-surgeon. She wanted to be present to comfort a friend expecting the result of a brain scan. In the end her friend got the bad news alone while she reported the theft to the police.

For Maureen Clavin the experience of social decay, run-down services and the fear of crime are all mixed together. It is a common response. At a bus stop an older woman romanticises 'it used to be beautiful here, quite respectable. It's gone terrible since they let all the darkies in—all the muggings and shootings are done by the darkies'. Few of Moss Side's whites have direct experience of violent crime, but most have a second-hand story to tell about it.

### Security shattered

Sue, a white woman in her thirties carrying her shopping back from the precinct is worried about gangs. At the same time she is angry about the media coverage because 'they are tarring us all with the same brush'. Outside of the young, black targets of the media crime panic about Moss Side, all too many people are susceptible to fears about gangs. Economic crisis creates an overwhelming sense of fear and isolation as people try to lock their doors against the problem. The best they think they can hope for is that they will not be tarred with the same brush.

For black Moss Siders there is no door that can be shut so tightly that the police cannot break it down, with a posse of journalists in tow. Their security has been shattered by gangs—gangs of reporters, of community workers, and of policemen determined to frame them for running down Moss Side.

*Additional reporting by Joe Kaplinsky and Joe Feeley*

# Blade runners

## Simon Kray dissects the Scottish knife panic

In February Paul Sheldon, an Edinburgh student, died in his brother's arms after being stabbed through the heart in an apparently motiveless attack. This case has been the most high-profile in a spate of knife attacks reported in the Scottish press.

'Twenty-one Scots knifed every day', claimed the *Daily Record* next to a colour photo of a man with a knife still embedded in his back. It seems that everyone from hotel owners to actors and doctors have been knifed. Ravers are now protected by metal detectors in clubs. Even the NHS seems to be a victim, as facial scars require plastic surgery at an estimated £3000 a 'chib'. The perceived knife epidemic has provided the backdrop for Strathclyde police's knife amnesty campaign, 'Operation Blade'.

The first phase until the end of February involved collection points, mainly in police stations. The public was invited to 'bin a knife and save a life', and the police campaign was supported with appeals from famous footballers, actors and pop stars on Scottish Television and Clyde Radio. Each day we were treated to updated figures and photos of the gruesome instruments of death which had been handed in—4500 in total.

As the press reports of attacks continued unabated through the knife amnesty, we were encouraged to assume that a 'hard core' had retained their blades. In fact it seemed that most of the knives deposited had come from the likes of the butcher who handed in some of his, worried they might fall into the wrong hands.

Phase two of Operation Blade is a crack-down aimed at the 'hard core'. Stop and search operations have been increased. Scottish law is to be brought into line with England and Wales, where the defendant must prove the knife being carried is for a lawful purpose. Shopkeepers who stock knives are being persuaded to stop or to eye up potential customers as to age and suitability. Not for the first time the Labour Party has tried to lead the law and order bandwagon, with MPs Brian Wilson and David Marshall forcing the issue of law reform in the police's favour.

Can Glasgow really be as different from other major urban areas as the Scottish knife panic suggests? Glasgow does have a colourful hardman history, but then all major cities have had their working class heroes and their razor gangs—even sunny Brighton had its Pinkie. Scottish crime statistics show a steady increase in recorded 'non-sexual crimes of violence'. But as in any panic, figures for reported crime tend to increase proportionately to media profile.

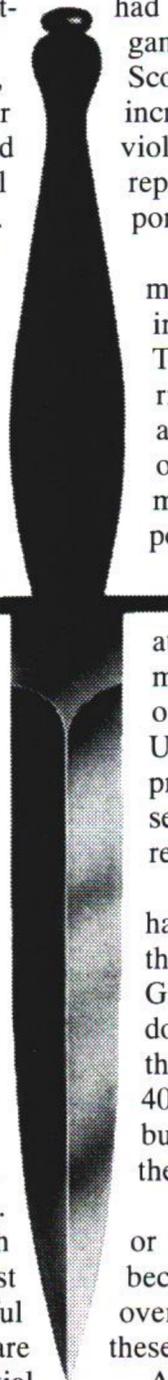
Whatever the truth about knife attacks might be, Operation Blade will do nothing to improve the safety of the people of Glasgow. The very notion of a knife amnesty is ridiculous, when anybody can get access to a blade from the nearest kitchen drawer. The only practical effect of this panic and the measures it has produced can be to give the police more powers to harass and control young people at random.

Young males out clubbing are indeed at increased risk of attack—not by their motiveless peers, but by organised gangs of police officers. Soon to be armed with US-style side-handled batons, clad in blade-proof armour and empowered with stop-and-search regulations that give little or no recourse, the police will hit the streets.

By giving more legitimacy to heavy-handed policing, Operation Blade will make the streets more not less dangerous for many Glaswegians. On the first day of the crack-down 110 people were searched. Only four of those were arrested. Last year in Strathclyde 4000 people were arrested for carrying knives, but less than half were prosecuted. What will the harassment figures be for this year?

It seems that being harassed and searched, or waking up in the cells next morning, is becoming as much of a risk as getting a hang-over when you go out for a pint in Glasgow these days.

And now I hear that, on 29 March, a coach carrying people from Glasgow to support sacked workers picketing the Timex factory in Dundee was stopped by police—on the phoney pretext of searching for knives. None was found. But the coach missed the demonstration.



# Liverpool lament

Alan Renehan sees problems with local responses to the national media assault on Liverpool



PHOTO: PRESS ASSOCIATION

The James Bulger case provided the cue for another wave of anti-Liverpool reports in the national media. About a fortnight after the death of two-year old James, the *Sunday Times* splashed a major feature—'Self-pity city'—that articulated the sentiments underlying most discussion of the inner cities today (28 February 1993).

The article by Jonathan Margolis was full of prejudice against working class people in Liverpool. Margolis described a city populated by a rabble, and asked if it has gone mad: 'Well, that's Liverpool people...they sound like tired mothers bemoaning their husbands' and sons' violence, while quietly tolerating their excesses as, well, natural.'

## 'United as Scousers'

The message behind all of the media images of shell-suited scallies and irresponsible mothers should be clear enough by now: Scousers are scum.

Understandably perhaps, Liverpool's local newspapers, the *Echo* and the *Daily Post*, have complained about the bias. However their response has been to present Liverpoolians as poor unfortunate victims. Victims of unemployment, victims of poverty, victims of crime and now victims of the 'poison pen vilification' of Fleet Street (*Echo*, 24 February 1993).

Although the 'self-pity city' jibes are a malicious caricature, the pathetic-sounding tone adopted by the local press has been influential in Liverpool in response to the Bulger killing and the national media coverage which followed it.

As a local resident wrote a day after Auberon Waugh had penned a diatribe against Liverpool, 'so many different tragedies have united and bound us together as Scousers' (*Echo*, 5 March 1993). Many have united to support events like the 'walk of sorrows' retracing the last steps of the two-year old from the shopping centre to the

embankment, a route which has been compared to Jesus walking with the cross.

Alan Bleasdale's new play reflects the view of Liverpoolians as isolated and rather suicidal characters, united by the fact that they are 'On the Ledge' and, of course, by that good old Scouse wit. While even the local police join in the defence against the 'Mersey-bashers', another correspondent to the *Echo* informs us that there are 'two types of Liverpoolians...the wreath-laying ones that insert pages of condolences and then there are the stone-throwing jobs' (5 March 1993). So when tabloid journalists rubbish Scousers as a violent mob, the local press responds by pleading for mercy on the grounds that most people from Liverpool are really soft and compassionate.

Instead of the angry 'city that dared to fight' of the eighties, Liverpool in the middle of today's slump seems to be a city of atomised individuals, bitter about the situation they find themselves in but unable to see a way out of it. For some Scousers, the prevailing sentiment appears to be that if we are going to be victims, we'll be the best at it.

This view has become more widespread as any idea of fighting back against the consequences of the slump has been removed—at least temporarily. While more redundancies are handed out at Ford Halewood and ICI, and the economic position of Merseyside deteriorates further still, we are simply asked to mourn a young boy and feel sorry for the people of Liverpool.

Contrary to what the national media says, it was not only people from Liverpool who projected their own fears and insecurities on to the Bulger case in this way. It might have been Scousers who filled the pages of the local press with memorial notices for two-year old James. But it was middle class women from London, who had probably never been anywhere near

Bootle shopping mall, who set up Mothers Against Murder and Aggression in response to his death.

The main thing that's different about Liverpool is that its people probably have more reason than most to adopt the victim mentality. The city's economy is in ruins, its people hammered by the Tory government and badly let down by local Labour Party politics. As a consequence, many individuals in Liverpool feel the current sense of insecurity in British society particularly strongly. But they are only the best-known examples of a dangerous national fashion for getting maudlin and wallowing in despair.

## Wrong enemies

The defensive 'Liverpool v the world' approach now influencing politics in the city identifies the wrong enemies. It allows those in Liverpool who are putting the boot into local people to present themselves as the Scousers' champions. So Labour council leader Harry Rimmer can preside over yet more cuts in jobs, working conditions and services, and still be presented as the warrior of the people fighting the 'racism' of the Southern press.

Which brings me to my final point. The whole discussion of the Bulger killing has been hijacked to stimulate a discussion about imposing more draconian legal controls over people's lives. The prospect is for more surveillance and identity cards, more punishment, more helicopters, more paramilitary-style policing; and all that is demanded in Liverpool at the moment is for people to feel sorry for the city.

It's a bit like a collective expression of the sentiment that the bloke in the bottom flat where I live put to me when I first moved in: 'Hiya Al, I'm Terry. I've had it hard, kidda. Me brother hates me, me mom's ill and me old man has run away with me wife.' We need something better than that.



# 'I blame the parents, too'

Today's Labour Party spokesmen and other liberal social commentators have accepted the arguments of yesterday's conservatives, says Kate Lawrence

**T**he juvenile crime panic has accelerated the collapse of the traditional arguments of liberal/left critics, that social problems are primarily generated by social and economic inequalities. They have all but abandoned the idea—considered common sense for decades—that the problems individuals face have something to do with society. Instead a new consensus is emerging that individual degeneracy is to blame for the ills of society.

In the Labour Party's major intervention in the crime debate, shadow home affairs spokesman Tony Blair warned that failure to teach individuals what is right and wrong would result in the 'moral chaos which engulfs us all'. More emphasis had to be placed on individual responsibility while Britain got 'tough on crime' as well as its causes.

Blair's echoing of traditional conservative themes won applause from right-wing commentators. The *Sunday Times* hailed him as 'a leading light of the intelligent tendency in the Labour Party' and described his emphasis on 'the individual responsibility of criminals and the moral vacuum behind teenage lawlessness' as 'the beginnings of the national consensus...to produce the policies needed to stop the rot' (28 February 1993).

Blair is not alone in retreating from the idea that people's problems derive from social and economic inequality. The cry of individual responsibility is everywhere. Labour's social policy think-tank recently abandoned the idea that everyone had a right to welfare benefits, while leading Labour MP David Blunkett has called for a national service-style

community work programme to discipline deviant youths. The traditionally liberal *Guardian* welcomed Blair's law-and-order speech as the best news of the week, noting how he had 'rightly berated the left for putting too much emphasis for the cause of crime on social conditions, and too little on individual responsibility' (22 February 1993). That editorial followed an article in which two of the *Guardian's* leading political and social commentators, Martin Kettle and Melanie Phillips, aped the irrational response of right-wing pundits to two-year old James Bulger's death, by arguing in effect that fears that we are in the middle of a juvenile crime wave are justified even if we aren't in the middle of a juvenile crime wave.

Kettle and Phillips quoted statistics which show that deaths such as that of James Bulger are extremely rare, but nevertheless concluded that his was 'a death for our times' (22 February 1993). Their explanation repeated what right wingers have said for years, that a new generation of problem children was the product of 'family breakdown or poor parenting'.

web of crime, wilful unemployment and illegitimacy.

By focusing on the morality of individuals at the bottom of society, conservatives such as Murray seek to shift the burden of responsibility away from the structures of capitalist society. Rather than social problems being seen as evidence that there is something wrong with how society is organised, single mothers and absent fathers, passing on their immoral behaviour patterns to delinquent offspring, are held to blame.

There is no more proof today of any repetitive behavioural link between unemployment, family structure and crime than there was a century ago. All that has changed is that today such ideas have won an audience among the kind of liberal critics who until recently would have dismissed them as Tory cant.

### Sticking plaster

Although the postwar liberal consensus identified problems at the level of society, it believed that these could be resolved through state intervention. In fact, however, the problems of inequality were always too deeply rooted in capitalist society to be tackled through the sticking-plaster approach of the welfare state. The return of economic recession in the seventies left even less scope for expensive state interventions. The slump conditions of today leave no scope at all.

The end result is that the state-sponsored solutions which liberals proposed in the past have proved spectacularly unsuccessful in solving social problems. This has helped to throw the liberal lobby on to the defensive, leaving it vulnerable to the right's arguments about individual responsibility.

### Beyond help

The failure of state-sponsored solutions has also given conservatives more confidence about their tired old arguments. Look, they can now tell the liberals, despite all that your precious welfare state has tried to do for these people, they are still at the bottom of the heap, and many are even worse off. It just goes to show that the real problem is their incorrigibly degenerate 'underclass' behaviour. Unable to offer an alternative today, liberal opinion has retreated before this argument.

The accommodation of a new generation of *Guardian* writers and Labour politicians to old right-wing notions about individual moral failings helps to divert attention from the failings of a broken-down social system, and to reinforce the idea that the only solution is a dose of discipline and old-fashioned law and order. ●

# A change of climate

The emphasis upon individual responsibility for social problems is now widely accepted as if it were an obvious and eternal truth. Yet until very recently, things were seen the other way around.

The post-Second World War welfare state, characterised by universal unemployment benefit, free education and healthcare, rested on the new consensus that social problems were the consequence of social and economic inequalities, which society as a whole had a responsibility to tackle. The connection between issues like crime and economic and social factors was seen as common sense. Although behavioural factors always played a part in mainstream explanations of social problems, they remained only in a residual form.

From the 1940s, the category that dominated discussions on poverty was the 'problem family'. The term retained a sense that poverty had something to do with the behavioural patterns of a certain group of people. But it also reflected the confidence of those concerned with social problems such as poverty that the 'problem family' could be dealt with by the welfare state.

The balance in favour of state intervention as the solution to social problems reached its zenith in the 1960s. The persistence of poverty during those capitalist boom years did lead to a renewed sense that society might not be able to find a solution. However, the consensus in favour of state intervention led to major social experiments such as Labour's comprehensive education system and president Lyndon Johnson's 'war on poverty' in the USA.

Although by the end of the sixties there was growing anxiety about the ability of the welfare state to eradicate society's ills, there remained a durable consensus that fundamental social and economic problems required state-backed solutions.

In 1974 Tory MP Keith Joseph, seen by many as Margaret Thatcher's mentor, railed against teenage pregnancies among husband-less women from the lowest social classes. 'They are producing problem children', he said, 'the future unmarried mothers, delinquents, denizens of our borstals, subnormal educational establishments, prisons, hostels for drifters'. It sounds much like the current craze for single mother-bashing. However, 20 years ago, the weight of established opinion against such public expressions of prejudice meant that Joseph's remarks almost finished his career.

Even as recently as the Brixton riots of 1981, Lord Scarman's official inquiry argued that social and economic factors such as poverty and unemployment were significant causes of the unrest, rather than it being a simple matter of criminality.

What has changed since then is not the reality of poverty and social inequality, but the political climate in which they are perceived. The collapse of traditional liberalism, and the new priority which politicians and commentators from a liberal background place on individual immorality, has enabled the conservatives to redefine what is seen as common sense today.

Phillips has also approvingly reported the view of criminologist Dr David Farrington, that the typical juvenile delinquent is born into 'a low-income, large family with criminal parents, who supervise him poorly with harsh and erratic techniques, and are likely to be in conflict and to separate' (5 March 1993).

The notion that irresponsible parents are to blame for a generation of juvenile delinquents echoes the prejudices of right-wing commentators who have always sought to blame social problems on the moral failings of individuals at the bottom end of society.

### Demoralised misfits

The classic statement of this idea can be found in the writings of the American sociologist and 'underclass' protagonist Charles Murray. He argues, in a late twentieth-century version of a late nineteenth-century idea, that Britain, like America, is under threat from a demoralised layer of social misfits. The typical members of Murray's 'underclass' are individuals caught in a self-generating immoral

# When were the good old days?

Today's nostalgia for the values and the safety of yesterday has a strangely familiar ring about it, says Tracey Lauder

**D**uring the latest round of panics about child crime and delinquency, every other newspaper editorial seems to have been devoted to the decline of the nation's morals, harking back to the days when children were innocent, 'decent' people were not terrorised by hooligans, and you could leave your front door open.

The present discussion about crime and moral responsibility has emphasised a desire to return to the 'good old days'. Christina Hardyment (*Sunday Telegraph*, 21 February 1993) thinks that the difference between today and yesterday is so great that 'young people may seem alien, rough-spoken and generally disorderly to generations who remember wartime discipline and restraint'.

Tory grandee WF Deedes agrees that his prewar youth 'seems a golden age compared with what lurks in the shadows for the young today'. Although he admits that children wandered the streets ragged and barefoot, Deedes assures us that 'physically, they were safe' (*Daily Telegraph*, 22 February 1993). While different commentators identify with different golden ages—Victorian morals, Edwardian gentility, prewar innocence, wartime discipline, and so on—they all agree that 'then' was better than now.

## All our yesterdays

In a Gallup survey carried out for the *Daily Telegraph* in February, 85 per cent of those interviewed thought it was safer to walk the streets at night 20-30 years ago. There is a widespread perception that we are now reaping what was sown in the 1960s with a departure from old-fashioned values. John Major seemed to have struck a chord with his invocation of the security of yesteryear.

It seems that the past is now the source of authority on everything from cricket to childcare. Indeed, with the past being elevated in this way, you could be forgiven for believing that the past two centuries have been a stable continuum of British fair play, high moral standards and well-behaved children. Typically, in searching for an explanation for the latest panic about child crime, Robert Whelan of the Family Education Trust asks 'why can't [children] enjoy being young for longer and do things that all youngsters used to do?'



The original hooligan, *Daily Graphic*, 5 December 1900

Surely, then, the archives should be full of reports congratulating the youth of yesterday on occupying themselves in such a responsible fashion? Well, not exactly.

Today's moralistic commentators and politicians like to give the impression that things were much better in the past. The funny thing is that in the fifties they were giving the same impression. In 1957, for instance, amid press hysteria over the emergence of 'the Teds', Sir Thomas More commented 'would not the proper description be "young thugs", leaving it at that?'

The Teds were seen as the epitome of society's decline, with their strange clothes and milk bar culture, 'a sort of spiritual dry rot amid the odour of boiled milk'. Back then, the problem was said to be that 'the British way of life' was being destroyed by 'Americanisation'. That, said the experts of the day, couldn't have happened 20 years previously, when wartime discipline kept young people in line. Or did it?

In 1938 an account of English juvenile courts regretted that children were starting to grow up in 'an atmosphere of restlessness and pleasure-seeking' which was not 'morally healthy'.

Another report of 1939 noted 'a growing contempt by the young person for the procedures of juvenile courts'.

In the thirties the decline of moral values was blamed on the new forms of popular culture such as cinema, cheap novels and radio. Every new fad seemed to undermine respect for law and order. In fact there were more middle class panics about the behaviour of football fans during this period than at any time since. The popular fears and desire for past values expressed in the thirties are strangely reminiscent of the nostalgic wishes expressed today.

Probably the age which crops up most often as an example of upstanding morality is the Victorian era. It was then, everyone agrees, that individuals exercised the most restraint and society was cohered around the highest of values.

However, a brief scan of the contemporary press reveals that the good citizens of Victorian Britain lived in fear of the Velvet Cap Gang who pushed people off the pavement and used 'filthy language', and of the 'roughs' who were 'armed with thick leather belts, on which there were heavy brass buckles'. In fact, it was a frequent lament of the time that whipping was not employed enough to teach the working classes respect for the law. The upper classes yearned for the safety and peace of what they recalled as the days before 'the excessive leniency' of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

## Flogging a dead horse

The Victorian era was characterised by all manner of fears and panics and nostalgia for the 'goode olde dayes', including concerns for the detrimental effects of bicycles on the nation's youth and the 'sentimentality of judges' in dealing with ruffians who required flogging. The fear of moral decay was captured by Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869): 'The outbreaks of rowdyism tend to become less and less of trifles....And thus that profound sense of settled order and security, without which a society like ours cannot live and grow at all, sometimes seems to be beginning to threaten us with taking its departure.'

There is nothing new about pining for the past. Flogging has been prescribed for every generation since it was abolished, likewise the workhouse, conscription and juvenile prison. The golden age of '20 or 30 years ago' has always seemed attractive in comparison to immediate fears about the breakdown of order. The only difference today is the wider appeal of such moralistic nostalgia.

Harping on about the past has normally been the preserve of the Conservative clubs and the British Legion—Tory MPs have always had a thing about whipping. Previously, calls for the return of corporal punishment were dominated by the likes of Brigadier Medlicott, Wing Commander Bullus and Sir Marcus Lipton referring to 'these louts who, long ago, should have been smacked on the behind by their parents'. But, in the absence of an explanation for the social and economic breakdown that we are experiencing today, such appeals to the past can become more common parlance. ●

(Historical references from G Pearson, *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*, Macmillan Education, 1983)

## Somebody is watching over you. Andrew Calcutt monitors the spread of closed circuit television

has asked for police cameras to monitor the Radford Road area. In Newcastle and South Shields, Northumbria police are operating cctv systems covering the whole town centre. The Newcastle system was installed last December at a cost of £400 000.

It is common practice for town-centre systems to be connected to police stations, but operated by local authorities. Councils in Birmingham, Bournemouth, Coventry, King's Lynn and Plymouth have installed complex systems. King's Lynn is staging seminars—the 'King's Lynn experience'—advertising the capabilities of its 46-camera system. Bournemouth council has topped King's Lynn by installing 47 cameras along the seafront.

Smaller cctv systems are used to monitor markets, housing estates, underground car parks, public transport and hospitals. Newham council set up an eight-camera system in Upton Park. Glasgow district council has installed cctv covering 7000 homes. The London borough of Greenwich introduced similar equipment on the Woolwich Common estate. The *Security Gazette* reports 'many local authority housing departments opting for a cctv package with a back-up recording system'. British Rail and London Underground operate video systems. Stoke Mandeville Hospital recently installed an eight-camera cctv: screens linked to the same system pipe in entertainment and advertising.

**T**he abduction of James Bulger brought video surveillance into the public eye. Newspapers and television showed blurred images from surveillance systems operated in Bootle by Marks & Spencer and Amec Building Ltd. Poor-quality footage was enhanced by IBM and contributed to the arrest of two boys for murder.

Police and politicians said this was proof that closed circuit television systems (cctv) helped to

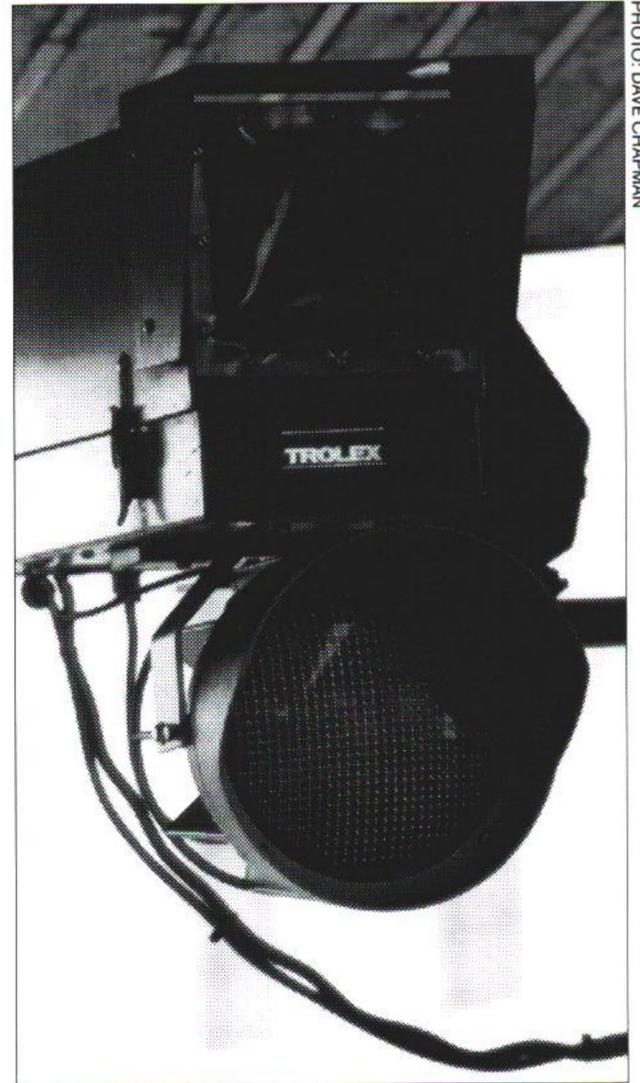


PHOTO: DAVE CHAPMAN

# You've been framed

protect the public. A look at the spread of video surveillance suggests that its intended purpose is really to help to control us.

Electronic surveillance is booming. The market in cctv equipment has bucked the recession to grow by 10 per cent a year. Total spending this year may reach £300m. The Security Industry Association estimates 150 000 'sophisticated' systems now operate in Britain—not including one-camera set-ups in the corner shop. It seems that George Orwell's prediction for 1984 was only a few years premature: 'There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment.'

Operating from helicopters, police forces now carry out low-altitude overt surveillance and high-altitude covert surveillance, often using infra-red cameras (heli-tele). Some police vehicles are equipped with in-car video. In Gatso speed traps (named after the Dutch company which developed them), a video camera is triggered by a wire loop detector. Carlton TV's traffic news is shot in a Scotland Yard monitoring room equipped with banks of video screens showing every main thoroughfare in London. Security experts joke that there are more cameras than trees along London's A40.

The Metropolitan Police are experimenting with video surveillance in target areas like Elephant and Castle, Peckham and King's Cross. Police videos were used in the manhunt following the Trafalgar Square riot of 1990. In Nottingham, Hyson Green traders' association

Surveillance is equally widespread in the private sector. Every Premier League and Football League ground in England is now equipped with cctv. Most branches of building societies and banks are also equipped; so are many cashpoints. The *Financial Times* reports that 'surveillance equipment is installed as standard in most new shopping centres'. A large department store would expect to pay upwards of £50 000 for a 10-camera system. The Dixon's chain represents the state-of-the-art: 500 shops linked to a central monitoring room at a secret location in Hertfordshire.

Recent technological developments include fastscan (broadcast quality pictures transmitted down telephone lines at lightning speeds), and multiplexing (pictures from 16 cameras simultaneously viewed and recorded on a single screen). Video systems are getting cheaper. Edinburgh university scientists have developed domestic equipment which could retail for £100. At the other end of the scale, the Security Industry Association believes that many more local councils will install city-wide systems (18 cameras and upwards). In the workplace, cctv is being combined with access control equipment to monitor and document the movements of employees. Soon everyone in Britain will have been recorded on cctv.

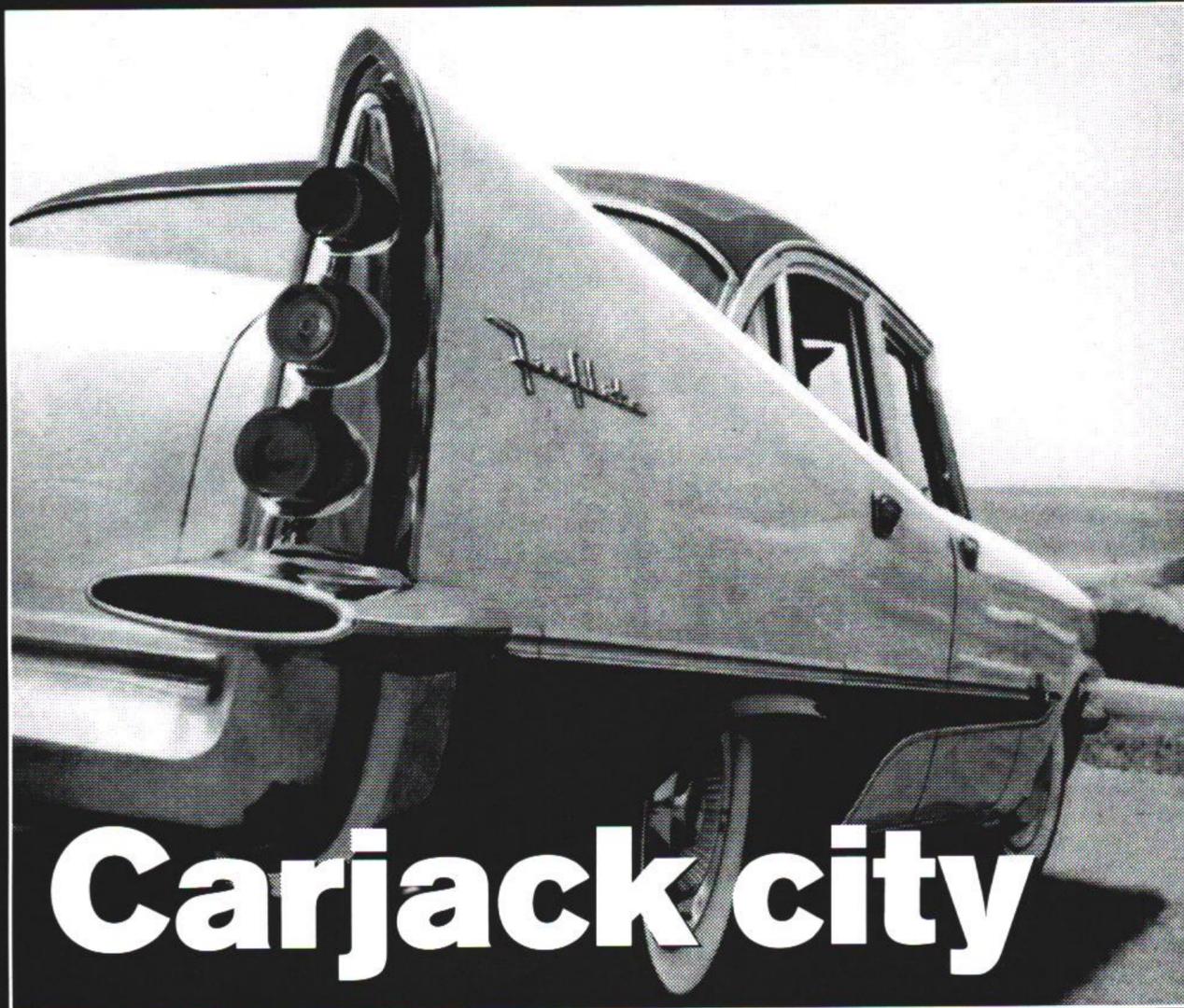
Video surveillance is often described as a weapon in the fight against crime. But a spokesman for the Inspectorate of the Security Industry admits that 'it was first put in to monitor

crowd behaviour, as embryonic crowd control...monitoring what is going on in general'.

At the recent conference on private policing organised by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the director of the Oxford Street Plaza gave an insight into the sort of crowd control techniques which may be implemented in response to information gathered from video surveillance.

She described how a shopping mall was 'swamped by youths' coming out of a Saturday lunchtime disco. They were 'lining the balustrading', turning the mall into 'effectively a community centre'. She admitted they 'were not committing a real crime', but they were 'not shopping', and 'their presence created a perception of fear'. Security teams monitored the youths and kept them moving. They were repeatedly told to 'please continue your shopping' until, after a few weeks, 'it was no longer fun to visit the plaza' and 'the problem was eradicated'.

Speaking at a conference for senior police officers, assistant chief constable Malcolm George (Greater Manchester Police) declared that video systems can secure 'freedom from...the drug dealer, the football hooligan'. It's worth remembering that the police have stretched the meaning of 'drug dealer' to include any black man under 30, while 'football hooligan' is now a blanket term applied to white working class youth. As Jeremy Beadle might say, next time it could be you. ●



# Carjack city

Daniel Bryan reports from New York on the latest source of suburban paranoia about crime and the new excuse for a police crackdown: carjacking

It seems that carjackers have now replaced communists as the biggest threat to the American way of life. Carjacking is defined by the FBI as 'the taking of a motor vehicle from the person or presence of another by force, violence or intimidation'. In recent months it has become the focus for a law-and-order panic which has served to heighten suburban hostility to the inner cities, and to justify the launch of new legal and policing measures against the ghettos.

## Two incidents

The initial carjacking hysteria centred on two gruesome incidents which received heavy attention in the national media. In September 1992, a research chemist from Columbia, a planned suburban community near Washington DC, died after her arm became entangled in the seatbelt during a carjacking; she was dragged for nearly two miles. The carjackers had tossed out her two-year old child, carseat and all.

Less than two months later, a suburban New Jersey housewife disappeared while on a late-evening shopping trip with her three-year old daughter. The child was found the next morning unharmed, but three days later the mother was discovered stabbed to death in a ditch near her abandoned van. In both cases the accused, all young black men, were charged within days, their mugshots plastered across the newspapers, with footage of them being led

away in shackles shown repeatedly on primetime TV news.

The coverage of these incidents was at the centre of a huge media scare about an alleged new crime wave against suburban shoppers, carried out by inner-city criminals. 'Urban terrorism has come to shopping centres', declared one report (*New York Times*, 27 November 1992). In fact, these grisly events stand out and shock precisely because of their relative rarity. The fear which carjacking has been used to create among suburban residents is far bigger than the crime itself.

Police estimate that carjacking accounts for one per cent of the 1.7m auto thefts committed in the USA in 1991. Far from suddenly booming, in some big cities, the figures for carjacking declined slightly in the early nineties. In New York, for example, 2298 vehicles were reported stolen at gunpoint in 1990; in 1991 it was 2007; and in the first six months of 1992, 926. More importantly, the overwhelming majority of carjackings occur in the areas where other crimes of violence and theft are most common: the big cities with impoverished ghettos. Statistics also show that the vast majority of carjackings result in no injuries.

It is clear that the real chances of suburban residents falling victim to a violent car theft are extremely slim. Nevertheless, the violent carjacking scare has taken hold of middle class public opinion. Its message chimes in with

the racially loaded crusade against 'urban terrorism', which is being used to justify new measures of containment against inner-city communities.

The governor of New Jersey, for example, has fuelled the panic about carjacking by declaring his determination to keep the ghetto 'plague' at bay: 'We haven't yet seen the epidemic plaguing other areas around the nation and we're not willing to. We intend to escalate our response to a full-scale assault on the problem.' (*NYT*, 25 November 1992)

For its part, the FBI has made carjacking 'a nationwide priority'. Although local police involved in the cases said that they had 'established no trends in profiles of victims...type of car...time of day...or location', the FBI quickly decided who was to blame. The Feds have said that carjacking will now be 'included with gang activity and drug-related violence as crimes investigated by a 300-member arm of the agency formed in January with former counter-intelligence agents' (*NYT*, 16 September 1992).

## New segregation

Nobody has to say it out loud, but the target is clear: young black men. And they are to be targeted by former secret service agents made redundant by the end of the Cold War, because 'street terrorists' from the ghetto have apparently replaced the KGB as the Public Enemy No1. On top of all this, the only anti-crime bill passed by the federal government in 1992 was an anti-carjacking law—as if stealing vehicles at gunpoint was somehow a new offence not covered by existing federal legislation.

The carjacking scare has been promoted by politicians and the media as yet another reason for mainly white, middle class America to retreat behind its security walls and leave the police to deal with the inner cities. Suburbanites who have been panicked into thinking that the ghetto is reaching out to get them are now seeking safety in 'master-planned communities'. These are corporate-owned and operated suburbs with private security armies and names like 'Memories', 'Green Valley' and 'Celebration' which offer 'safety from threats both real and imagined, and control over who moves in beside them' (*Harpers*, November 1992).

One happy resident who had moved from suburban southern California into a walled citadel in the north of the state explained that 'even the good neighbourhoods there aren't good any more'. Everybody knew what she meant; bad equals black. This is the sentiment behind a new movement seeking to partition California into two states: Northern California, home to the best white-only suburbs, and Southern California, populated largely by blacks and Latinos and centred on the urban sprawl of Los Angeles. Segregation, it seems, is back in fashion.

The carjacking furore captures the dangerous advance of law-and-order politics in America. Entire black and Latino communities are being criminalised and treated as a violent plague to be policed in military fashion. With last year's Los Angeles riots still fresh in the minds of the nation's law-makers and enforcers, this latest panic provides another pretext for clamping down hard on the inner cities.



# Dishonourable members

**A**lthough I think of myself as more or less unshockable when it comes to the cynicism and stupidity of politicians, I am constantly amazed at their public utterances. I'll never forget the sight of a Labour MP trying to claim that angry protesters were 'outsiders', not ordinary local people. When the interviewer remarked that they were all local residents and seemed very ordinary, the exasperated MP complained that they weren't 'proper ordinary people'. Whether you call such outbursts 'errors of judgement' or just brass neck, MPs show no signs of improvement in this age of PR advisers and spin doctors. If anything, they're getting worse as they retreat further into their fantasy world.

Remember the letter to a constituent who complained about council housing which said she was lucky to have a house at all? Or the proposal of a 'cheap-and-cheerful' train service 'for typists'? That sort of spectacular gaffe is usually held up to ridicule, accompanied by some gentle tut-tutting and indulgent 'aren't they awful, but we wouldn't want it any other way' editorials, suggesting that having MPs from another planet is one of the integral ingredients of British democracy's success.

Yet the most outrageous pronouncements usually go unnoticed, occurring as they do 'behind the scenes' in the netherworld of parliamentary committees. In A-level politics they teach you that this is where MPs go about their day-to-day business, doing the unglamorous work that keeps government ticking over. With parliamentary institutions losing public confidence hand over fist, this anonymity is probably a good thing for the honourable members.

After weeks of listening to the evidence of half-starving teenagers on pocket-money grants, the chairman of the parliamentary inquiry into student hardship concluded that it was impossible to say if poverty existed because it was such a difficult thing to define. Nobody asked him what he considered to be a reasonable income, or whether he thought money might be more relevant than a philosophical discussion of the meaning of hardship.

Now a new standard has been set by Sir Ivan Lawrence, chairman of the select committee on home affairs, and MP for the government that keeps thousands of immigrants in a detention camp near Heathrow and is currently deporting record numbers. Sir Ivan has just led an investigation into agencies that advise people on immigration matters. Not surprisingly, he wants them closed down, but his reason for doing so might raise a few eyebrows. Full of righteous indignation, he complains that these outfits offer no expertise and are exploiting vulnerable immigrants—a practice Sir Ivan finds 'reprehensible'. Well, he should know.

**J**unior heritage minister Robert Keys predicts a fine future for the British tourist industry, with many people 'choosing to holiday at home'. It's not clear whether he means 'at home' in the literal sense—stuck indoors with no money—or as in a cheap-and-cheerless week at the seaside. Either way the government is doing its best to ensure that this economic forecast comes true. I have less confidence in his suggestions for enticing foreign tourists to these shores with

a 'warmer welcome'. Top of his list is 'flying more Union Jacks', a flag most foreigners find as welcoming as a skull-and-crossbones, but it is his call for 'more attention to the special needs of foreigners' that I find most mysterious.

'Special needs' sounds like the kind of sleazy deals laid on for middle-aged men on business trips abroad. Paris, Amsterdam, Bangkok, Berlin are the places that spring to mind, rather than Brighton. Even the speciality to which England gave its name, *le vice Anglais* is very much a minority interest, and government support, however enthusiastic, is unlikely to turn it into a big foreign currency earner.

As for the domestic market, the money just isn't there these days. The government has tried, through assisted places schemes, to encourage private schools which offer gainful employment for enthusiastic caners and birchers, but this is just not enough. And there are always meddling parents willing to prosecute.

Meanwhile pent-up frustrations are beginning to spill out. The *Sunday Telegraph's* Lynette Burrows demanded that a 13-year old joy-rider should be 'thrashed': 'That would take the smile off his face.' And put one on the face of Tory MP John Townend. Children 'need their bottoms spanking', implored Mr Townend, speaking on behalf of needy children. 'A slap does them good', he added cheerfully. Mr Robert Robson, manager of Bilsthorpe colliery went a step further. Asked 'When and where were you happiest?', he replied: 'When I was at school, being caned. It didn't do me or any of my school pals any harm.'

I used to have my doubts about theories that the British were more screwed-up than other people. All a bit glib, this stuff about nannies, toilet training and boarding schools, and it only applied to a small section of the middle classes and a few aristocrats. Since reading the *Sun* the other day, I'm not so sure.

The *Sun* is not a 'top person's paper', and advertisers are not in the habit of throwing money down the drain. So I was disturbed to see Royal Doulton had taken expensive space to advertise their latest and (I hope) most disgusting product, a grotesque figurine entitled 'Well Done!'.

'Well Done!' is 'a sweet figure celebrating a very important moment in every child's life'. Translated, that means a fat little cherub with curly golden locks and red lips sitting on an ornate china potty, having its first trained shit. The ad claims that 'every parent remembers that important day for ever'. Maybe this is true. But then, one might say the same about getting piles, and I think it unlikely that even Royal Doulton collectors would want a hand-painted ornament to remind them of that day. Yet Royal Doulton has no doubts: 'Collectors, parents and grandparents alike will appreciate this cheerful figure... Well Done! will become a treasured family heirloom.'

I can reveal that a special limited-edition piece, 'Bad Boy!' is available for 'private collectors', and was displayed during the recent exhibition of obscene publications in parliament. It was one of the items considered unsuitable for the general public and I understand business has been brisk. As they say, 'You don't have to be mad to work there, but it helps'. ●

Alan Harding will be as sick as a parrot if football doesn't remain a game of two halves

follows the game and is engaged by its passions and personalities. And, unlike in Britain, the players are presumed, until evidence points to the contrary, to be reasonably intelligent human beings. 'Toto' Schillaci, the Italian World Cup hero, was recently asked whether the fact that his wife had left him was responsible for his lack of goals. 'My personal life does not affect my performance on the pitch', Schillaci replied. A diplomatic reply that strains credulity—but a far cry from a burp and a fart, which would probably have been Paul Gascoigne's response.

'it's a game of two halves' because TV advertising demands four quarters instead. The greater fear is that the Americanisation of soccer will rob this greatest of sporting spectacles of any atmosphere. After all, despite the generally inferior quality of the football at the last World Cup, the sense of occasion at Italia '92 was unparalleled—even though in the end it was a deeply mourned funeral for the Azzurri (the Italian national team), rather than the expected Caesarian triumph.

Personally, I think the fears for the Americanisation of football are

# American

When an emotional Luciano Pavarotti received the gold disc for the sales of his 1990 World Cup hit 'Nessun Dorma', he exclaimed that this was one of the proudest moments of his life. Not because he had succeeded in bringing great music into the homes of millions, but because the disc was presented to him by 'the great champion' Bobby Charlton. Pavarotti (a devoted Juventus supporter) was honoured to be in the presence of a footballer—and an English footballer at that!

It was a touching moment that revealed the gulf between Italian and British football. In Britain, when Nigel Kennedy wraps an Aston Villa scarf around his neck, his manners are part of a self-conscious attempt to junk the idea that he is 'cultured', and to appear plebeian. Indeed supporting Villa is, for Kennedy, a way of acquiring a working class aura. Pavarotti, on the other hand, loves football because he is cultured, not in spite of it. Kennedy's conceit would have no meaning in Italy where it is not vulgar to follow football, and middle class supporters of the game are not johnny-come-lately yuppies slumming it on a Saturday afternoon.

Of course the majority of the fans who fill the San Siro stadium in Milan and the Stadio Olimpico in Rome are working class. But a far wider audience

The centrality of football to Italian life has given it the power and the affluence to draw to the national game some of the world's greatest players—and in turn has made Serie A (Italy's equivalent of the Premier League) the world's greatest league. 'When I pick up an England programme, and I see it there, "Platt, Juventus", it hits me', observed England (and former Aston Villa) player David Platt. 'There I am, in that black and white strip, the most famous in all football. There is never going to be anybody bigger than this club.'

But the glitz and affluence of the Italian game has also led to fears that it is being 'Americanised': that the interests of the sport and its followers are taking second place to business interests and the need to transform the game into glitzy entertainment. The epitome of this for the European observer is the presentation of the SuperBowl (American Football's Cup Final) where Michael Jackson is an equal attraction to the game itself and the whole schedule is dictated by advertising revenue. And what happens in Italy, many fear, will also happen in Britain. Already in Britain much of the Premier League schedule is dependent on the whims of Sky TV, which has exclusive live rights to the game.

The Americanisation of football is a particular worry since the next World Cup takes place in the USA. It might not only be a matter of being unable to say

overplayed. Even in American football there is spectator involvement. After all there are 49ers and Giants' fans who, for better or worse, do define themselves through their team. It is also senseless to complain about football being considered as entertainment. What else has it ever been?

There is an even more important point here. Football, like all other sports, is an organic part of the culture that produces it. And like every other cultural phenomenon you cannot simply drag it out of the culture whence it came. Just as it has proved impossible to implant American football into Europe (viewing figures for Channel 4's coverage of the game have fallen sharply since the initial hype, and the London Monarchs reigned for only slightly longer than Lady Jane Grey) so there are limits to which real football can be Americanised. Italian football may look more like an American sport because the people involved are richer and there is more razzmatazz about it—but it remains a specifically Italian cultural phenomenon.

You certainly need big money to succeed in Italian football, and it is big business. Former steel-mill owner Jack Walker of Blackburn Rovers, the closest thing to an Italian football magnate in Britain, would not make much of an impact alongside the likes of media mogul Silvio Berlusconi at AC Milan and

Gianni Agnelli (Mr Fiat) at Juventus. But Italian businessmen do not buy franchises on teams to make money, and there is no case of a team being bought up and moving city—something which has happened often enough in US sport.

AC Milan—probably the best club side in the world today—is the best example that money can buy success but success does not bring automatic financial reward. This year, even with 73 000 season ticket holders, a league triumph and so far an uninterrupted run in the European Cup, Milan will not

break even. Not surprising, when you consider that owner Berlusconi signed away £40m last season on eight players.

No doubt there will be a tendency for the game to become less focused on the paying customer and, as in the USA, there will be less away support for the key games as big clubs travel the length and breadth of Europe in search of the glamour prizes. But it is very difficult to see this destroying the fabric of support. In the end what makes football is the emotional support for your team, however unglamorous it may be.

Once a Charlton supporter always a Charlton supporter. A friend of mine in Italy has remained a Bologna supporter all his life because that's where he did his national service. And so it goes.

For all its success, Channel 4's coverage of Italian football remains a minority attraction. It may provide a dazzling display of international talent playing to feet and killing the ball with a first touch. But it doesn't have the raw excitement of a ball pumped into the air, chased hard, and skidding away in the mud from a player who might be a donkey, but he's *your* donkey. ●

# football?



The 'Sky Strikers' have brought fancy footwork to the Premier League

PHOTO: BRITISH SKY BROADCASTING

# The cultural

The controversy surrounding Michael Medved's book *Hollywood v America* has made censorship sound politically correct says Alka Singh

Michael Medved is a worried man. The American film critic whose book *Hollywood v America* has caused a storm on both sides of the Atlantic fears that Tinseltown is being taken over by a posse of filmmakers who have a fatal attraction for sex, violence and immorality. Hollywood, he told a packed audience in London's Dominion Theatre earlier this year, has become about honouring ugliness. Why else, he wondered, would Martin Scorsese's *Cape Fear* be nominated for an Oscar?

Medved's crusade is to return Hollywood to upright citizens and decent values. Why can't art be uplifting rather than sordid?, he wants to know. Why can't it be beautiful rather than ugly? And why can't the main characters in Hollywood films be 'ordinary' people: married, faithful, responsible parents, rather than single, divorced, gay or psychopathic?

If Medved did manage to cleanse art of its nastiness he would barely have a book to read or a film to watch—and certainly not by his favourite authors or directors. All the names held up as the great masters of the Western artistic tradition are hardly shrinking violets in their treatment of sex and violence.

Take Shakespeare. From *King Lear* to *Macbeth*, there is barely a single decent, law-abiding, faithful citizen in sight among the buckets of pig blood which were habitually thrown around the Elizabethan stage. *Titus Andronicus* is surely one of the goriest stories in the English language, in which children are



served up for dinner in a supreme act of vengeance. Or think of the Greek plays. If any Hollywood scriptwriter came up with the plot of *Oedipus Rex* ('man has child by his mother and then gouges his eyes out with a pin') his script would be binned quicker than you could say 'self-censorship'.

Or take one of Medved's favourite films, *The Alamo*. Here John Wayne, as Davy Crockett, helps lead the fight for Texan independence, massacring Mexicans wholesale in the process before getting his own men massacred in the fight-to-the-death finale. 'Its sole redeeming feature', critic Peter John Dyer wrote at the time, 'lies in one of those crushing climaxes of total massacre which Hollywood can still pull off thunderingly well'.

Medved clearly does not object to violence, only violence that does not uphold his moral vision of the world. Violence at the Alamo is acceptable presumably because it is in pursuit of the American dream. Violence in Shakespeare and Greek tragedy is acceptable because the masses don't read them (or at least so Medved would like to believe). But *Cape Fear* or *Terminator 2*? Now, they might give the wrong idea to the wrong people. What Medved's argument boils down to is that violence and moral ambiguity is fine for enlightened minds (like his own), but not in front of the plebs or the children, please.

Medved justifies his objections to Hollywood's output by arguing that screen violence leads to social violence and moral depravity. This is, of course, a very old chestnut, long favoured by the more loony right-wing politicians and figures like Mary Whitehouse.

It is also a specious argument. Watching *Terminator 2* is no more likely to lead you to blast away with a machine gun than *Oedipus Rex* caused an increase in incest in ancient Greece or *Titus Andronicus* led to a wave of infanticide in Elizabethan England. There is no link either logical or factual between artistic representation and social behaviour.

The argument that 'screen violence causes social violence' hinges on the idea that people are irrational, unthinking beings moved by instinct and emotion, for whom images of violence trigger an atavistic response to go out

# war goes PC



The body count in *Gone with the Wind* (far left) made *Terminator* look tame

and cause mayhem. That says more about Medved's view of humanity than it does about people's actual behaviour.

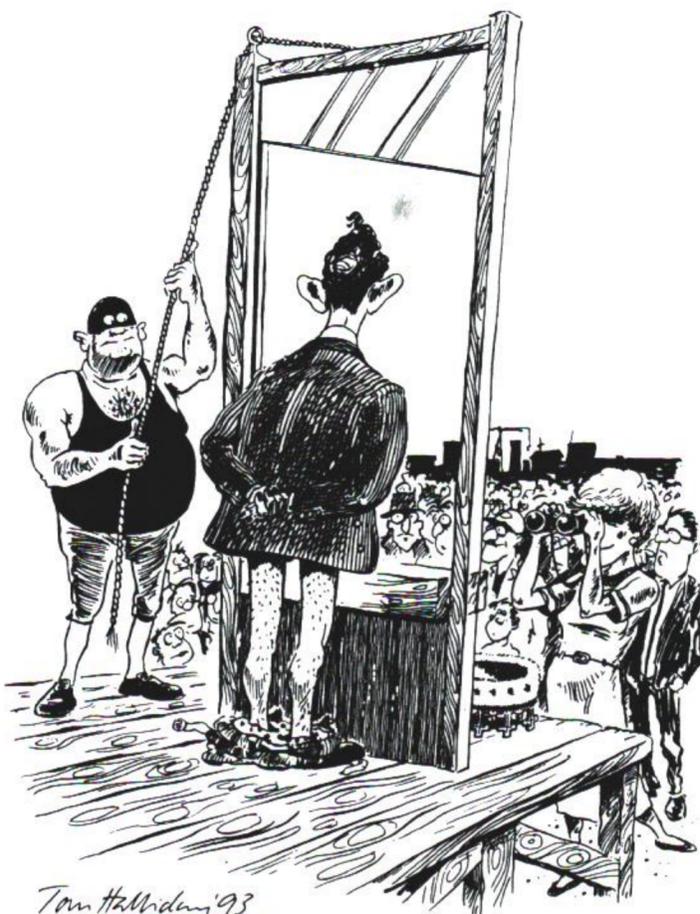
In the past, liberal commentators would have had little difficulty in dealing with the arguments for the censorship of violence. Today it is different, however, because Medved uses the language of liberalism to promote his reactionary ideas. Not for him Pat Buchanan's 'cultural war'; Medved prefers the politically correct 'cultural environmental movement'. He is opposed to violence, he says, because it is oppressive to women. He likes TV programmes like *LA Law* because they have a high quotient of black and female characters in important roles. He sprinkles his argument with impeccably PC terms like 'diversity' and 'positive images'.

Medved employs the language of political correctness to promote highly reactionary ideas about family values, moral order and Western civilisation. Where once liberals called for 'positive images' to promote women and blacks,

Medved calls for positive images to preserve American values. Where once liberals called for the censorship of racist material, Medved argues for the 'self-censorship' of all 'demeaning' material. To those liberals who used to call for pornography to be banned because it led to violence against women, Medved says why stop there: 'Let us clean up the whole of our culture.'

The result is a panoply of liberals who now back Medved's censorious campaign. People like film producer David Puttnam ('a raging moderate' as he describes himself), critic Barry Norman and *Guardian* journalist Melanie Phillips have all given their support to Medved, albeit reluctantly. It is ironic that the most vocal opposition to Medved has come not from liberals, but from reactionaries like film director Michael Winner.

In Medved's hands censorship has become politically correct. This is a far greater threat to our well-being than the most depraved product of Hollywood. ●



Tom Halliday '93

'MARVELLOUS / FASCINATING!!..... AND WHAT HAPPENS THEN ??'

This work by Tom Halliday is one of the winners of a national competition for cartoons about the monarchy, on the theme of 'Another Annus Horribilis?'. The competition was supported by *Living Marxism* and the *New Statesman and Society*. The judges—including Steve Bell, *Spitting Image's* Roger Law and *Financial Times* cartoonist Jeremy Banx—placed Halliday's cartoon third, but we liked it the best so we've reprinted it here. First place in the competition went to John Docherty, and Leon Kuhn came second.

A selection of the cartoons submitted—including the winning entries—can be seen at The Angle gallery in Birmingham from 17 April. The exhibition has already caused controversy before it has even opened, with a number of local councillors trying to get it banned—so catch it while you can.

The Angle gallery, The Arcadian, Ladywell Walk, Birmingham B5 4ST. Tel (021) 622 7187



# Vroom womb

**L**ads, lads, lads, what is happening to your willies? On *The Big Breakfast* (C4) recently, they premiered the 'wonderpant'—the male equivalent of the wonderbra. It gives you jut, lift and substance. You too can be a Chippendale.

But does the new erotics of the male body really betoken an unashamed, hedonistic self-confidence? And why are they called Chippendales? Is it something to do with furniture? Or is it to do with those two rodents on the cheapo Disney videos? And why 'wonderpant' as opposed to 'pants'? Am I the only one troubled by the use of the singular?

Seeking reassurance, I tuned into BBC 2's slot for willy enthusiasts—*Top Gear*. It got off to a worrying start with the head of Mitsubishi talking about the 'added value of smallness'. Then it moved on to a reassuring item in which a man with a huge chin and a leather jacket (like Peter Perfect from the *Whacky Races*) was test-driving the new Jaguar, which has a 12-cylinder engine.

If the car is a penis substitute, this is the equivalent of a whole salami down your 501s. He drove it over the moor with The Doors on the soundtrack. He had an emphatically masculine manner, placing all the full stops a little bit. Too early. He stressed words that didn't need. To be stressed. He also had a thrilling habit of turning every other noun into a verb. Having noted that the car was 'powerfully engined', he 'petrolled' it and drove away. I felt. A whole lot. Better. Especially when I saw 'Mike'—a man who had stripped down a Jag and turned it into a tricycle. The huge, exposed engine rose up in front of him as he straddled its seat. He looked like something from those obscene frescoes in Pompeii.

Of course you can't actually use a 12-cylinder engine in any meaningful way in Britain, unless you hook it up to a steel rolling plant. Executive car design is not about unleashing power, but restraining it, about keeping the wild horses on a tight rein. Think of all those spoilers. What does a spoiler on the back of a car say? It says, we did such a good job on the aerodynamics that we had to bugger them up again, otherwise it would fly away.

Executive saloons are not really for driving anyway, they are for parking. Almost no big cars in this country are privately owned. It is fleet car culture that has given rise to the myriad nit-picking variations that come with every saloon. What is a GLE as opposed to a GTI? Only a GIT would know.

These things are a way of valorising the vehicles, of arranging them in a hierarchy that reflects the pecking order of management. It is also why this type of car is so ludicrously over-priced. Like mid-week in a Trusthouse Forte, it is all on the firm and therefore on the taxpayer. This proliferation of extras and treats has turned the inside of saloons into cosy little nests of self-indulgence. You don't have to pull hard on the steering wheel any more or even wind down the window. Now, I ask you, is this masculine?

All right, I know there was never really anything butch about driving a car. In the traditional family set up, the 'family car' is driven to work by the man, who gets to sit back and listen to Derek Jameson on the way while the woman battles with bus queues and weather. He is as prissy about his vehicle as any sitcom maiden aunt would be about her best parlour—anointing it with turtle wax and Hoovering the

insides. But this was once presented with a masculine rhetoric of mechanical maintenance. Not any more.

When Peter Perfect moved on from the power of the Jaguar to the 'ergonomics of its actual driving environment', an oddly wimpish tone crept in. Peter was 'saddened' by the interior which, he felt, did not 'cosset' him properly. He all but sucked his thumb as he said it. I would not have been surprised if he had asked for airbags that inflate in time of stress and suckle him. For the truth is, the car is no longer a penis at all. The car has become a womb.

Once upon a time cars were all thrust. Suddenly, they are all regression. The new adverts for Jaguar and Rover and the impending launch of the little yellow MG Midget all promise the driver a second childhood. These are the cars you dreamed about when you were a wean, now at last you can drive them. And they are so well-upholstered you can drive them in the fetus position.

Even in the celebrated VW advert—the one with The Bluebells (more regression) singing 'Young at Heart', the Strong Woman who is lightly shrugging off her divorce allows herself a tear once she has snuggled down in the safety of her padded hatchback. And here hyper-reality has done one of its cheery little back flips. The advert has put the single back at Number One, enabling you to pretend that it really is Yesterday Once More every time you switch on the car stereo.

Nowhere is this regression more apparent than in the cars the detectives are driving. James Bond had an Aston Martin, bristling with an arsenal of gadgets; The Saint had the underpowered but slick Volvo sports; the Batmobile was practically a space ship, and even Hong Kong Fooey (Number One Superguy) drove something that was 'faster than the human eye'. Morse, on the other hand, drove an antiquated Jag and his imbecilic replacement Anna Lee (expelled from Hill's Angels for being too dim) drives an Alpine Sunbeam. Back in reality, the latest generation of Japanese cars is round and retro. Of course, cars have always been toys but they used to be Hornby, now they're more sort of Tomy.

Let me assure you that I have never had any need for and do not regret the passing of the phallic substitute. I drive an egg-shaped seven-seater Previa myself. I never pass a Sierra Cosworth or a BMW without keying its paintwork. But there is a worrying sub-text here. Attached to the phallic imagery of the traditional car advert was a promise of freedom, of blasting around mountain bends, over heath and heather before the post-coital groan of the gravel in the drive.

Now obviously this is not quite honest. A car is nowhere near as liberating as cheap public transport would be. It saddles you with debt and plonks you down in a traffic jam. It increases your contact with the forces of law and order and it makes your city uninhabitable. Children, in particular, have been imprisoned by the car. Only 10 years ago, 90 per cent of eight-year olds walked to school unaccompanied. Now it's five per cent. They go with watchful parents, worried about traffic. Or they go strapped firmly into the back seats. We always knew this, but previously we suppressed the knowledge, and were brought into the auto-mart with a promise of liberation. Now the drawback has become the main pitch. The car is being actively promoted as a padded cell, a cosy prison and all our dreams seem to be of retreat and enclosure. ●

# MARXIST

## REVIEW OF BOOKS

Phil Murphy questions the 'Keynesian revolution', and its relevance in today's slump

### John Messiah Keynes?

John Maynard Keynes: The Economist as Saviour 1920-37, Robert Skidelsky, Macmillan, £20 hbk

This is what a biography should be like. It is informative, substantial and entertaining. In this 700-page second of three volumes on John Maynard Keynes, Robert Skidelsky takes us through the 1920s to the 1936 publication of Keynes' most famous book, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. Skidelsky provides a succinct summary of the idea behind the *General Theory*, in which Keynes focused 'on the level of demand, or spending, as the determinant of the level of activity in an economy. His book is an attempt to show how consumption and investment demand in any period can fall short of potential supply, or capacity to produce, resulting in mass unemployment' (p545).

Keynes was a man with many interests—from mathematics to philosophy, from Cambridge high table to the Bloomsbury group and many more. Key aspects of Keynes' life and outlook are here confirmed with new colour: his intellect and application certainly, and also his elitism, his arrogance, his anti-Semitic leanings and, emphatically, his anti-socialism.

The contemporary discussion of Keynes' work reflects the interest in the policies drawn from it. During the postwar period economic policy in the West was dominated by Keynesianism, as associated with state intervention in the economy. This policy was widely credited with the return of prosperity after the slump of the 1930s. Keynesianism became the basis for the postwar economic consensus, while free market thinkers like Friedrich Hayek were marginalised, their *laissez-faire* policies damned by association with the Depression.

However, with the return of recessionary trends in the seventies, it was Keynes' followers who became discredited. State intervention was blamed for choking the entrepreneurial spirit and the free marketeers were rehabilitated. Hayek became a respected fount of wisdom, Keynes a has-been. More recently, however, the failure of the free market policies advocated by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and the onset of slump in the capitalist world, have led to renewed interest in Keynes' work and the possibilities of managed growth.

Despite the idea that Keynesian economics are

socialistic, his own motives were to preserve capitalism. But he disagreed with free marketeers like Hayek, who saw any state economic intervention as a form of socialism, paving the 'road to serfdom'. In the words of one of his students from the 1920s, AFW Plumptre, Keynes 'saw clearly that in England and the United States in the 1930s the road to serfdom lay, not down the path of too much government control, but down the path of too little, and too late':

'Continued unemployment meant socialism, complete government control, unlimited government intervention. He tried to devise the minimum government controls which would allow free enterprise to work. The end of *laissez-faire* was not necessarily the beginning of communism.' (Quoted in *John Maynard Keynes*, p409)

Skidelsky has his own agenda. He seeks to distinguish the greatness of Keynes from the misunderstandings and mistakes of postwar *Keynesians*. They inherited his machinery, but without, Skidelsky claims, his balanced views on its limitations. Skidelsky's glee is barely disguised as he describes the decline and fall of the great man's policy-making 'disciples' of the 1960s and 1970s: 'Their hubris was inevitably succeeded by nemesis.' (p410)

Contrary to orthodox opinion, Skidelsky regards the 1930 *Treatise on Money*, not the *General Theory*, as Keynes' 'classic achievement' (p337). For Skidelsky, the counter-crisis proposals for deficit-financing which Keynes theorised in the *General Theory* were only appropriate in the exceptional circumstances of the 1930s. The *Treatise*, however, he sees as having wider relevance. Although published during the great Depression, it is pre-Depression in atmosphere and deals with fluctuations in output rather than persistent mass unemployment.

The *Treatise* reflected the experience of the 1920s, not the 1930s. It analysed the problems of an arthritic economy, not of a world in deep depression. As such, says Skidelsky, the neglected *Treatise* would have provided a more relevant guide to dealing with the ►

arthritic British economy post-1945 than did the *General Theory's* emphasis on public spending: 'That Keynesian policy after the Second World War came to be identified so exclusively with "fiscalism" was a misreading of the times fostered by a "single book" approach to Keynes.' (p319)

Skidelsky concludes that there should be a more balanced approach to government intervention. He is sympathetic, for example, to making more use of monetary policy to influence investment, rather than the exclusive focus on fiscal policy contained in the *General Theory*. Skidelsky blames the reversal of the 'Keynesian revolution' upon the absence of such 'balance' among Keynes' followers.

Skidelsky's exposition is useful in dispelling the more narrow and mechanical interpretations of Keynesian economics. As an economist Keynes certainly was much more than a deficit-financer. But Skidelsky is less successful in defending the two principal claims about Keynes' legacy: that his policies made him the 'saviour of capitalism' in the thirties, and that his impact upon economic thinking amounted to a 'Keynesian revolution'.

Despite the book's title, Skidelsky fails to provide convincing evidence that Keynes saved capitalism. That was certainly how Keynes saw himself, but the condition of capitalism half a century on is not evidence of his success.

Keynesian economic policies did not end the slump of the 1930s. Few governments sought to adopt the Keynesian prescription during the Depression. And where they did—in Japan, for example—it was not done in the name of Keynes. In both Britain and America balanced budgets remained the policy objective, though it became increasingly difficult to achieve them. In practice capitalism increasingly needed state intervention just to survive.

The pragmatic moves towards creating what became known as the 'mixed economy' were not taken on the basis of Keynesian theories. And, in any case, they were not what ended the slump. Deficit-financing failed to re-establish the conditions for sustained profitable investment. In America, for example, mass unemployment was still around the 10m mark in 1939. Profits did not regain their 1929 level until 1940. Nowhere in the West—outside of Nazi Germany—was a new dynamic of expansion created. It was only the exceptional circumstances of rearmament and war preparation at the end of the thirties which finally brought an end to mass unemployment.

In places, Skidelsky comes close to admitting that public spending cannot be credited for the end of the slump: 'The verdict on the 1930s remains open....It is at least open to question whether Keynesian policies in Britain could have achieved much more....The American recovery under the New Deal was rather less successful than Britain's. Hitler's Germany alone provided triumphant vindication of Keynesian economics, but only through semi-war conditions, backed by terror' (p467). But elsewhere he seems to go along with the conventional view that government jump-starting worked in the 1930s (p607).

Such ambiguity is unhelpful, particularly when people are today proposing extra state spending as a possible solution to the slump. It did not work last time and it

would not work this time either. It was only the consequences of the Second World War which allowed capitalism to escape from the Depression and paved the way for the postwar boom. And the decisive impact of the war was not a Keynesian boosting of demand, but the forced restructuring of capital and an increase in the rate of exploitation. It was this which restored the conditions for profitable production and steady expansion after 1945.

If the application of Keynesian-style policies was ineffective in curing the Depression, how is it that Keynes became so influential as to be credited with a 'revolution'? Skidelsky declares that 'the revolutionary thought was that people could be unemployed due to a "lack of effective demand", and not because they had "priced themselves out of jobs"' (p545).

This is a fair summary of what Keynes said, but did it amount to a revolution? Skidelsky himself admits that the *General Theory's* message about the need for government intervention in the economy was 'intuitively acceptable and also wanted by the late 1930s'. It was 'common sense' (p545).

It was so commonsensical that Keynes was not unique in arguing for state intervention. Lots of other economists including Gunnar Myrdal in Sweden and Michael Kalecki in Poland were arguing along similar lines. Nor was the theory of effective demand so novel: Thomas Malthus—Keynes' 'favourite economist'—JA Hobson and the less well-known Nicholas Johannsen were all precursors.

Since the *General Theory's* publication there has been a debate as to whether Keynes' ideas were a 'revolutionary' break with classical economics, or just an amendment to classical theory. This often becomes a debate about what classical theory is, and how Keynes defined it, but such academic discussions miss the important point. Keynes shared with others the insight that free market self-equilibrating theory was simply outdated.

As he says right at the start of the *General Theory*, 'the characteristics of the special case assumed by the classical theory happen to be not those of the economic society in which we actually live, with the result that its teaching is misleading and disastrous if we attempt to apply it to the facts of experience' (Macmillan edition, 1970, p3). For Keynes classical theory was simply behind the times. He thought it valid for the 150 years before 1914, but outmoded in the new age of greater uncertainty.

Towards the end of his major work, even Keynes went so far as to concede that he remained in some ways within the previous tradition:

'Our criticism of the accepted classical theory of economics has consisted not so much in finding logical flaws in its analysis as in pointing out that its tacit assumptions are seldom or never satisfied, with the result that it cannot solve the economic problems of the actual world. But if our central controls succeed in establishing an aggregate volume of output corresponding to full employment as nearly as is practicable, classical theory comes into its own again from this point onwards.' (*General Theory*, p378)

The most interesting feature of Keynes' economic thought is his great emphasis upon exogenous psychological factors, beginning with the propensity to consume, as

determining the level of activity. He gives centre stage to the role of expectations in an age of uncertainty, to the state of confidence, and its consequences for the propensity to hoard and the inducement to invest.

Yet even Keynes' promotion of the role of motives, expectations and psychological uncertainties as the true subject matter of economics is more a development of what went before than a departure from it. It locates him within the long tradition of the decline of objective thinking about the economy and the elevation of subjective factors; a decline which began way back with the disintegration of classical political economy in the 1830s.

Skidelsky gets closer to the mark on the origins of the 'Keynesian revolution' when he notes that 'twentieth-century events had plunged economics into crisis long before Keynes'.

Keynesianism was not the product of any great battle of ideas between the old guard and the new. What

pessimism about the future for capitalism was especially striking in Britain and America. The speed of their economic descent was a major factor. On the eve of the First World War Britain was still the world's foremost economic power. By the 1930s it was clear that it had lost this position and there was no going back. In America the roaring twenties had given way to the slump-ridden thirties.

Given their past economic successes, free market ideology had survived longest in these two countries. The acceptance of greater state intervention would therefore need a more decisive overturning of existing ideas in Britain and the USA. Elsewhere, in Europe and in Japan, the state's greater role during the slump was less of a departure. There the state had long played a part in protecting emergent indigenous economies against stronger rivals. So enhanced governmental activity in the 1930s was more acceptable in Europe and Japan than it was in Britain and America.

This contrast underlies the phenomenon which Skidelsky notes, quoting Gunnar Myrdal, that the Keynesian revolution was mainly an Anglo-American affair (p581). For these two countries overturning free market policies was a more iconoclastic act. English-speaking Keynes, with a long record of service on behalf of the elite British establishment, was the economist of the times who earned the title of official iconoclast.

Keynesianism grew in influence because it corresponded to the requirements of the post-Second World War politics of consensus. The experience of the Depression and war had led to a general loss of faith in capitalism. One by-product of this was the establishment by the mid-1940s of a new Western consensus, which accepted the need for planning and the creation of a mixed economy, as well as a commitment to welfare provision.

Keynes' argument for what Skidelsky appropriately calls the Middle Way, of limited state intervention to save capitalism, fitted this developing mood. Keynesianism was the economic ideology appropriate for the consensus politics of the postwar boom. His theoretical work did not initiate or inspire the era of state intervention; it just mirrored it. Keynes' work was a reaction to changing reality, rather than an initiator of change.

From this perspective it becomes clear that the demise of Keynesianism in the 1970s was not due, as Skidelsky believes, to the deficiencies of its practitioners. It was rejected because of the loss of faith in the supposed capacity of state intervention to ward off the crisis. The return of recession in the early 1970s discredited the fanciful notion that state intervention could prolong the boom for ever. Keynesianism was the casualty.

Keynesianism was a victim of the new depression, just as it had been the beneficiary of the last. With the new cycle in politics which began around this time, the Keynesian ideology of a middle way became one of the frontline targets in the right-wing offensive against the consensus politics of the postwar years. Because of this association with the past, Keynesianism will not be resurrected as an influential school. But whatever form the desperate demands for more state intervention during this slump take, the lesson from Keynes and the 1930s is that it will not be able to solve the fundamental problems facing the capitalist economy.

### **Keynes came to prominence because of the political need for a new capitalist ideology**

happened was that the waste, the poverty and stagnation brought on by the Depression contradicted the orthodox theory of a cosy capitalist society with eternal equilibrium. The old theory became discredited because, like the views of flat-Earthers, it was too far removed from the facts. Within the void created by the discrediting of the old, a new set of ideas came to the fore which more reflected the way capitalism was now operating. But why was it Keynes, rather than, say, Kalecki or Myrdal, who was deemed to have fathered a revolution and credited with shaping postwar economic policies?

The answer lies in the particular political needs of the time for a new ideology, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. Skidelsky sees that 'a new ideology was required for a capitalism evolving into more organised forms' (p229). This had become a particularly pressing need by the 1930s. The experience of the slump ensured that confidence in capitalism was at a new low, while the alternative of socialism seemed to be making gains in the Soviet Union.

By the late 1930s the widespread intellectual conviction had grown that the notion of a free market capitalism was not sustainable. The experience of economic stagnation and decay during the slump had exposed the deep problems of the market system. More and more businessmen in Britain, in America and around the world came round to the view that growth could only resume through state aid.

Since capitalism seemed to be associated with Depression, unemployment and fascism it faced a crisis of confidence. Free market policies were simply not viable options for the capitalist class any longer. This sense of

## READ ON

**About Time: The Revolution in Work and Family Life**, Patricia Hewitt, Rivers Oram/IPPR, £22 hbk, £9.95 pbk

Patricia Hewitt, former press secretary to Neil Kinnock, has produced a detailed study of changes in working time practices over the recent past. Tracing the rise of the flexible worker—working part-time, flexi-time, job share, term-time only, weekends only, or taking career breaks—Hewitt goes so far as to say that ‘the full-time employee working a standard five-day week is in the minority’ (p25).

After detailing changes at work, Hewitt describes the role that women continue to play in the home. Her statistics (although disappointingly based on 1985 figures) give a stark picture of women’s oppression. Women continue to do four times as much routine housework as men; women have continued to take responsibility for childcare (although childcare takes seven hours’ work a day, seven days a week, the most men contribute is 44 minutes a day). Hewitt points out, however, that men and women average the same daily working hours—about 10—indicating that it is primarily men who are responsible for providing the family’s income, while women fit work in around their domestic responsibilities.

Hewitt takes an unashamed standpoint in favour of more work-time flexibility. Women do not, she claims, aspire to full-time working. She argues that instead of the right to full-time work, the right to shorter hours with a *pro rata* reduction in pay should become the campaigning focus of the trade unions. In fact her own sources disprove this, her main point. The most important issue for all workers is pay. Hewitt quotes the 1985 EC employee survey, which demonstrated that just five per cent of workers would like fewer hours with *pro rata* pay cuts. Even among women, just one in five full-timers wanted shorter hours at the cost of lower pay.

Hewitt’s ideas have much more to do with the employers’ needs than with those of employees at the receiving end of workplace reorganisation. Chapter Four, ‘How people feel about working time’ was sponsored by DIY store B&Q (basic rate £3.48 an hour). Hewitt eagerly lists the benefits of flexible working practices to managers, urging them to take advantage of the opportunities it offers; reducing unit labour costs, increasing the operating time of plant and machinery, removing expensive overtime and increasing productivity. She notes that ‘the economic importance of flexible working time is the part it plays in strategies for restructuring enterprises to make them more competitive’ (p89). In effect, Hewitt is encouraging workers to take pay cuts, urging employers to implement them.

The latter half of the book consists of recommendations to government, employers and trade unions on how to bring the law into line with the new patterns of work. But perhaps it does not matter much how many *pro rata* rights you have if you take home around £60 a week (my estimate of what a 30-hour, term-time only worker earns at B&Q). You still can’t live on it.

Sara Hardy

**Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle among Japan, Europe and America**, Lester Thurrow, Nicholas Brealey, £9.99 pbk

Lester Thurrow, dean of the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Sloan School of Management, has written a lively telling-off to American business and government alike. The book is in the form of a comparative analysis of the main competitors for control of the twenty-first century: America, Japan and Europe (which for Thurrow’s purposes, and with some accuracy, means a German-dominated Europe).

Thurrow begins with the observation that the bear in the woods is gone—the enemy of Soviet communism has turned out to be no enemy at all, however fierce it once looked. For the next century, rivalry will be economic, not political or military, and the prize belongs to the power most in tune with the new circumstances.

Thurrow concludes that the next century probably belongs to Europe, principally because of its advantageous position with respect to the markets of the former Soviet bloc. However, it would be a mistake to think that his analysis is just an observation.

In fact, Thurrow’s treatment of Europe and Japan is superficial, where his investigation of the United States is involved, at least at the empirical level. Thurrow’s purpose is not so much to really find out where America’s competitors have an advantage, but to scare the American authorities into taking the right steps to defend American competitiveness.

Accordingly, the qualities that Thurrow attributes to the Europeans and Japanese have little to do with the actual particularities of those economies, but more reflect what he wants to see happen in American industry.

Thurrow charges American investors and workers with an Anglo-Saxon desire to reduce effort to a minimum, while striving for maximum rewards. Consequently Americans have little sense of the long term, with investors demanding inordinately high returns before they will invest in industry while workers expect high wages with little sacrifice. By contrast, Thurrow argues that the German and Japanese economic cultures are ‘communitarian’—putting group interests above those of the individual, and the long term above the immediate. Japanese investors, for example, will sacrifice high dividends to increase a company’s market share.

Thurrow’s critique of American industry seems profound, but actually relocates the problems of American profitability at the level of culture. It is interesting to reflect that where once the work ethic and thrift were considered protestant virtues they are now the province of Shinto, and that now it is the Anglo-Saxons, not the orientals who are supposed to be work-shy. In reality the different investment cultures are a product of different economic conditions. American investors cannot get high rates of return from their industry and so seek easy profits in the speculative financial markets. The long-term stagnation of industrial productivity is the real reason for American short-termism.

James Heartfield

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