

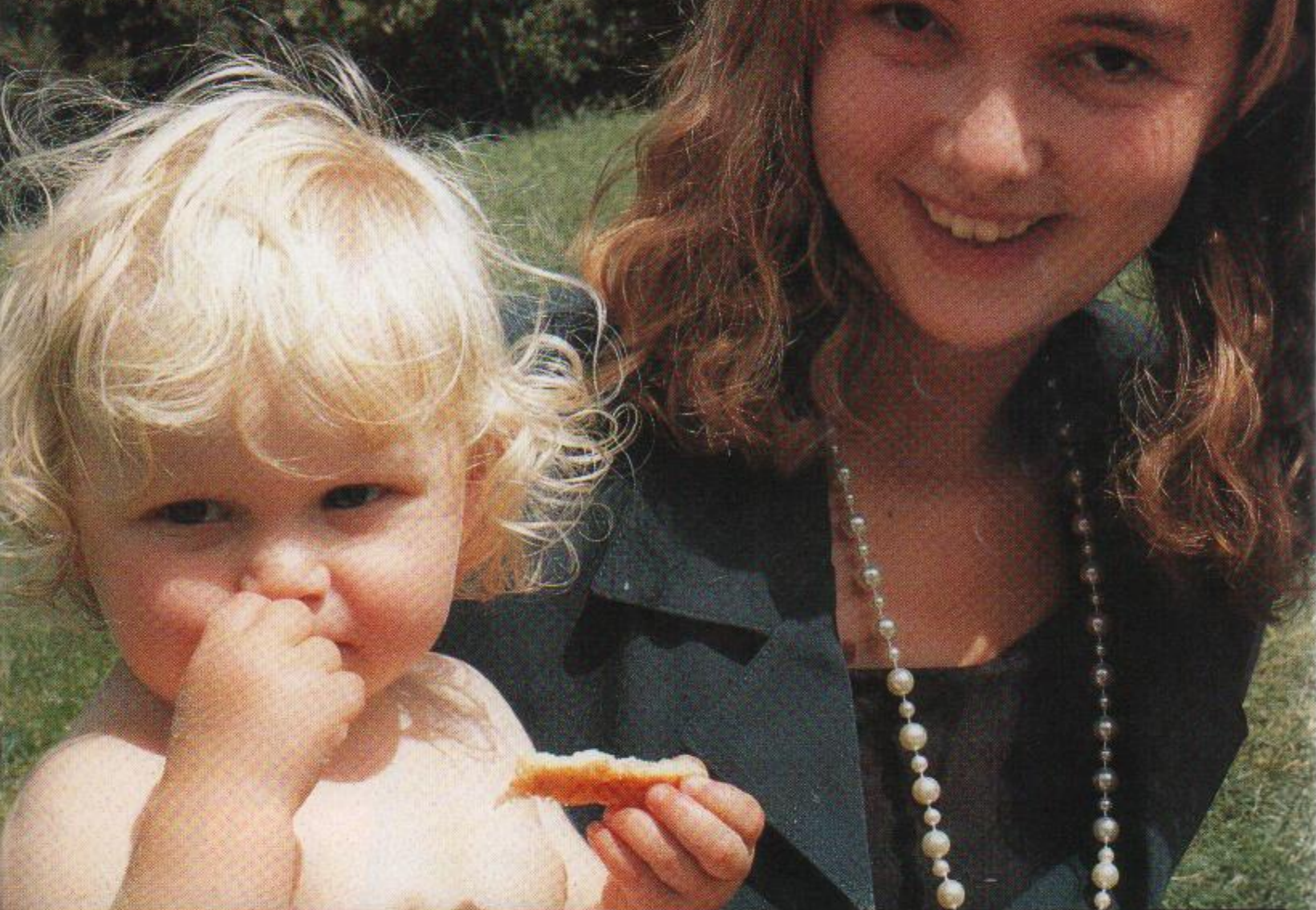
LIVING MARXISM

WHO
CONTROLS
WHAT WE
WATCH
AND
READ?



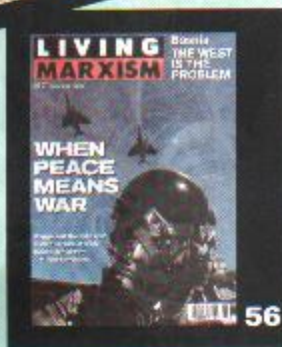
US \$6 DM7 FF25
UK £2 September 1993 No59

Bosnia: bloody liberals
The 'flexible working' fraud
America's post-Cold War blues
Chess chequemates
and much more



NASTY LITTLE BREEDERS?

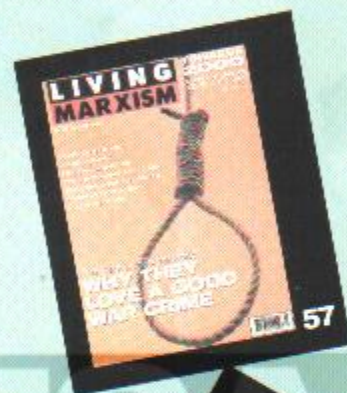
THE STATE DECLARES WAR ON SINGLE MOTHERS



Back issues

All issues £2.50 including p&p

- 52** Rape camps and other horror stories; Behind the West's humanitarian mask; The economy myth of recovery; Churchill and white power;
- 53** The hidden side of the Yugoslav war; America v Europe; The PC presidency; Abortion in the USA; Malcolm X
- 54** Frightening the life out of us; The experts on the chances of recovery; Welcome to the workfare state; Avant-garde art; Movie violence
- 55** Ban nothing; Who's making the news in Bosnia?; Where will the West strike next?; Crime panics; The framing of Moss Side; After Warrington;
- 56** When peace means war; Recession over—slump continues; Police torture in USA; Bosnia: a mess made in the West; *Romper Stomper*
- 57** The new authoritarianism; Why they love a good war crime; Recolonising Africa; The great royal non-debate
- 58** Peacekeeping means imperialism; Aids: the truth about the Day report; Why Clinton bombed Baghdad; Britain: a free country?



Binders

Living Marxism embossed binders. £7 plus 80p p&p

Index

New Living Marxism index. Issues 1-58; November 1988-August 1993. £2.50 plus 40p p&p

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

A subscription to *Living Marxism* is now better value than ever; at £19.50 for a year it saves you almost 20 per cent on the cover price. Write to *Living Marxism* Subscriptions (59), BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX or phone (071) 278 7699

CONTENTS

- 4 **Editorial**
- 6 Letters
- 8 Whose finger on your TV button?
Andrew Calcutt
- 12 Privacy laws
Tessa Mayes
- 14 Europe after the ERM
Helen Simons
- 17 Ann Bradley
- 18 Bosnia: bloody liberals
Joan Phillips
- 22 Who gains from Tory losses?
James Heartfield
- 24 **May the state preserve us
from ourselves**
Frank Richards
- 28 The 'flexible working' fraud
Ellie Dashwood
- 32 Unhealthy conditions at work
Kate Lawrence
- 34 Japan's problems
Daniel Nassim
- 37 Toby Banks
- 38 **Living:** Chess chequemates;
Spaghetti westerns; War censorship
- 41 Frank Cottrell-Boyce on TV
- 43 **The Marxist Review of Books**



PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER COVER PHOTO: OPIUS

Carry on CAM

This summer, Nato and the United Nations were arguing over which one had the right to bomb the Bosnian Serbs; the USA was threatening more gunship raids against Mogadishu, Somalia; the Israelis were using American arms to lay waste southern Lebanon; the British Army was passing yet another anniversary of the start of the Irish War; and the Metropolitan Police were binding and gagging a black woman, Joy Gardner, who died in custody.

Meanwhile, the Campaign Against Militarism was bringing more than three thousand people onto the streets of London, to march against Western warmongering and oppression at home and around the world (picture above).

CAM will be launching further initiatives throughout the year, in response to the rising tide of Western militarism. If you want to be kept informed of the campaign's plans, you can contact CAM on (071) 278 9908 or write to CAM, 92 Cromer Street, London WC1H 8DD.

Stop Press—CAM October conference—see page 23 for details

Calling all American readers

Living Marxism now has a direct mailing address in New York. All subscriptions, queries and correspondence can be sent to Junius Publications Ltd, PO Box 769, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156.

Editor: **Mick Hume** ● Assistant Editor: **Joan Phillips**
International Editor: **Daniel Nassim** ● News: **Andrew Calcutt**
Living: **Kenan Malik** ● Books: **James Heartfield**
Design: **Richard Stead, Charles Longford**
Production: **Michael Kramer, Peter Ray** —
Managing Editor: **Phil Murphy**

Subscription rates: Britain and Northern Ireland £19.50 ● Europe (airmail) £27 ● Outside Europe (airmail) £37 ● Overseas (surface mail) £23 ● (Institutions add £7.50) ● Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX; Fax (071) 278 9844 ● Distributed in the UK by Comag Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE; Phone: West Drayton (0895) 444 055; Fax (0895) 445 255; Telex 661 3787 ● Distributed in the USA by Bernhard DeBoer Inc, 113 East Centre Street, Nutley, New Jersey 07110, USA; Phone (201) 667 9300 ● Typeset by Junius Publications (TU) © copyright Revolutionary Communist Party
Printed by Russell Press (TU), Nottingham ● ISSN 0955-2448 September 1993. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but can only be returned if an SAE is enclosed

**LIVING
MARXISM**

Monthly review of the
Revolutionary Communist Party
Editorial: (071) 278 9908
Subscriptions: (071) 278 9999



Mick Hume

The state declares war on single mothers

A 23-year old single mother from Warwickshire was jailed for six months in August, because she left her two-year old child home alone while she went out to work. The woman said that she could not afford to pay a childminder as well as buy food and clothes out of her £100-a-week wage packet. Judge Michael Harrison Hall said that she had treated her daughter worse than a dog.

The jailing of the single mother won support from Tory health secretary Virginia Bottomley and other notables. Even commentators who quibbled about the prison sentence acquiesced to the idea that it was right to brand her as a criminal.

Nobody made the simple point that it is none of judge Michael Harrison Hall's business to dictate how a desperate woman with no childcare makes ends meet, let alone to lock her up for failing to meet M'lud's own high standards of motherhood.

Nor has anybody responded to the new moral war against single mothers by asking the basic question: what gives government ministers, judges, social workers, doctors, vicars or any other official do-gooders the right to tell women how to run their lives?

When the authorities make such a major national issue out of something like the Warwickshire 'home alone' case, it should immediately raise suspicions about their motives. After all, if they were truly concerned with the welfare of the children of single mothers, a solution would appear to be straightforward enough. They could

ensure that working class women receive a civilised income which allows them to live like humans rather than dogs. And they could provide decent childcare facilities for all.

It would not exactly be hard to improve on the current state of affairs in this country. Britain has three million under-fives, and just 360 000 places in state day nurseries or with registered childminders—a ratio of around 9:1. Worse still, less than one per cent of under-threes can get a place in publicly funded day care today.

Even if you can find a childcare place, it is getting harder and harder to pay for it. A survey published in the *Employment Gazette* days after the Warwickshire woman was jailed showed that, when working mothers have to pay for childcare, it now costs them on average a quarter of their wages. The less you earn, the higher the proportion of your pay goes on childminding. And the hardest hit of all are low-paid single mothers. The jailed 23-year old could not afford to pay half of her wages for childcare.

None of these issues featured in the hysteria which was orchestrated around the home alone case. Instead the authorities sought to make a public example of the young woman, to stigmatise her as a typically immoral 'unmarried mum' of today. Jailing her and parading the case across the national media was the modern equivalent of the old village custom of stitching a scarlet letter 'A' (for adulteress) on to the dress of such a 'fallen woman'.

The Warwickshire jailing is just one episode in what is becoming something of

a crusade against single mothers, especially if they are young and working class (and more so still if they are black).

Government ministers accuse them of sponging off the British taxpayer, and jumping the waiting list for council housing. Sociologists and criminologists blame them for an alleged decline in parental responsibility and rise in juvenile delinquency. In short, the new consensus, often wrapped in academic or even child-friendly jargon, is that single mothers are nasty little breeders.

The implications of this campaign are serious, and not only for the single mothers at the sharp end. It is paving the way for potentially devastating cuts in welfare benefits. And it is reinforcing the dangerous notion of 'family values'.

The government is floating plenty of proposals to cut single mothers' access to benefits. One idea is to curtail the right to the housing benefit with which they pay rent, and instead make young single mothers live either with their parents or in state-appointed hostels—a sort of updated workhouse. The new Child Support Act has already shifted financial responsibility for the children of single mothers away from the welfare state and on to 'errant fathers'. Women who don't cooperate in hunting down the man who did the dirty deed face even more intense surveillance from the social security people, and loss of benefits.

For the authorities, the virtue of a moral crusade against single mothers is that it could help them both to cut welfare spending, and to find scapegoats for the crisis of the system. Crudely put, the

message is this: if you're angry about the collapse of public services or afraid that society is falling apart, don't blame the government, blame teenagers bringing up babies on social security. In typical nineties fashion, those stuck at the bottom are expected to carry the can for the failures of capitalist society.

The wider consequence of this crusade is to strengthen the case for traditional 'family values', as the alternative to degenerate single parenthood. Those in power want to promote the nuclear family as natural and intrinsically good. They understand that reinforcing family values will tend to underpin a conservative and conventional outlook on all issues. They understand, too, that it can legitimise their attempts to make families, rather than the state, bear the burden of looking after the young, the old and the infirm.

Family values enjoy a formidable consensus of support today. Even those who complain about the government's treatment of single parents will usually concede that yes, in an ideal world, a two-parent family is the best way to bring up children. The notion that the family is in some way natural is more or less accepted across the board. And once that notion is endorsed, it becomes impossible to challenge the basic assumptions behind the moral war against single motherhood.

Yet in truth it is no more 'natural' to live and bring up children in a conventional family than it is to do so alone. The modern family unit is the product of a system in which the wealth of society is concentrated in the hands of a capitalist minority, and the rest of us are left to fend for ourselves as best we can. As a consequence, people cling together in families for support. Those arrangements are then

dressed up in religious and moral mumbo-jumbo, and presented as the natural, eternal way of things.

In current circumstances, it is certainly harder to cope with children on your own. But that, too, is a consequence of the way in which society is organised. If domestic tasks like childcare were taken out of the private sphere, and made the responsibility of society as a whole, it would become more possible for people to organise their lives as they want, rather than as they are told they should. Instead, today, the trend is towards privatising more and more functions of the welfare state, under the banners of family values and community care.

The way in which single mothers are stigmatised today, and their choices limited by monetary and moral constraints, is a prime example of how capitalism will mess up your life.

Young single mothers are accused of bleeding the welfare state. But the real problem is that, living on part-time wages and income support, they don't get nearly enough of society's resources.

Those who complain about the money spent on providing income support for single mothers like to emphasise the headline figure—currently around £3.4 billion a year. That might sound like a lot; but spread over almost a million single parents and more than two million children, it translates into poverty of the kind that paved the way to the tragic Warwickshire case.

Put that 'excessive' annual bill of £3.4 billion into perspective as part of capitalist society's wealth, and it is peanuts; equal to a bit more than 10 per cent of Britain's military budget, or just 1.5 per cent of what the bankers and money men throw across the desks of the

City's foreign currency dealing rooms every single day.

The consensus today is that single mothers are a problem, and that a partial solution is to provide them with more compulsory supervision and guidance: from social services, from the Child Support Agency, from the churches, from the courts.

But the real problem is the way that these and other official agencies increasingly interfere in people's lives in pursuit of their own cynical motives: seeking to control the way that we live, and to exploit our problems in politically motivated campaigns like the crusade against single mothers.

To many people, the argument that a single mother should be punished for not looking after her child properly might seem like common sense. But in the hands of the state, it is an insidious idea. Today a judge sentences a woman to jail for leaving a child alone. If we accept his right to do so, what comes next?

If the authorities can dictate the conditions of childcare to a single mother, why not to all parents? After successfully using the case of the home alone two-year old to set a precedent, what is to stop them imposing new rules tomorrow about how people raise their five-year olds, 10-year olds, or teenagers?

We live in authoritarian times, when a court in Norfolk can jail a middle-aged married couple for arguing too loudly in their home. Against that background it is important to give no ground at all to the case for more state interference in our affairs—especially when it is raised under cover of an emotive issue like the protection of children. So next time they start on about 'home alone' crimes, let's tell them to leave single mothers alone.

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

Somalia: who asked to be colonised?

So much for the initial stated aim of the US of restoring hope in Somalia. What hope is there for the people when innocent civilians are being gunned down under the pretext of a humanitarian mission? The Somali people have enough murderous leaders of their own without foreign nations intervening in such a way that only adds to the bloodbath and exacerbates an already unacceptably horrific situation.

The Somali people did not ask for a prolonged and bloody military intervention in their country. They did not ask to be patronised, colonised and murdered. They did not consent to being part of a publicity stunt that allowed one US president to leave office to the applause of a nation he has poisoned, and another to enter riding on the waves of a military action that blinkers citizens to the crises on their doorsteps. The Somalis requested humanitarian aid, not a scavenging media machine plucking at the carcass of a troubled nation for pictures of dying children and heroic soldiers.

It is perhaps ironic that the US soldiers are 'protecting' civilians from gunmen armed with American weapons in the conveniently forgotten struggle for the Horn of Africa. How can the US think to puff out its chest and pat itself on the back when its previous involvement has helped lead to the terrible events that are now tearing Somalia apart?

Why have I spoken only of the US intervention when the operation has of course been spearheaded by the UN? Could it be because offensives taken by the US appear arbitrary and without thought for UN stipulations? Could it be because Boutros Boutros-Ghali appears to be no more than a stooge in a macabre play staged and directed by an American president possessed of a paranoid obsession with being taken seriously and seen as strong?

Whatever my reasons and regardless of your own beliefs about who exactly is taking the leading role in this operation, one fact stands out clearly—there is no place for killers in Somalia. Foreign military heavy handedness must cease, for as long as the Somali leaders feel themselves to be backed into a corner with no dignified way out, the harder and more fiercely they will fight leaving little hope for recovery.

The one wish of the Somali people—a wish they demand to see realised—is the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from their soil and for the rebuilding of Somalia to be aided by the agencies that genuinely care about the lives of the people. Somalis everywhere must come together to present a united stand against foreign military intervention.

Hi Ahmed Somali Welfare Society

Oil imperialism

In your editorial ('Peacekeeping means imperialism', August) you argue that 'Western governments are increasingly driven to intervene abroad, under the banners of the UN, in a bid to overcome their domestic crises. Their aim is not to save lives in Somalia or Yugoslavia, but to salvage their own authority in the West'.

The United States' intervention in Somalia may have had more to do with old-fashioned imperialist plunder (which is not to say that the baloney about 'restoring hope' did not serve short-term propaganda purposes).

According to journalist Mark Fineman, writing in the *Los Angeles Times* earlier this year, 'far beneath the surface of the tragic drama of Somalia, four major US oil companies are quietly sitting on a prospective fortune in exclusive concessions to explore and exploit tens of millions of acres of Somali countryside. That land, in the opinion of many geologists and industry sources, could yield significant amounts of oil and natural gas if the US-led military mission can restore peace to the impoverished East African nation'.

In the words of the New York journal *Left Business Observer*, 'nearly two-thirds of the country was allocated to four oil companies—Conoco, Amoco, Chevron, and Phillips—by the wretched Siad Barre regime, a Washington favourite that was overthrown in January 1991. Industry sources told Fineman that they hoped that the US deployment would 'protect their multi-million dollar investments'.

Left Business Observer notes that no other major American newspaper ran this story. And of course the same self-censorship applies on this side of the Atlantic.

Justin O'Hagan *Co Down*

PS How can you 'campaign against militarism' and at the same time support the military elitists of the IRA who go about their murderous business with the support of around six per cent of the Irish people? Capitalism has its glaring contradictions, but so too does 'revolutionary communism' if your politics are anything to go by.

Bosnia and the West

The cry of 'do something' reverberates through the chattering classes as if the United Nations had not done enough to wreck the lives of the hated Slavs already. Having carved up Yugoslavia, the diplomats are doing the same to Bosnia. Our governments blockade Serbia, fire upon Croats and persuade the Muslims to establish an independent state—only to stab them in the back once they do.

Perhaps it's a sign of the times that the only

kind of action that warrants the name is the action taken by people in authority. John Howard (letters, August) writes that the policy of opposing Western intervention is a do-nothing policy. Western intervention is the problem; stopping it is the best action we can take.

John Howard says that a 1936 issue of *Living Marxism* would have read 'Western intervention can only make things worse'. If so, it would have been true. The intervention by the German government on the side of Franco, by the British government against the international brigades, and by Britain's liberal establishment to restrain the republican government to the limits of acceptable behaviour, combined to frustrate the Spanish revolution.

Nat Cohen and his comrades in the Stepney Communist Party (the first volunteers to fight for the Spanish republic) made many mistakes—not the least of which was the desire to find the revolution anywhere but where they lived. But one thing they did understand was that you never ask the state to act on your behalf—and when the bailiffs came round to evict a member of the British Union of Fascists they would join in giving the bailiffs a good hiding. Nowadays the 'must do something' brigade join in with Hackney council officers demanding the eviction of tenants accused of stealing.

Working class action, independent from the state, is 'brave and inspiring'. Joining in with the chorus of school sneaks, pulling on teacher's skirts and pleading for some 'action' from on high, is what I call 'flaccid'.

James Heartfield *London*

Your article 'How the West has won' (July) is a load of bollocks. It is true that no-one of any significance has questioned the right of Western powers, through the UN, to intervene in the Yugoslavian war. Yet as far as Clinton, Major, Mitterrand, etc, are concerned, the main reason for intervening is to improve their standing at home.

John Major is the most unpopular prime minister ever, Francois Mitterrand's party has recently received a pretty comprehensive thrashing in the French elections, and Bill Clinton is not exactly flavour of the month. It would appear, therefore, that intervening in Bosnia-Herzegovina has done little to improve their political standing. If anything it has had the opposite effect. In other words, they have failed in their (undeclared) aims. They have also failed in their declared aims.

The 'Vance-Owen peace plan' which has been sponsored and championed by the UN for so long, will not be implemented. The 'safe areas' for Muslims have been constantly bombarded by Serb artillery pieces and small arms fire. Aid convoys to Sarajevo and other Muslim cities have been held up, turned back,

confiscated and in some cases destroyed by Serb and Croat forces.

Another of the UN's declared intentions is to prevent the carve-up of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Recent meetings suggest that Bosnia-Herzegovina will be divided up, effectively between Croatia and Serbia. Another failure for the UN. The 'Useless Nincompoops' have proved militarily incompetent to handle the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Finally, the UN itself is in pieces. Its members cannot agree on any policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina. The very *raison d'être* of the UN has been brought into question.

How anyone can say the West 'has achieved an important victory' in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a mystery to me.

GC Macquarie Nottingham

PS There are many ethnic and racial differences between Serbs, Croats and Muslims. Serbs and Croats do not speak the same language. Serbs speak Serbian, Croats speak Croatian. The two languages are quite similar, like Spanish and Italian, but they are not the same. They even use different alphabets. If you don't believe me, try learning to speak Croatian and then go to Serbia and see how far it gets you.

Ad nauseam

With regard to *Living Marxism's* efforts to expose militarism in society—perhaps an article on militarism in advertising? Perhaps, too, the wankers and wankerettes who jerked out 'Make war not love' (Nike around Wimbledon-time) and 'Heat-seeking' (Vauxhall cars, current) could be asked to explain to us why they are so keen to have themselves commemorated as Imperial War Museum postcards?

Michael Searle Twickenham

Sex and politics

John Everett (letters, August) asks 'what has sex got to do with politics?'. This is a good question which he should address first and foremost to the capitalist authorities, since it is they that continue to fine and imprison homosexuals and sadomasochists for having sex. His own answer is less than satisfactory.

Finding such sexual pleasures as mine

'totally incomprehensible', John Everett concludes that homosexuality can have nothing to do with politics. The persecution we suffer, it would seem, is the result of our own 'peculiar' behaviour, leading us to 'offend against what other people regard as the norm'. If we kept ourselves to ourselves there would be no problem. Meanwhile socialists should restrict themselves to the 'establishing of direction and control of economic factors in the interests of the people'.

I am completely in favour of getting sex out of politics but I recognise that first we have to get politics out of people's sex lives. John Everett's 'norm' is of course highly political—a device for defending the status quo by establishing middle class family values as the only acceptable form for working class lives. The resulting sexual and gender divisions are then morally policed by the authorities so as to redefining society's problems as those of 'immoral' behaviour on the part of deviant individuals.

Only when working people join the struggle for basic democratic rights for homosexuals will any of us be able to leave behind the petty differences in sexual desires that are promoted by the authorities, and move towards our shared interest in a communist future.

You can't dodge the issue, John. As long as the capitalist authorities have got you all up tight about the 'peculiar' sexual pleasures people like me are enjoying in the bushes, they can relax and get on with the business of screwing society.

Geoff Burnham Northampton

Pension wrongs

Whilst I would agree that an alarming number of recession-hit employers are turning to the company pension scheme as a source of cash, however shortsighted and tax inefficient, Andrew Calcutt's report ('Pensioners mugged by men in suits', July) makes a number of misleading statements.

As a result of a European Court judgement, deeming pensions to be pay, some women will see their pensions reduced at 60. This will not affect people retiring now, but will gradually equalise men's and women's pension ages, in the future.

Money purchase schemes are quickly dismissed, when they have the advantage that

'cash hungry' employers have no access to the funds which are allotted to individual members at outset. To state that they are not inflation-proof is confusing, they are simply dependent on the amount of the contribution, which is known on an individual basis and can therefore be judged, by the employee.

John Reid Guildford

Viva Cromwell!

Megan Ap Gruffydd (letters, August) has no grounds to complain about Penny Robson's use of a Roundheads and Cavaliers analogy to end her anti-monarchist article ('Off with their head of state', July). There are two points to be made here.

First, Penny Robson was using the analogy not to draw direct parallels between the seventeenth century and today, but to point out that the subservient attitude of the Labour Party and Charter '88 towards the monarchy makes them more conservative than Oliver Cromwell. (Clearly irony is not Megan's strong suit.)

Second, Cromwell was a revolutionary (clearly history is not her strong suit either). Megan says Cromwell's struggle was 'conducted within the confines of the ruling establishment of that period', as if it were a sort of pre-Maastricht split in the Tory Party. In fact his was a revolutionary war fought precisely to break the confines of the old order; cutting off the king's head symbolised that process perfectly.

Megan's point seems to be that Cromwell was not a Marxist. Give in Penny, she's got you there. Cromwell led the embryonic English bourgeoisie, 200 years before there was any such thing as Marxism, and was well prepared to defend his new ruling class against the lower orders; witness the crushing of the Levellers' movement. But that does not alter the fact that the anti-monarchist war was progressive. It is ironic that the capitalists whose predecessors fought with Cromwell now worship the monarchy and insist (like Megan) that there has never been a revolution in Britain.

Megan really is right to say that 'the actions of the living' are what matter. But we will be ill-equipped to understand the present if we start from wrong-headed assumptions about the past.

John Makeham London

We welcome readers' views and criticisms.

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

The Broadcasting Standards Council makes weighty recommendations on what we can and cannot see. By what right, asks Andrew Calcutt, do its members influence what's on TV?

Whose finger on your button?

What is important is a means of independent scrutiny. We can contribute from an independent point of view.' At the July press launch of the Broadcasting Standards Council's annual report, Lady Elspeth Howe, the newly appointed chair, praised the 'independent' role of the council and cited its contribution to the demise of satellite-porn station Red Hot Dutch. But what exactly is the role of the Broadcasting Standards Council (BSC)? Who are its members? And in what sense are they independent?

Established in May 1988, the BSC became a statutory body under the Broadcasting Act 1990. It has five main tasks: to draw up and review a code of practice which broadcasters must reflect (a revised code will be published towards the end of 1993); to monitor programmes and make reports; to commission research into such matters as the portrayal of violence and sexual conduct; to consider complaints and make findings on them; to represent the United Kingdom on international bodies concerned with setting standards for television programmes.

A quango

The government provides the BSC with a substantial grant. In the financial year ending 31 March 1993, the council received grants totalling £1,267,143. The Department of National Heritage, Film, Tourism, Sport and Broadcasting provided £842,143. The remainder (£425,000) came from Administration, Immigration and Police Support Services at the Home Office.

So it turns out that the BSC is not 'independent' at all: it is a quango, set up and wholly financed by the Tory government. But what

about the individual members of the council? Can they be said to be independent?

The annual report for 1992-93 states: 'members of the council are appointed by the Secretary of State for National Heritage'. The key appointee to date was Lord Rees-Mogg, who chaired the council until June 1993. Rees-Mogg was the founding father of the BSC, and his ethos remains paramount. But he can hardly be described as 'independent': he has been among the governing circles of Britain for 30 years.

Lord Rees-Mogg is a former editor of the *Times*, vice-chairman of the BBC board of governors and chairman of the Arts Council. He is currently chairman and proprietor of Pickering & Chatto Ltd, and a director of GEC. He was much in the news this year for his efforts to prevent ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. In matters of morality he is a Catholic conservative, and his favourite century is the eighteenth.

The *Daily Telegraph* recently ran an article on Rees-Mogg's habit of making woefully inaccurate political prophesies (Heseltine to succeed Thatcher, for example). The article concluded: 'the problem with Rees-Mogg is not that he was wrong...but that he feels compelled, despite all his previous blunders, to sound omniscient.'

Throughout his five-year stint in charge of the BSC, Rees-Mogg was presented as an independent authority on broadcasting. Programme-makers were required, by law, to take heed of his 'independent scrutiny' of their work. Yet his track record in public life sheds light on the real Rees-Mogg: not independent, but a member of the Oxbridge in-crowd; a peer of the realm; a British eccentric inextricably linked

to the establishment, and too pompous even for the *Daily Telegraph*.

The most recent government appointee to the BSC is Lady Howe, who took over from Rees-Mogg in June. Wife of former Tory cabinet minister Sir Geoffrey Howe and former deputy-chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission, she was Margaret Thatcher's bitter rival for the role of top Tory woman during the 1980s.

The pronouncements issuing from the BSC are no more independent than its well-connected, government-appointed leaders. Examination of the work of the BSC reveals that its outlook is deeply imbued with all of the prejudices and patronising attitudes of the small-talk in a Tory Party tea-room.

'An ugly society'

The starting-point of the council's code of practice is 'concern about the effects on violent crime of violence on television...the possibility that regular exposure will desensitise the audience...fear [of] a copy-cat effect'. In fact, nobody has ever been able to substantiate the claim that the portrayal of violence on television has any such effect on viewers. Even the BSC feels bound to admit that 'the evidence supporting or running contrary to these fears is not conclusive'.

However, the lack of hard evidence is no obstacle to the BSC's determination to impose tighter controls on violence on television: 'in the absence of an answer, the council takes the view that a society which delights in or encourages cruelty or brutality for its own sake is an ugly society, set on a path of self-destruction.' In the absence of an answer, the BSC has taken it upon ▶



itself to save us from ourselves.

The BSC code of practice aims to cover all exits down which broadcasters might try to escape. At one point the code suggests that broadcasting should be regulated on the grounds that it might affect real behaviour among its viewers: 'the extent of [broadcasting's] power uncertain, it shares a duty not to incite crime.' But the code's authors also declare that 'programme-makers have a responsibility not to aggravate the imagined extent of danger'. In other words, programme-makers

as justification for more control.

A flavour of the kind of control the BSC seeks to impose on TV today can be gained from flicking through its nit-picking code of practice for broadcasters:

'[news bulletins'] use of nicknames for notorious criminals which may soften their image should be discouraged....[in adult drama] care should be taken to avoid confusion between violence which may be legitimated by the situation and

concerning UK satellite channels, and none referring to Red Hot Dutch. Yet the BSC devoted considerable resources to its successful lobbying for Red Hot Dutch to be proscribed by the heritage secretary—in the public interest, of course.

In 'Sex and Sexuality in Broadcasting', the BSC's annual research review in 1992, the vast majority of respondents (81 per cent) agreed with the statement: 'people who don't like watching sex can always switch off.' A similarly large



Lord Rees-Mogg (ex-chair)



Lady Howe (chair)



Dr Jean Curtis-Raleigh



Dame Jocelyn Barrow DBE

should be regulated because TV violence is fictional. It seems the BSC is not concerned whether the dangers posed by televised violence are real or 'imagined'; its only concern is that programmes should be regulated.

At the BSC annual report press launch in July 1993, Lady Howe referred to the four-fold increase in complaints about violence on television which the council had received during the previous 12 months. Admitting that 'there has been a great deal of debate and this may have prompted particular contributions', she nevertheless insisted that '[this] is an indication of the heightened feeling about violence...if people are worried about the effect of violence hopefully that will influence the attitude of programme-makers'.

Fanning the flames

If 'people are worried about the effect of violence' on TV, it is because they have been influenced by scaremongering busybodies such as the BSC. The council contributes to unsubstantiated rumours about the effects of TV violence. Having fanned the flames of hysteria, it waits for the calls to come in, and then cites the increasing number of complaints as reason enough for public concern. Concern for the public and its peace of mind then comes to be put forward

illegitimate violence, the kind perpetrated by villains....the display of weapons should be carefully monitored, particularly when knives or other objects readily available in the home are involved....violence which involves animals, even when no harm has come to the animals involved in the production, is deeply upsetting [and] should be kept to a minimum....the representation of sexual intercourse before the Watershed [9pm] should always be a matter for senior editorial judgement....programmes should not encourage smoking, especially by children or young people....the portrayal of alcohol in programmes ought therefore to be regarded with seriousness.'

And no doubt all feet must be wiped and all tea-cups placed on coasters before a programme can be broadcast.

The BSC presents itself as the voice of the ordinary people, speaking up for the public against the liberal trendies of the media establishment. Yet the council seems ready to ignore public opinion when it fails to tally with the BSC's own prejudices. On occasions when its findings proved inconvenient, the council's opinions have even remained 'independent' of its own published research.

In 1992-93, for example, the BSC received only six complaints

number (78 per cent) agreed that 'if people want to watch sex on television, they should be allowed to'.

In a research working paper commissioned by the BSC, an 11 year-old girl from Leeds commented on 'bed-hopping' in *Dallas*: 'well, some people may think it is wrong, but other people may think it is perfectly all right. I think it is just the individual's decision.' If only the grandees who sit on the BSC could demonstrate as much maturity on questions of sex and morality!

Grow up

Concern for children and the allegedly damaging effects of television is enshrined in the council's code of practice: 'some, however, feel that broadcasting, by confronting their children with the dilemmas of adult life, encourages them to grow up too fast.' Additional research commissioned by the BSC would seem to confirm that many children are indeed more grown-up than their state-appointed moral guardians.

In 'Children, Television and Morality' (BSC research working paper No1), Dr Anne Sheppard refutes 'the disturbing image of a child sitting cross-legged, hunched, isolated and unblinking before a television set, soaking up the images like psychological blotting paper'.

Interviews carried out by Dr Sheppard indicate that, contrary to current wisdom, children do not lack discernment. "They can", she concludes, 'distinguish reality from fantasy on television'.

Dr Sheppard asked an eight year-old boy if a shooting in *The Bill* was the same as one on the news:

Child: 'No. News is real and *The Bill* isn't.'

Interviewer: 'What is *The Bill* then?'

Child: 'Just a thing they've made up.'

The BSC's monthly bulletins also list complaints which the council has investigated, but not upheld. These are said to come from a cross-section of the British public, but they are almost exclusively representative of what could be called the *Daily Mail* mentality.

'Mrs Matthews of Hampshire complained of an advertisement for Ritz video hire...she was concerned about the menacing terms in which two cinema films were advertised, including references to "murder and mayhem".'

It would not be surprising if one of the BSC's complainants turned out to be a certain Mrs Bucket (pronounced 'bouquet'). Absurd though they may be, such complaints are taken seriously by the BSC. In his foreword to the 1991-92 annual report, Lord Rees-Mogg pontificated: 'every one of those who complain to us...can at least be assured that, on the one hand, their complaints are treated seriously and, on the other, that the most senior levels of management in the broadcasting organisations



Matthew Parris



Alf Dubs



Richard Baker OBE



Rev Charles Robertson



Rhiannon Bevan

THE BROADCASTING STANDARDS COUNCIL

An eight year-old girl made the same distinction: 'The news is real. *The Bill*'s not true. If someone is shot in the news, they would be dead completely, but in *The Bill* they wouldn't be. It'd just be a fake.'

In all the recent discussion about television and the dangerous influence it exerts over impressionable young viewers, the BSC has never stepped forward to put the record straight. It chooses not to let the evidence of its own research get in the way of a good moral fable about corrupted children and the decay of the nation's values.

Narrow minds

The petty, narrow-minded atmosphere in which the BSC operates is reflected in the complaints it receives and the way in which it handles them.

In 1993 the council upheld complaints about 'the use of holy names' (such as 'Oh my God!' and 'Jesus Christ!') in episodes of *Coronation Street* and *Pebble Mill*. In 1992 the council upheld complaints against *Damned in the USA*, a documentary on censorship shown in the 'Banned' series on Channel 4. The BSC apparently failed to see the irony of censuring a television company for showing a programme about censorship.

'Mr John of Gloucestershire complained of a scene in an episode of *Emmerdale*...showing a man and a woman in bed together. It showed no sexual activity and only the nude upper halves of the couple's bodies.'

'Mrs Rensch of London and three other viewers complained of the offensive use of a Christian holy name in an episode of *Bonjour La Classe*.' (Partially upheld)

'Shit' at 9.06pm

'Mrs Rensch complained of the use of a Christian holy name in an edition of *Smith and Jones*.'

'Mrs Rensch of London complained of the use of Christian holy names on *Drop the Dead Donkey*.'

'Mr Hopkinson of Staffordshire complained about an item in *Beadle's About* which he described as "a travesty of a marriage service".'

'Ms Smith of Yorkshire complained of offensive references to the bodily functions of a dog in an edition of *Side by Side*.'

'Ms Davies of Kent and another viewer complained of a scene showing a stripper in an episode of *Love Hurts*.'

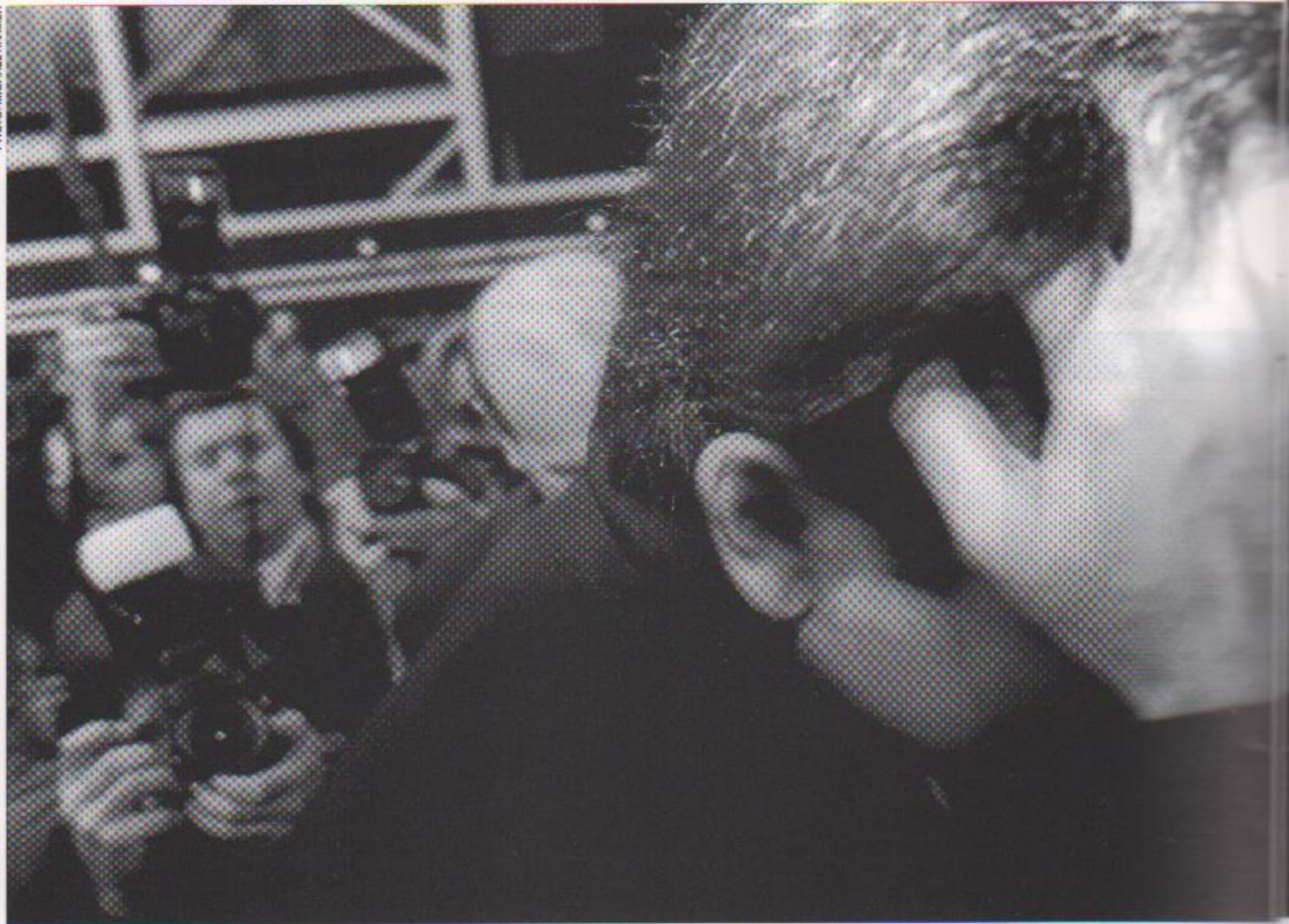
'Mr Waterfield of Cambridgeshire and another viewer complained about the film *Tequila Sunrise*. Both complainants were concerned about "foul language" including the inclusion of the word "shit" at 9.06pm.'

will be concerned in the formulation of adequate responses.'

In other words, the BSC will ensure that complaints from proponents of the *Daily Mail* mentality influence the increasingly censorious climate in which programmes are produced and editorial decisions are made. Rees-Mogg's statement exemplifies the insidious influence of the BSC in seeking to restrict the scope of television and radio programmes. It chimes in with current trends such as the call for more emphasis on 'happy news', and the new instructions from BBC governors (like Rees-Mogg) for interviewers to be more polite to government ministers.

Creeping effect

The BSC might seem like a harmless coterie of upper-class eccentrics lending an ear to the fears and foibles of their suburban counterparts. But it would be foolish to underestimate the creeping effect of the council's work. There are plans afoot to hand over more powers to the BSC, and to merge it 'into the work of a new consumers' council for broadcasting entrusted with a much broader remit'. A revamped BSC is set to be the remote-control panel you never asked for.



Their right to invade

Government proposals for a legal right to privacy can only legitimise the authorities' control over our affairs, says Tessa Mayes

From Fergie's topless, toe-sucking photos to reports of John Major's off-camera attack on Tory 'bastards'; from 'Squidgygate' to the trial-by-newspaper of the Taylor sisters; for months, intrusive reporting by the media has been a big public issue. Now the government has come up with a proposal to enshrine the right to privacy in law, published in the Lord

Chancellor's new consultation paper, 'Infringement of Privacy'.

'A person who is harassed by his neighbour, an actress, pop star or sportswoman who is harassed by an obsessive fan, as well as people harassed by the press, should all be able to invoke the protection of the law.' ('Infringement of Privacy', July 1993)

Invading somebody's privacy would be a civil offence, and the law would give the ordinary citizen a means of preventing or of obtaining redress for unwarranted intrusions into his or her private life. The courts would have powers to award up to £10 000 damages, enforce injunctions, prevent intrusions and demand the return of information.

The consultation paper stipulates a broad, flexible arena as 'private': a person's health, personal communications, family and personal relationships.

Many people who have had enough of the low-life tactics of the tabloid press might think that a privacy law sounds like a good idea. But it is not. Although the new proposals are presented as the granting of a right to privacy, in practice they would

represent another increase in the power of the authorities to control public debate and to interfere in people's private lives.

Who is to decide what constitutes privacy? And who is to be allowed to intrude upon it?

The 'Infringement of Privacy' paper proposes that 'ordinary citizens' should be protected from intrusions into their private life. In the words of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, 'the time has come to ensure the law protects the privacy of everyone'.

Whose privacy?

Yet the law already offers a particular definition of whose privacy can or cannot be invaded. While the security services can eavesdrop on our private telephone conversations, and the police or our employers now have access to video camera footage of just about our every movement, there are laws and regulations to ensure that we cannot pry into their affairs.

A few days before the 'Infringement of Privacy' paper was published, the government updated the D-Notice system—an agreement under which the media voluntarily limits the reporting of military and intelligence matters. Now, under its privacy proposals, the government is considering banning anybody else from using long-range photographic lenses and bugging equipment.

At present, self-appointed committees of MPs, civil servants, policemen, judges and officers from

The consultation paper insists that certain people—specified by the authorities, of course—should have the right to invade the privacy of others, in the cause of 'necessary protection'. Lord Mackay's examples include an employer who wants personal information about a job applicant. He also argues that 'a person of ordinary sensibilities, for example, would not object to closed-circuit television in department stores', and cites the Justice report on 'Privacy and the Law' (1970) which says invading privacy is necessary for 'the protection of one's person, one's property or one's legitimate business or other interests'.

Today video cameras are going up everywhere from city centre pubs to workplace toilets, and state agencies from social workers to the police are taking a closer and closer interest in how we conduct our private lives. The idea that the authorities can invade our privacy in order to give us 'necessary protection' can only lend legitimacy to a further increase in state monitoring of our affairs—while denying us any control over their activities.

1984 in 1993

We are told we need protection, but from whom?

Lord Mackay's paper mentions in passing that the protection of our privacy must mean 'not only seclusion from neighbours or the avoidance of publicity, but freedom from unwarranted interference by the state'. We are warned that 'privacy is one

who conduct campaigns against 'anti-social' groups in society like single mothers, and who want to ban the public from enjoying themselves at festivals and raves 'in the public interest'.

While we are told in the consultation paper that 'spying, prying, watching and besetting' by the press should be considered an infringement of privacy, we are supposed to concede the state's right to spy, pry, watch and beset those whom the authorities decide are guilty of 'anti-social conduct'. Indeed we are now encouraged to spy and pry on these people ourselves, whether as journalists with the 'public interest' at heart or as ordinary citizens ringing up the new MI5 public hotline to report our suspicions about 'subversive' neighbours. In the hands of those who make and execute the law, the 'public interest' always means the state's interest.

All citizens now

The discussion about privacy is typical of many political debates today. We are told that we are to be given new rights, usually enshrined in a charter. Yet these rights are always to be exercised by the state, via the courts, an ombudsman or some other official body. In practice it means the granting of more powers to state agencies to regulate our lives.

Using the language of human rights and citizenship to justify more state interference is a useful way of presenting an exercise in control as something we should all support. If we are all citizens now, then we all have the same interests to protect. John Major is as ordinary as you or I because we all have at least one thing in common: our need for privacy.

The debate about protecting our privacy does not involve any public discussion about the increase of state interference in our affairs today. Indeed the proposals can only reinforce a climate in which society is becoming less open and more secretive, less public and more private, and where any critical questioning of capitalist values is frowned upon.

Crimewatch culture

The government's proposals define privacy as a combination of 'secrecy, anonymity and solitude'. They seek to involve us all in an emerging *Crimewatch* culture, where it is acceptable to be nosy so long as it means prying into the private affairs of others in order to help the authorities clamp down on their idea of 'anti-social behaviour'.

If we accept that the state has the right to decide what is discussed publicly, who can use video cameras, what is done privately, and who can use bugging devices—what next? Thought Police?

our privacy

the security services and armed forces all have full access to 'sensitive' material. They can pore over it at their leisure, in private rooms—and then decide whether the rest of us are allowed to see it or not.

Under the proposals in the 'Infringement of Privacy' paper, the state would retain the ultimate say over what can and cannot be made public. Indeed its authority in this area would be considerably strengthened. Lord Mackay's paper questions 'whether juries are able to handle trials involving difficult issues', and advises that privacy actions should be heard by judges without the hindrance of ordinary people on a jury. So the 'ordinary citizens' who are supposed to be given a right to privacy are in fact to be denied the right to a say on such matters.

of the first victims of the totalitarian state', and the paper points to Eastern Europe and 1984.

But what of the increasing scope for state agencies to interfere in our lives in Britain in 1993? On this the report has nothing to say. Instead, we are asked to accept the idea that the state will play the role of protecting us from each other.

Lord Mackay's report suggests that privacy can be infringed if it is in the 'public interest'. This would include matters relating to 'crime or seriously anti-social conduct, public health or safety, the discharge of a public function and the correction of a misleading statement'.

And who is to define the meaning of 'the public interest' or 'anti-social conduct'? The politicians and the judiciary, of course. The same people

A mark of the times

The Exchange Rate Mechanism is dead, and so is the old dream of European unity. But, says Helen Simons, the economic integration of a new Europe centred on Germany is only just beginning

When Europe's Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) finally cracked in July, it sent a wave of panic across the continent. After weeks of devaluation pressure centred on the French franc, Europe's financial chiefs tried to cobble together a deal to save the system. But when their only solution was to abandon the cherished notion of exchange rate stability and allow Europe's currencies to float within bands so wide as to be meaningless, it was clear to all that the old ERM was dead.

The crisis of the ERM has been accompanied by apocalyptic warnings about 'the end of Europe' and future instability. According to many pundits not only is the ERM finished, but Maastricht is dead and even the future of the EC itself is in question. European cooperation, they claim, is now set to be superseded by a return to the economic nationalism of the 1930s.

Certainly things have changed since the ERM debacle. The trouble is that any rational explanation for the monetary crisis has been obscured by the claims and counter-claims flying across the continent, as governments and economists blame each other for the chaos. As a result many experts have missed what is really happening within Europe, and the likely future of European relations.

The most ludicrous claims about the crisis came from the British government. The Tories watched the turmoil in Europe's currency markets with barely disguised glee. John Major's government had been humiliatingly forced out of the ERM last September. Now ministers claimed that the latest episode proved that the ERM rather than the British

economy had been the problem, as there were fundamental 'fault-lines' within the system.

Major even seized the opportunity to relaunch his 'hard Ecu' plan which was laughed out of Europe two years ago. But while Tory ministers may relish the fact that their European partners have now run into problems, Europe is not about to take lessons in currency stability from British capitalism.

Britain was forced out of the ERM because its economy is the sick man of Europe. With most of British industry unable to compete in world markets, sterling could not maintain its parity with the deutschmark. Sterling collapsed not because of hidden fault-lines in the ERM, but because of the obvious fault-lines in the British economy. Far from vindicating its position, the Major government's reaction to the latest crisis only served to confirm Britain's isolation within Europe.

The French press argued that 'Anglo-Saxon financial speculators' were the villains of the piece. The right-wing paper *Le Figaro* claimed that these traders set out to break the franc because of their opposition to fixed exchange rates and their suspicion of France. Former French foreign minister Roland Dumas even suggested that 'the Anglo-Saxons' were determined 'to see European construction stopped'.

Meanwhile, French premier Edouard Balladur and many French officials blamed the Germans for holding Europe to ransom by refusing to cut interest rates. By putting German domestic fears of inflation ahead of Europe's need for interest rate cuts, the Bundesbank had thrown the continent into crisis. Since Germany was the

problem, some French officials called for Germany to leave the ERM.

Unlike the British explanations, French claims do have a resonance within Europe. Journalists, analysts and politicians have targeted the speculators and many agree that France is paying the price for Germany's post-reunification problems. But these arguments cannot explain the currency chaos either.

Take the idea that speculators caused the crisis. Speculators, Anglo-Saxon or otherwise, are not aliens driven by strange and sinister motives. They are old-fashioned capitalists, motivated only by the drive for profits. Speculators make their money by anticipating price movements on the world currency markets. But they have no magical powers to move prices at will. Price fluctuations are a result of the workings of the entire market system.

Some commentators tried to suggest that the latest ERM crisis had partly been caused by arch-speculator George Soros 'playing up' the £1 billion he allegedly made from exploiting the pound's difficulties last year. But even if Soros had speculated every penny, it would make little overall difference to a currency market in which \$300 billion is traded every day in London alone.

It also makes little sense to blame Germany's economic weakness for the crisis. Suggestions that the ills of the ERM could be solved by Germany leaving the system are farcical. A European monetary system would mean nothing without German involvement. The mark is the key currency because Germany is Europe's key economy.

Number one

Because Germany is the number one trading partner for all major European countries, they all seek currency stability with the mark. The fact that the ramifications of German interest rate policy are felt across the continent indicates the strength of the German economy rather than its weakness. The idea that this 'weak' economy should drop out of the system to ensure stability is, as BBC economics editor Peter Jay pointed out, a bit like telling the sun to quit the solar system.

At one point during the eleventh hour talks to save the ERM, Germany did agree to leave the system and let the rest sort things out. The response was instructive. First the Netherlands struck a secret deal to leave the system with the Germans. And then, like rats leaving a sinking ship, Belgium, Luxembourg and Denmark all declared that they would do the same. This would have left France in an ERM with Spain and Portugal. ►

BA
do



BY



Faced with the stark choice of sticking with the ERM or going with Germany, all the core economies in Europe wanted to go with the Germans. This demonstrates that European institutions are only meaningful today insofar as they reflect the real power relations between the nations of Europe. Instead of blaming the speculators, the Anglo-Saxons or

The European economy is now more truly integrated than ever before

the Germans for the ERM's downfall, it is more useful to look at those relations in order to explain why such an institution should fail.

Exchange rates between nations reflect the relative performance of economies at a moment in time. If an economy is strong with high productivity it will tend to be reflected in a strong currency. Investors are always on the look out for winners. Nations with the competitive advantage of high productivity and dynamic growth will tend to attract investors. Demand for that currency will increase and its value on the foreign exchange markets will rise.

The reverse applies to weaker nations. If productivity is low and economic activity is slow then there will be little to attract investors. Unless governments create attractive conditions for investors through incentives such as high interest rates, there will be little demand for the currency. The result will be a relatively low exchange rate on the money markets.

The ERM was designed to minimise shifts between Europe's currencies. This was achieved by setting a narrow target range for exchange rates and getting the monetary authorities to manipulate the foreign exchange markets, through controlled buying and selling of currencies by the central banks and careful manipulation of interest rates.

The ERM worked best in the boom years of the late eighties, when the pressures on the system were minimal. But when the slump caused tensions to rise within the system, the ERM was unable to buck the market. Last year the system could not hold either sterling or the Italian lire at their over-inflated prices. When it reached the point where the only thing preventing a sterling or lire crisis was massive buying in the market by the

central banks, the mechanism gave way. The pound and the lire crashed and other peripheral currencies were soon forced to devalue.

This summer's ERM crisis was precipitated by the French government promoting the franc further than was justified by the strength of its economy. In May, one French minister demanded that the franc should become the ERM's anchor currency. The Balladur administration cut interest rates 10 times in as many weeks, while insisting that the French economy remained strong enough to support the franc. However, once French interest rates dipped significantly below German levels, the *franc fort* beloved of the Balladur government was vulnerable.

At first the French got away with their bravado in the exchange markets, as forecasters and investors became preoccupied with what they saw as the new problem facing Europe—the German recession. With all eyes focused on the problems of the German economy, French claims to economic strength seemed reasonable by comparison. Many investors moved out of the mark and put their money into gold, Japanese yen or even French francs. But the moment investors took a serious look at French and German future prospects, the hype surrounding French claims became transparent.

Premature obituaries

Whatever difficulties Germany faces in the short term, it remains Europe's strongest economy. German productivity is about 15 per cent above the average of Europe's other industrial nations. While France can also claim productivity levels above Europe's industrial average, in key sectors such as car production and metals Germany beats its French neighbour hands down. Wise investors will still choose marks over francs every time.

Once the bubble of hype about France's economic strength had been burst, the franc was left without support. The French government pushed through a last ditch interest rate hike, and spent all of its foreign currency reserves defending the *franc fort*, but in vain. By attempting to challenge Germany for the economic leadership of Europe, the French authorities had created the conditions for the franc's downfall.

The collapse of the ERM was a big blow to Franco-German relations. Since this axis has been the linchpin of the EC, it is not surprising that many commentators declared that the ERM crisis spelled the end for closer European cooperation and currency union. But such obituaries are premature.

It should certainly be clear to all by now that the dream of a harmonious,

united Europe of equal partners is a non-starter; but then, in reality, it always was. On the other hand, the fall-out from the ERM crisis has accelerated the process of pulling Europe's core economies together under German leadership.

For a start, the summer's events revealed the close links between some of the core currencies of central Europe—those of Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and Denmark—and the German mark. They all pledged allegiance to Germany rather than the ERM in the midst of the crisis. And within days of the adoption of wider ERM bands, proposals were being floated for a smaller and tighter ERM. This would be nearer to a fixed exchange rate—and hence to a single currency—than anything which Europe has seen so far.

Nor are the economies that are coming together at the centre of Europe restricted to existing members of the European Community. At the height of the crisis Hungary announced that in future it would denote its foreign trade in deutschmarks rather than *Ecus*. More significantly, the Austrian and Swiss currencies remained closely tied to the mark throughout the turmoil.

No other option

The restructuring of European economies under the pressures of the slump is also helping to pull Europe's most important markets and industries into closer proximity with one another. Mutual investment levels between France and Germany are now at an all-time high, as are inter-European mergers and acquisitions. Despite all the political rancour, the European economy is now more truly integrated than ever before.

The final factor is that none of the other European economies has any serious alternative to following the Germans. France is the best example. Recent events have shattered the dreams of French politicians about shaping Europe's future. No doubt many of them would love to tell the Germans what to do with their deutschmarks. But while French pride is at rock bottom, France has no serious foreign policy options other than to hold on to its German connection. In the end it will have to swallow its pride and be prepared to be humiliated every time it tries to outflank Germany.

Much has been said about the ERM debacle heralding the end of the old Europe. Yet few understand that it also symbolises what European capitalism is becoming. In the months ahead it should become clearer who are the winners and who are the losers in the new Europe. But there can now be no doubt that Europe is a German continent, in which the mark can buy and sell the rest.



Too much monkey business

When I first switched on a Radio 4 programme about the Declaration on Great Apes I thought it was one of those rather arcane BBC comedy programmes where celebrities have to speak on a bizarre subject for 10 minutes without hesitation, repetition, foul language or making a prat of themselves.

It was only after about a quarter of an hour that it dawned on me that everyone involved in the broadcast was absolutely in earnest. Peter Singer, professor of bioethics at Monash University, Australia, was indeed arguing that governments should extend to the great apes the right to life, liberty and freedom from torture. Apes in his view should be defenced from treatment which would be regarded as improper for human beings.

The declaration states that great apes should not be killed except in exceptional circumstances such as self-defence and if imprisoned 'without due legal process' should be immediately released. Captive apes should be immediately granted spacious sanctuaries before being gradually returned to the wild.

I wasn't particularly surprised to hear these preposterous proposals from Peter Singer. He did after all pen the seminal book *Animal Liberation* and popularised the concept of speciesism—the supposed sin of allowing the interests of our own species to take priority over other species. But I was a little taken aback to hear a BBC interviewer treating him as if he was making a thoroughly reasonable point.

Days later the question of what rights are due apes was posed again by a fascinating TV programme about how apes under laboratory conditions show a capacity to count, remember, solve problems and communicate. They can even be taught a basic language through which they can communicate with humans. The theme was picked up by the *Observer* which told of Koko the lowland gorilla who communicates through a sign language vocabulary of 1000 words, responding to thousands of words of spoken English. To the question 'what do gorillas like to do most?', she responds, 'gorilla love eat good'. She has, according to researchers at her California home at the Gorilla Foundation, shown her ingenuity and intelligence by inventing more than 50 sign words—'bottle match' for cigarette lighter, 'white tiger' to describe a zebra.

Once again the question is posed: are these animals really so different to humankind?

Singer and his colleagues insist they are not and muster biological arguments to back them up. We humans apparently share a staggering 98.4 per cent of our DNA with common and pygmy chimpanzees.

We share more genes with chimps than they share with gorillas or orang-utans which, we are told, makes a mockery of the 'species distinction' we draw between humans and apes.

Can they be serious? We also share a considerable proportion of our genes with corn, but nobody suggests we draw up a declaration of rights for wheat. (Not yet, anyway.)

You only have to look at human society and compare it to the way that apes live to see that, however similar our DNA, the differences between man and animal are far more important than any similarity.

Humans are unique. We alone have developed a society which has consciously changed the world to suit us. We dominate other animals because we have developed the capacity to do so.

Of course animals can be taught to perform rudimentary functions. Dogs learn to come when they're called and cats learn that the squeak of the fridge door means food is on the way. It may even be possible to teach individual apes to solve particular problems and develop their capacity for certain patterns of thought. But whatever researchers teach chimpanzees, baboons and orang-utans, it will remain evidence of what we (people, that is) have taught them. It's a triumph of our capacity to tame and train, not a triumph of an ape's aspiration to live in a different way.

Do apes yearn for freedom and equality? They certainly show no signs of utilising their supposed capacities to organise for it.

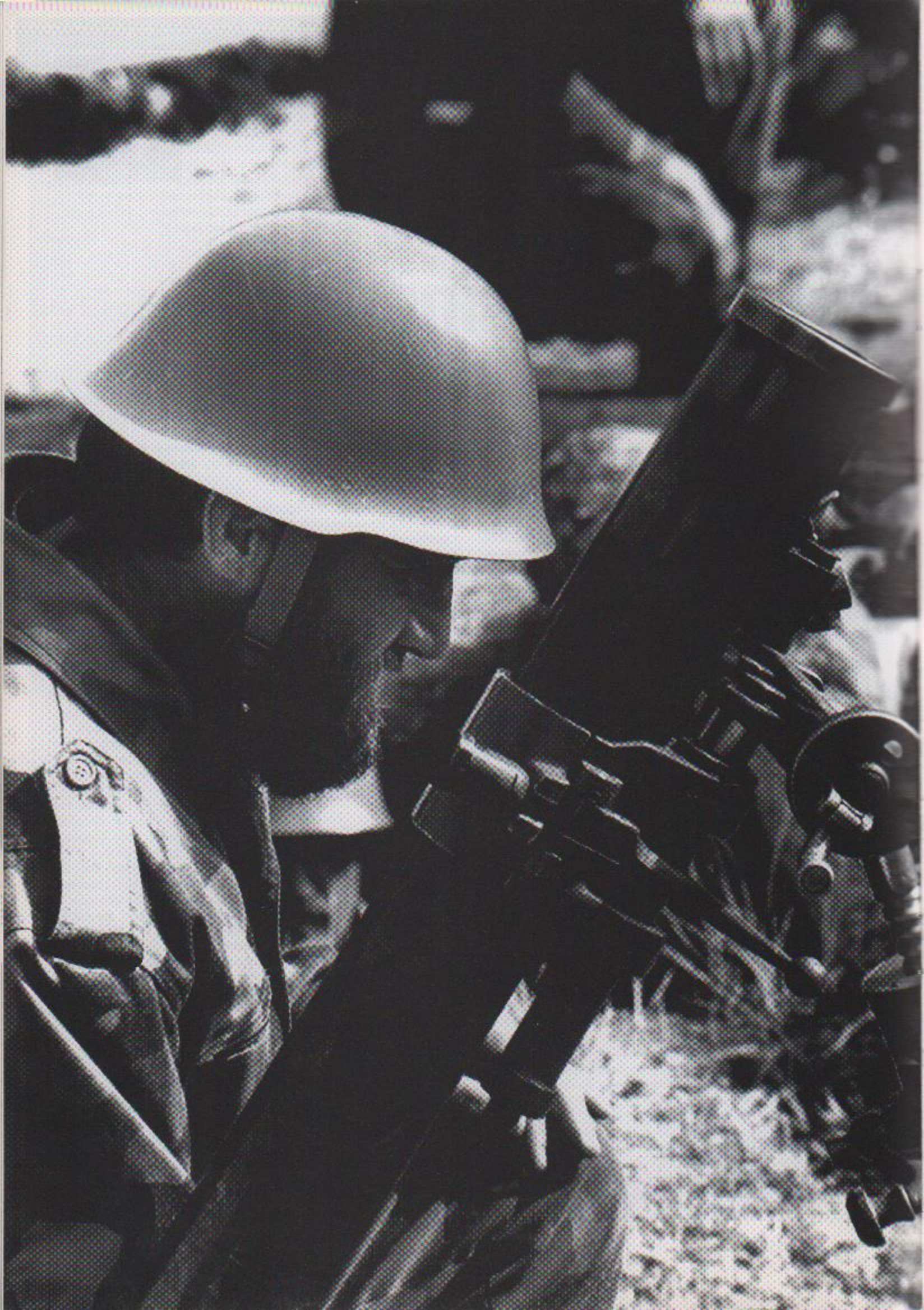
Peter Singer argues that the great apes' mental and emotional capacities justify their inclusion in a 'community of equals'. He and his co-thinkers argue that those of us who insist on a qualitative distinction between animal and humankind

fall prey to the same sentiments that allowed American slave-owners to hold blacks in captivity and allowed the Nazis to exterminate Jews. Both justified their oppressive behaviour on the grounds that their victims were less than human.

It's a strange equation. Whatever their oppressors may have felt about them, blacks and Jews are humans and demonstrated their humanity by organising resistance and demanding their rights. When apes demand their rights, I'll listen. But until then I'll continue to regard any attempt to reduce the consciousness of African Americans to that of apes as insulting and racist.

It's a weird world. Argue that the Iraqi people should have the right not to be bombed and the media treat you as though you're a lunatic extremist, propose that gibbons be welcomed into the human race and you're treated as a sage.

**It is
a triumph
of humanity's
capacity to
tame and train
animals**



Bosniamania broke out in British media circles this summer. From Channel 4's *Bloody Bosnia* week to the *Independent's* Save Sarajevo campaign, the message from liberal commentators was that the West should use force in the Balkans to save the Muslims from the Serbs.

Joan Phillips looks into why Bosnia has become a moral crusade for liberals. Her own documentary, *Journalists at War*, a critical review of media coverage of the Yugoslav conflict, was broadcast on Channel 4 in August

As Nato bombers were warming up on the runways in August, the people shouting loudest for Western intervention in Bosnia were the liberal media commentators. Exuding a patronising contempt for all those who are not as consumed with passion as they are about Bosnia, liberals everywhere combined to make sure that the public would not be able to escape from it.

In Nato's sights: liberal media commentators have called for air-strikes against the Serbs

Channel 4 brought us *Bloody Bosnia*, a season of programmes aimed at pummelling a public grown weary with war in the Balkans out of its apathy.

Guardian journalists joined in the jamboree, producing a book to accompany the Channel 4 season. There were daily reviews of the *Bloody Bosnia* coverage, printed extracts from

the *Bloody Bosnia* book and anguished editorials and articles in abundance.

Not to be outdone, the *Independent* tried to upstage the *Guardian* and Channel 4 by launching its own Save Sarajevo campaign a week before *Bloody Bosnia* began. A front-page editorial about the folly of betraying Bosnia was followed within days by a front page taken up with the names of *Independent* readers who had responded to the paper's appeal to write letters in support of the Save Sarajevo campaign.

Artists for Bosnia got in on the Channel 4 act: singing songs, writing poems, painting pictures and staging plays in solidarity with Sarajevo. Vanessa Redgrave fronted Artists against Racism, for whom Bosnia has been turned into the cause of the nineties. Susan Sontag went to

Sarajevo to organise a production of *Waiting for Godot* (geddit?). Meanwhile, Sam Fox entertained our boys atop the tanks in Vitez....

Despite the frenetic activity, it was all a bit tedious. We were told nothing that we have not been told a thousand times already by the same people, except that we were now being told it day and night.

Essentially the argument from all concerned was that the Serbs are the aggressors and the Muslims are the victims in Bosnia; that Western inaction in the face of such aggression is appeasement; and that intervention to deal with the aggressors is a moral imperative for the West.

Serb-bashing and intervention-mongering was very much the flavour of *Bloody Bosnia*. Peter Salmon, Channel 4's Controller of Factual Programmes, justified the emotive content of the programmes by arguing that 'the time for polite discussion has passed' (*Guardian*, 20 July 1993). A *Guardian* editorial opened *Bloody Bosnia* week with the opinion that 'if Serb guns tilt the balance further against the Bosnian government, the time has finally come to take them out' (2 August). The *Independent*, too, advocated the use of force if necessary to open the road to Sarajevo.

Strong words from those who claim that right is on their side. But is it? It probably escaped most people that the threat to the aid route to Sarajevo was coming not from the Serbs, but, as the British commander in Sarajevo divulged, from the Muslims and Croats fighting it out in central Bosnia. Another thing that probably passed people by was the fact that the Serbian ►

Bloody liberals



advance on Sarajevo was largely a response to a series of Muslim offensives. The fact that all the coverage during the *Bloody Bosnia* week ignored these realities raises questions about what is going on.

There is something suspect about the crusade for Bosnia. For a start, the liberal conscience seems to be somewhat selective.

Why Bosnia? Why is the liberal conscience stirred by Bosnia and yet left comparatively unmoved by Angola, Liberia, Afghanistan, Lebanon—or the dozens of other places around the globe where conflicts are raging?

Up to 1000 people are dying every day in Angola, far, far more than in Bosnia. The civil war in Liberia has displaced 85 per cent of the population. In Afghanistan, 1000 people were killed in one week in May, and that was only in the capital, Kabul. In a few days in July, 300 000 people in southern Lebanon were blitzed out of their homes by the Israeli armed forces.

Bosnia is clearly not a special case. So why has it been turned into one by the liberals? It surely cannot be because all those cosmopolitan people care more about what is happening in the heart of Europe than on the fringes of Africa. And it certainly cannot be that all those liberal anti-racists make any distinctions between the importance of black people in Liberia and white people in Bosnia. Could it be because Western governments made Bosnia into a big issue for their own purposes and liberals just followed that lead?

Sharp relief

Why devote all that energy to defending the Muslims of Bosnia, and not the Muslims of Lebanon? The selective character of liberal outrage was thrown into sharp relief just before the *Bloody Bosnia* season began. The Israelis chose this particular moment to start shelling the hell out of southern Lebanon, turning more than a quarter of a million Muslims into refugees through a deliberate policy of depopulation. Yet the plight of these Muslims did not seem to move many British liberals as Bosnia did.

Why? Is it because Western liberals can identify with Muslims only when they are victims or when they are supplicants of the West? Are Muslims who associate themselves with resistance movements such as Hizbollah, and who consider themselves to be enemies of the Western powers, beyond the pale? Why is the liberal conscience stirred by the partition of Bosnia and not by the partition of Lebanon between Israel and Syria?

Why the Muslims of Bosnia, and never the Serbs of Bosnia? Why have

liberals identified with the Muslim side in Bosnia so strongly that they have disqualified the Serbs from any sympathy? The Serbs have certainly got blood on their hands. But have all the atrocities in the dirty war in what was Yugoslavia been committed by one side? Why are 800 000 Serbian refugees invisible to those liberal commentators searching for victims? Is it because the Serbs really are demons? Or is it because an increasingly conformist and uncritical media jumped on the anti-Serb bandwagon created by their governments at the start of the war in Yugoslavia, and never asked serious questions about what was going on?

Multi-something

Asked if his *Bloody Bosnia* season had a governing viewpoint, Peter Salmon said 'we're in favour of a multi-ethnic Bosnia' (*Guardian*, 31 July 1993). But there were no ethnic differences in Bosnia, only confessional ones—between Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic Slavs. Never mind, whatever it was, it was multi-something, and British liberals are very upset that it is no more.

But why are the liberals suddenly so enraged by the break-up of a small 'multi-ethnic' state (Bosnia), when previously they had been all for the break-up of a large 'multi-ethnic' state (Yugoslavia)? In fact, the same people who are now crying over the destruction of Bosnia are implicated in it. They never acknowledged it at the time and they have never admitted it since, but the disintegration of Yugoslavia which they supported back in 1991 led inevitably to the disintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A unitary Bosnia was a fantasy without a unitary Yugoslavia.

And why, when there is so much anguish about Sarajevo, is nothing ever said about Belgrade? This is not to disregard the suffering of people in Sarajevo, but simply to point out a double standard. The liberals are angered by the Serbian assault on Sarajevo. Yet they are happy to contemplate the prostration of Belgrade by Western sanctions. In the Serbian capital large numbers of people are dying for lack of medicines and starving for lack of food. It seems that inflicting suffering on innocent civilians can be for the best when it is done by the West.

All in all, there seems to be little consistency and even less principle involved in the liberal crusade for Bosnia. It makes you think that there might be a hidden agenda here somewhere.

If we wanted to be cynical, I suppose we could conclude that the battle between the *Guardian* and

the *Independent* over Bosnia was the broadsheet equivalent of the tabloid circulation war dressed up as a humanitarian crusade.

If it was a circulation war, the respective campaign managers could do with a few tips from Kelvin McKenzie about what sells newspapers. The only people who allowed themselves to be preached to by the Bosniamaniacs were probably the converted. Who else would have read the same hand-wringing article for the twentieth time?

The fact that Bosnia was seen as the best issue over which to fight a circulation war suggests that there is something more at stake here than sales of newspapers.

The fact that some people at Channel 4 believed that viewers would stay awake to listen to George Soros, currency speculator extraordinaire, pontificating about the ethics of Western capitalism over Bosnia shows that somebody is on a serious mission.

The fact that somebody at the *Independent* thought that sales would be boosted by being a campaigning newspaper, and squashing 2000 signatures on to a front page under the banner headline 'Sarajevo: action now!', suggests that zealotry has vanquished commercial common sense.

The fact that Sarajevo has become a fashionable place to hang out for artists and intellectuals like Susan Sontag indicates that liberals everywhere are looking for a cause.

Bosniomania is a reaction to the contemporary angst of liberals about their role in society. They have lost their bearings over the past decade. The rollback of the postwar liberal consensus has been disorienting. Liberals everywhere are desperately trying to find a new role for themselves in the fast-changing post-Cold War world.

Global trend

This explains why it has been the liberals who have tried to take the moral high ground over Bosnia. They are the most outspoken critics of Western inaction and the most vociferous supporters of intervention. We should note that this trend is replicated across the Western world, from London to Bonn and Paris to Washington. It is hard to find a liberal anywhere who is anti-interventionist in the 1990s.

The liberal conscience has quickly come to terms with the realities of the post-Cold War world. This is a world in which the right is in the ascendant and the left is in retreat. A world in which the balance has shifted in favour of the West and against the third world and the East. In which the idea that

the Western powers know what is best for the rest of the globe is the received wisdom.

Far from questioning this point of view, the liberals are often the most forceful exponents of it. They have found a new role for themselves as moral propagandists for imperialism. Their mission in life today is to dress up imperial meddling in the affairs of other nations as a moral crusade.

By justifying intervention in humanitarian terms, the new liberal crusaders have become foot soldiers

pushing Slovenia and Croatia to secede, to America leading the campaign for the recognition of Bosnia, the manoeuvres of rival Western powers led to the break-up of Yugoslavia and the outbreak of armed conflict. Their self-interested diplomacy has created an almighty mess in the Balkans. And Western diplomacy did not simply start the war, it has kept it going and made it worse. Take one important example.

On 18 March 1992, before the war really started in Bosnia, the Serb,

Bosnia-Herzegovina under his presidency.

Within weeks Bosnia had been recognised by the Western powers and the war for control of territory began in earnest. Some 17 months and many thousands of Muslim, Serb and Croat lives later, it looks like the Muslims are going to end up with a few bantustans in a partitioned Bosnia.

Who is to blame for this? Is it the Serbs? Is it the Croats? Is it the Muslims? In fact, the West

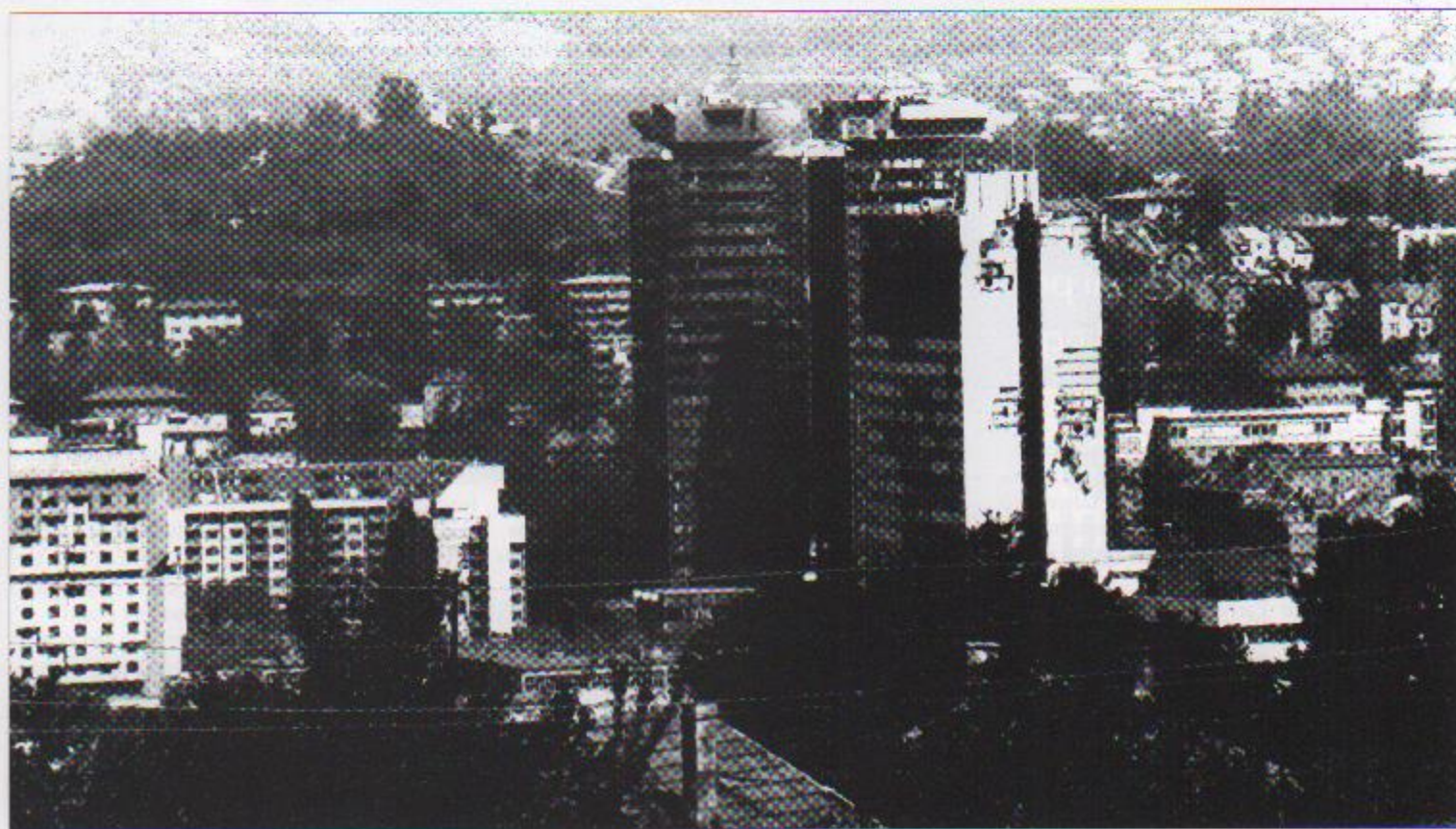


PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

(Above)
Why Sarajevo,
and not Kabul
or Beirut or
Luanda?

for the moral rearmament of imperialism. Regardless of whether or not governments heed their calls for action, the liberals have helped to enhance the moral status of the West as the force for peace and civilisation around the globe.

Most difficult to stomach from the liberals is their presumption that they are on the side of right—and that doing the right thing means demanding Western intervention in Bosnia. Nothing could be further from the truth

Those calling for Western intervention seem blind to the fact that the West has been intervening in Yugoslavia from the start. Indeed the fact is that *there was no war in Yugoslavia until the West stuck its nose in.*

As we have argued consistently in *Living Marxism*, the people of the Balkans are the victims of a new round of Great Power politics. From Germany

Croat and Muslim leaders all signed an agreement brokered by the European Community in Lisbon.

The Muslims got a good deal. They got 44 per cent of the land in Bosnia, and only 18 per cent of their people would have been living outside of Muslim provinces. The Serbs fared worse. They got 44 per cent of the land, but 50 per cent of their people would have been outside of these territories. The Croats got the worst deal. They got 12 per cent of the land and 59 per cent of their people would have remained outside of Croatian provinces.

On 25 March 1992, however, the Muslim SDA party in Sarajevo repudiated the agreement, saying it could not agree to the partition of Bosnia. The Lisbon agreement had defined Bosnia and Herzegovina as a loose confederation of three constituent units under a sovereign state. But Muslim leader Alija Izetbegović insisted on a unitary

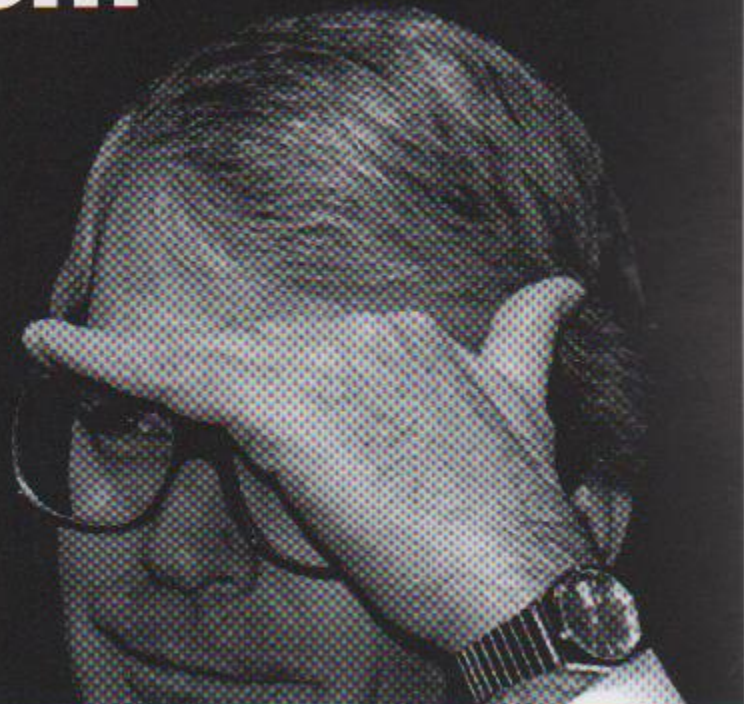
is to blame. It seems that the Muslims were persuaded by Western diplomats, and the Americans in particular, to oppose partition and hold out for a unitary Bosnian state. In other words, the West dangled a carrot in front of the Muslims and effectively encouraged them to commit political and military suicide.

It is clear from this (and many similar examples) that the Western powers never had the interests of the people of Bosnia at heart. They were playing a cynical game in which the Americans were leading the campaign for an independent Bosnia in order to assert their authority at the expense of the Europeans. They were prepared to shaft the EC negotiators, undermine the Lisbon negotiations and sacrifice the Muslims for the sake of their own prestige.

And this is the good West that the bloody liberals want to come to the rescue of Bosnia.

Who gains from Tory losses?

James Heartfield explains why the old political pendulum has stopped swinging



After two thorough drubbings in bye-elections at Newbury and Christchurch, and having fallen into third place in the opinion polls, the Conservative Party has less authority now than in the worst days of Margaret Thatcher.

For the Labour Party, with a clear lead at 44.5 per cent (Gallup, 5 August 1993) against the Liberal Democrats' 27 per cent and the Tories' 23 per cent, it should mean success is around the corner.

Instead, Labour is on the rocks. While the Tories lost majorities in the tens of thousands at Newbury and Christchurch, Labour polled so low it lost its deposits. At Christchurch the anti-Maastricht protest candidate, eccentric academic Alan Sked, got within shouting distance of Labour with 878 votes to their 1453.

In electoral terms, Paddy Ashdown's Liberal Democrats are the only party taking advantage of the Tory disarray. Always stronger in a bye-election, the Lib Dems are demolishing enough Tory majorities to look like a genuine force in the south of England.

Lib-Lab pact?

Mori's opinion poll gives the Lib Dems a clear majority in the south with 38 per cent over Labour's 31 per cent and the Tories' 30 per cent. Norman Fowler's response to Christchurch was to promise to turn the Tories' fire on the Lib Dems, to expose their secret socialist policies on the social chapter, higher taxes and even an energy tax.

The possibility that the Lib Dems might become the *de facto* opposition in the south of England is a real worry for Labour. In a recent pamphlet, *Southern Discomfort*, Labour's Giles Radice made the point that the party would have to appeal to the aspirations of C1 and C2 voters to stand a chance in the old Tory heartlands.

Others hope that tactical voting will allow the

opposition parties to concentrate their fire on the government. Just as Labour voters in Newbury and Christchurch switched to the Lib Dems as the best chance of beating the Tories, goes the argument, so too will Lib Dem voters switch to Labour where it is in second place.

But there is no likelihood that Lib Dem voters will ever switch to Labour in the way that Labour voters have been prepared to vote for the Lib Dems. Many working class voters find little to choose between the middle class moralisers on John Smith's front bench and those on Paddy Ashdown's. For the middle classes, by contrast, Labour is an unsupportable party for common people and the poor.

Still less is Labour likely to appeal to anybody's aspirations, down south or anywhere else. In the public imagination the party is irredeemably associated with the depressed areas of the economy in Scotland and the north of England. Labour's faltering attempts to introduce 'One member, one vote' only served to remind everyone of its links with a defeated and dying trade union movement.

Labour cannot take advantage of the Tories' difficulties because the conventional political see-saw is broken. No longer are Tory difficulties Labour opportunities. The old cycle of politics is at an end, and Labour is a victim of that exhaustion to an even greater extent than the Tories.

If anything, the Tories' difficulties are a consequence of their success in defeating the Labour Party, rather than any success on Labour's part. Throughout the eighties the campaign against traditional Labourism and trade unionism gave Tory policy coherence.

Now that John Smith's party is not taken seriously as either a threat or a promise, Tory attempts to frighten the middle classes with tales of a government held hostage to the unions don't work. Unable to bash its traditional punch bag,

the Tory Party is at the mercy of a middle class alienated by years of recession and high-handed leadership.

Characteristically, the political issues that have put the Tories on the defensive of late are not issues raised by working class opposition, but the concerns of a slighted middle class.

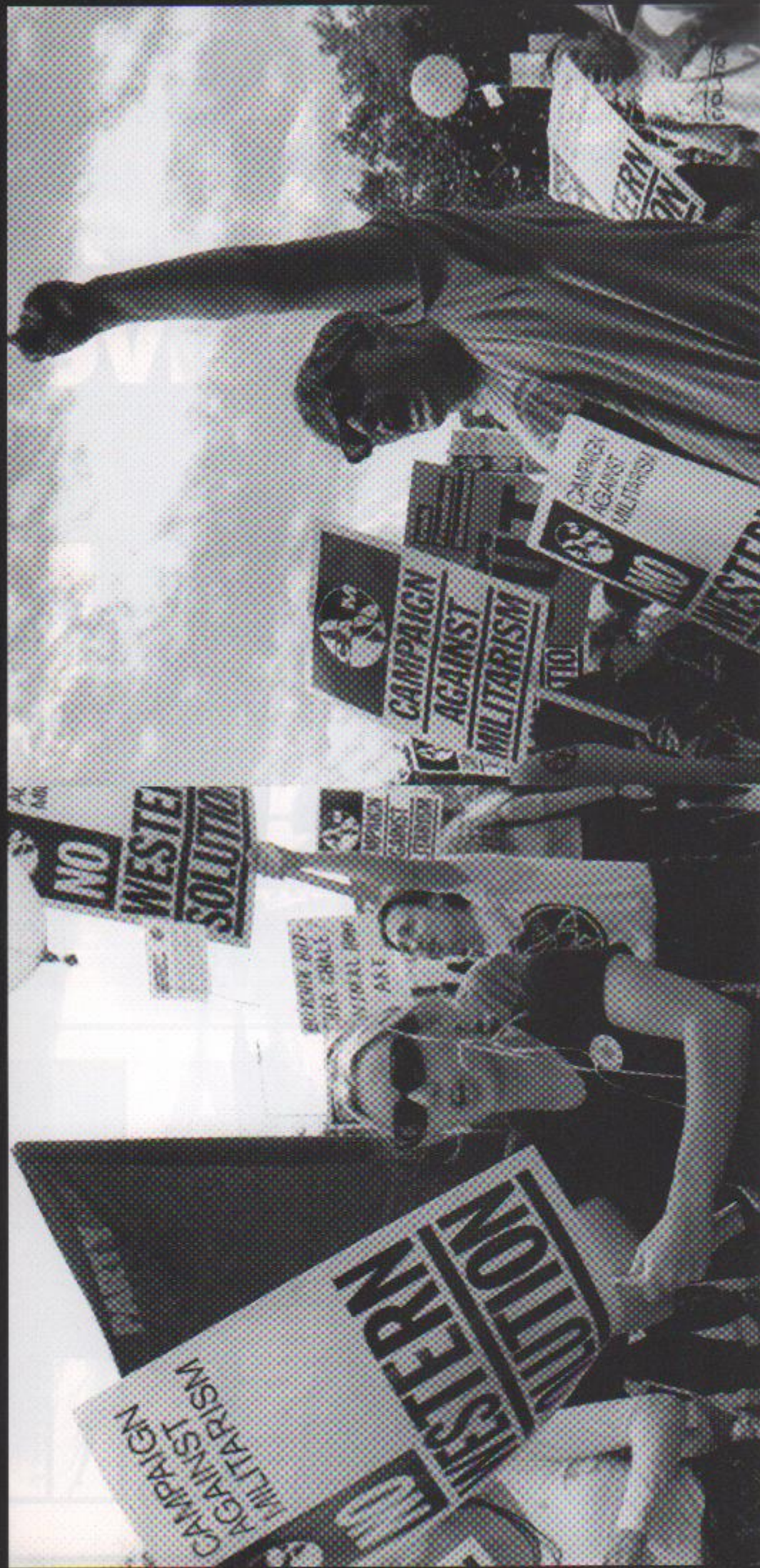
Fears about crime and resentment over taxes would once have been staple fare in the Tory campaign against the left. These are the sort of issues that translated the defence of capitalism into middle class fears about private property. Labour could easily be painted as the party that was soft on the criminals out of a misguided social conscience, and too eager to pay for its reforms by taxing the hard-working middle classes.

Jurassic parties

Today it is the Tories who are embarrassed by the crime figures, and the Tories who are suffering because of proposals to put 17.5 per cent VAT on fuel bills. Forget that Christchurch has one of the lowest crime rates in the country: the Tories are paying the price of middle class insecurity, however it is expressed.

Explaining away Labour's collapse at Newbury, Labour MP Peter Mandelson said that 'we shook the tree but the apples fell into somebody else's lap'. Of Christchurch, Labour frontbencher Jack Straw could only insist that 'we set the agenda from the first day of the campaign by marking out the issue of VAT on fuel'.

In truth Labour neither shook the tree nor set the agenda. The Tories are suffering because, like the Labour Party, their policies are tailored for a political era that has passed. It is the insecure middle classes that are influencing an agenda which reflects their concerns at a time when the working class has lost its political voice and the ruling party has lost its way. ●



WHEN PEACE MEANS WAR

UNDERSTANDING AND OPPOSING MILITARISM TODAY

A day of discussion and debate in Birmingham, organised by the Campaign Against Militarism

Saturday 30 October 1993 **Aston University, Aston Triangle, Birmingham B4**

Tickets £12 waged/£7 unwaged/£3 school and further education students.

Transport available from around the country. For further information and tickets, contact Jennie Bristow on (071) 278 9908, or write to Campaign Against Militarism, 92 Cromer Street, London WC1H 8DD.

Make cheques/POs payable to Campaign Against Militarism.



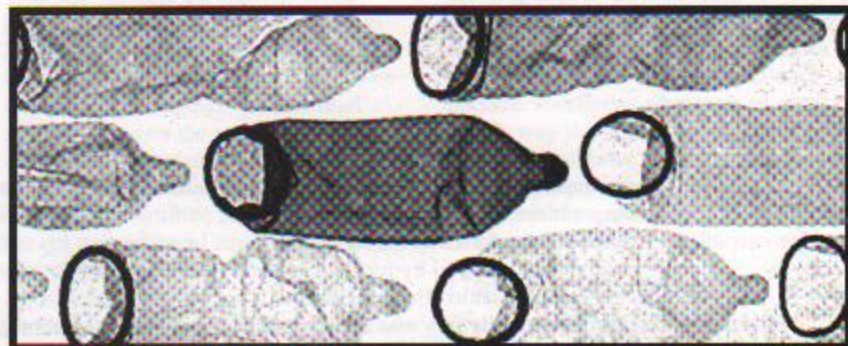
May the state preserve us from ourselves!





Under the new authoritarianism, state agencies from the police to social services are assuming more and more power to regulate our lives. The key assumption of this political culture is that we need to be protected from each other, and from ourselves.

Frank Richards asks what's new about the new authoritarianism, and identifies the dangerous trends developing behind the public climate of fear and mistrust in the nineties



In addition to publishing new charters, the British establishment publicly espouses a political philosophy that is self-consciously anti-authoritarian. Tory politicians regularly denounce state intervention, government bureaucracy and unnecessary rules and regulations. They praise individual choice and promise to allow local communities more say in running their own affairs. Clearly there is no direct or overt promotion of authoritarian solutions in Britain today.

And yet, despite the formal commitment to reducing the activities of the state, it seems to be expanding its powers all the time. Local government may have been curbed—but its activities have been taken over by new non-representative quangos, appointed by the government. Development agencies employing thousands of people are replacing elected councils. The same pattern of quangoisation is evident everywhere from the education system to the health service. This replacement of representation by administration suggests that the vocabulary of 'empowerment' is being used to consolidate the power of the ruling elite. It is always they who do the empowering—and not surprisingly, they keep more than a little for themselves.

The authoritarian dynamic is particularly evident in the constant emphasis on law and order. Permanent roadblocks in the City of London, police curfews on selected individuals and controls over the movements of groups such as the New Age travellers are only some of the more dramatic instances of the authoritarian culture of our times. It is a safe bet that no official report, inquiry or conference will ever suggest that the police need less power. On the contrary, they need more resources, longer batons and special powers 'just to prevent a breakdown of society'.

But matters go beyond repressive policing. Almost every innovation suggested by the state today has authoritarian consequences. So the dubious right of parents to choose their children's school is paralleled by greater government interference in education. New policies of national tests and a national curriculum are presented as an ultimatum. The strange mixture of government diktat and the language of choice in education typifies the general trend.

Even initiatives which purport to provide more protection against the abuse of state power follow a similar pattern. Take the example of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice. ▶

At first sight it seems curious to talk about a climate of authoritarianism. Superficially we are living through a period that appears tolerant, forgiving and even generous in its provision of new rights. Almost every month the British government publishes a new charter offering us rights that we did not previously enjoy. We have a Citizen's Charter, charters for patients, and charters for British Rail passengers. Words like 'empowerment' and 'enablement' have become part of the political vocabulary, promising a distribution of power and influence to everyone. Even the term 'children's rights' has become fashionable. It is surely only a matter of time before the government issues a Charter for orang-utans.





Originally it was set up to tackle the problems revealed by the recent high-profile miscarriages of justice. By the time its report was published, the commission's attention was absorbed not so much by the miscarriage of justice as by the need to strengthen the punitive powers of the legal system. The lack of justice had become equated with the flouting of the law by crafty criminals. The

being extraordinarily soft on crime, and unless they got their act together, 'ordinary' people would take matters into their own hands.

The invitation to the state to adopt more authoritarian solutions implies that law and order institutions are too liberal and too much oriented towards the criminal. In a sense this message is the central motif of the new authoritarianism. It expounds an

a legitimate concern, if not for a civil service bureaucrat then for a social worker or a policeman. Indeed the line that divides the police constable and the social worker has become increasingly blurred. The police now provide services that were hitherto provided by others, such as rape counselling. And social work has become more and more oriented towards the policing of family life.

The intrusion of the state into private life is now a matter of everyday routine

consequence of this redefinition of the problem was that the commission proposed to take away the right of a defendant to a trial by jury.

The proposal to eliminate the right to a trial by jury was accompanied by a carefully orchestrated media campaign about the failure of the law to protect ordinary people from criminals. The papers and news bulletins were suddenly full of stories about under-age criminals who brazenly continue their anti-social activities safe in the knowledge that the law cannot touch them. These stories of juvenile hooligans were complemented by a series of high-profile cases in which an assortment of muggers, robbers and killers were either let off or given ridiculously low sentences by the courts.

Inventing vigilantes

The press manipulated these stories to invent the British vigilante. Overnight the media was prominently featuring individuals and groups 'who have had enough'. Reports suggested that large numbers of ordinary people were ready to take the law into their own hands. For a while it seemed that any angry taxpayer who was fed up with noisy children would be guaranteed an interview on national television. Through the summer the national media continued to fuel this vigilante psychosis. The most famous example was that of Joseph Elliott, a self-confessed vandal whose killing of another man was accepted as self-defence by a jury in South London. The message of the media campaign was that the courts and juries were

outlook which inflates the problem of individual security and safety, as the justification for authoritarian solutions. The message is that we need more protection.

At the most basic level the need for protection is projected in relation to crime. According to the widely promoted formula, there are not enough policemen on the street, not enough decent magistrates and not enough firm laws.

However, the political culture of the new authoritarianism is not exhausted by a law and order campaign. The central message of the need for more protection is expressed in a variety of ways. The key assumption of this political culture is that we need to be protected from ourselves.

The need for protection is often posed in a neutral or even in a liberal fashion. Campaigns for 'safer sex' warn of the harm we do to each other. Health campaigns on a host of subjects—from smoking to eating—suggest that we really are a danger to ourselves. Children left out in the sun too long need protection from their miscreant parents. Once the logic that we constitute a threat to each other is accepted then anything goes. We need to protect wives from their husbands. Errant fathers can expect to be tracked down by a state concerned to defend the position of the mother. But matters do not end here. We also need to protect children from their parents. The intrusion of the state into private life is now a matter of everyday routine.

It appears that even the most intimate aspects of our lives are

No workers' rights

It would seem that the only sphere where no protection is required is that of workers' rights. It appears that workers need no protection from employers. The government is abolishing wages councils, refusing to contemplate limits on the length of the working week, and rejecting every other similar measure. Ironically the new authoritarian culture is prepared to protect workers—but only from other workers. So there is now a degree of acceptance that workers sexually harassing others should be disciplined. This principle also applies—at least formally—to racial harassment by workers.

The thrust of this approach is that so long as official interference aims to protect us from each other, it is in principle acceptable. The question of who is going to do the protecting is seldom posed, since it is self-evident that this is a job for the state.

Protection racket

The systematic extension of state intervention and regulation in everyday life is to some extent obscured by the form in which this development occurs. It seldom seems that the initiative is taken by the state itself. Instead it appears that state intervention is merely a response to a demand from concerned professionals or a frightened public. Just how extensive this protection racket has become is rarely understood. Occasionally—for example in the recent uproar about the refusal of social services to allow a mixed race couple to adopt a black child—we realise the truly frightening power that the state possesses to interfere in our lives. There was a time when the word 'totalitarian' was used to describe such attempts by the state to regulate the behaviour of parents towards their children.

Of course, the state has always had a tendency to throw its weight around. What is new about the contemporary form of authoritarianism is that it is understated and presented as a response to people's genuine concerns. Moreover, unlike the traditional law and order campaigns, this one is often formulated in the language of liberal common sense. Even racist violence has been accepted by the police as something from which the public



needs protection. The Metropolitan Police now offers gay police constables to liaise with the gay community to protect them from a 'serial killer'.

It is important not to confuse the new authoritarianism with crude repression. This is not the 'lock 'em all up' attitude of the military dictatorship. In Britain many offenders are put on probation rather than jailed. To save money, the government is prepared to release seriously disturbed people from mental institutions 'into the care of the community'. So what is at stake is not a simple police crackdown. The important developments involve extending the sphere of state surveillance, regulation and intervention. The key consequence is the elaboration of a public climate of fear and mistrust—a climate which encourages conservative solutions.

'Trendy ideas'

On one level this new interventionism seems to go against the spirit of conservative politics. It is often the right which complains about busybody social workers and the pretensions of political correctness in questioning conventional behaviour. However, right-wing outrage regarding trendy local government practices is tactical rather than substantive. Conservatives may object to state agencies imposing 'trendy ideas', but they do not oppose *the right of the state to regulate family*

politically correct professional milieu establishes the precedent for regulating private life. Moreover, both the state and the liberal professionals often agree on specific measures. For instance, the government's policy of tracking down fathers who abandoned their family responsibility is supported by many professionals and feminists. The repressive implications of this measure for both the women and men involved have escaped the attention of do-gooders ostensibly concerned to protect single mothers.

Strange alliance

The strange alliance of professional nice people and the state was clearly brought home through the BBC's recent campaign to recruit volunteers. For weeks the BBC ran adverts promoting different voluntary organisations, some as radical as OutRage! and Greenpeace. This showed that the appetite of the authorities for extending their domain is considerable; they even want to be involved with protest groups. But more importantly, it exposed the informal alliance between the state bureaucracy and the voluntary sector do-gooder.

The new authoritarianism is a consequence of the erosion of the postwar political consensus, and the consequent weakening of the legitimacy of Britain's central institutions. The problem of political legitimacy has become closely linked

and political uncertainty. Under these circumstances government policies invariably fail to tackle the problems they seek to address. Such failures create an even greater temptation to clamp down. If local councils don't do what you expect—get rid of them. If juries no longer believe the police—get rid of the jury system.

Many middle class professionals who experience the consequences of the economic depression feel particularly vulnerable. On the one hand their profession is devalued. On the other hand they are confronted by the menace of a society more and more out of control, in which the behaviour of insecure individuals becomes as unpredictable as the fluctuations of the housing market. For these professionals, the threat seems to come not from an anarchic social system, but from people who are desperate to survive. In their desire to insulate themselves from the uncomfortable attentions of the 'common' people, the middle classes become vociferous advocates of order. In this way the fear of the masses—football hooligans, single mothers, yobbos, young criminals—creates a ready-made audience for the political culture of the new authoritarianism.

Uphold civil liberty

In these circumstances it becomes all the more important to uphold the fundamental principles of civil liberty. Those who are concerned with human freedom and progress need to encourage the libertarian impulse. There already exists a healthy suspicion towards the activities of the state. This needs to be pointed towards the development of an alternative perspective, one which refuses to yield an inch of our space to state intervention.

To be sure, all of us face the prospect of insecurity during this economic depression. Many individuals are faced with problems beyond their control. Some inevitably fear for their safety. But a solution to these problems will not come from granting more authoritarian powers to the state.

Acceptable standards

It is only when people begin to organise together, and to evolve their own rules and objectives, that anti-social acts can be curbed. The constitution of a working class political culture at once creates a standard of acceptable behaviour which communities can act on and enforce. Without such standards there is no way of counteracting the destructive effects of human alienation. Authoritarian solutions only force us to become more fragmented, more subject to state regulation, and therefore less able to control our own lives. ●

The fear of the masses—football hooligans, single mothers, young criminals—creates a ready-made audience for the new authoritarianism

life. They might criticise liberal social worker-speak advice to parents. But they are not against preaching their own 'untrendy' morals. The government's vindictive propaganda against single mothers shows that right-wing ideologues are no more inhibited about interfering in family life than professional social workers. The message they preach is often different, but both agree that they have the right to interfere with how people conduct their personal affairs.

What is striking about the new authoritarianism is how often the

with the economic uncertainty that is the product of more than two decades of stagnation. Economic life is out of control and the ruling elites lack the political instruments to create the impression that they have a grip over the situation.

The crisis of legitimacy and the problem of control continually push the authorities to clamp down, to regain the initiative. Economic chaos and the lack of a political consensus encourage a demand for order. But order is an elusive quality in contemporary Britain, amid a climate of economic anxiety

'Flexible working practices' are the fashion today, and we are all supposed to benefit. Ellie Dashwood finds that in practice flexibility means bending over backwards for your employer

Flexibility is one of the employers' favourite buzz-words. The house journal of the Department of Employment, *Employment Gazette*, is full of articles about the rejuvenating effect which flexible working can have on industry. Flexibility is put forward as the solution to corporate ills—and it's easy to see why.

Flexibility agreements caught on in the 1980s. Although different in name, their effect has been the same as old-fashioned productivity deals. Both 'rejuvenate' industry through imposing redundancies, harsher working conditions and lower real pay levels on the workforce. The

employer benefits from either productivity or flexibility deals, because he gets a 'leaner and fitter' workforce, and a smaller wage bill relative to output.

However, there is one big difference between the two. Productivity deals were usually seen for what they were—an attack on working conditions and wages, pushed through for the benefit of the employers. Flexibility deals, on the other hand, are promoted as something which helps both the employer and the employee.

Whenever flexibility is mentioned, it tends to be coupled with 'and choice' or 'and control'. Working flexibly is supposed to give you more choice

about how to divide your time between work and other things during the day. You are meant to have more control over your life, and to be freed from the conventional nine-to-five straitjacket. Instead of being forced to fit in with management's schedule, flexible working is supposed to give you more scope to decide for yourself when and how you want to work.

If this description of the world of work today doesn't quite correspond with your experience, then read on. Reality for most of us has been very different. Diminishing job security and lower real pay levels are the true characteristics of the 'flexible' nineties.

There are more and more reports of workers having to make a choice between accepting either redundancy or wage cuts. The Citizens Advice Bureau report, *Job Insecurity*, published in March 1993, noted that, when faced with dismissal, workers were willing to accept the previously unacceptable. Some were taking wage cuts of up to 35 per cent and were working 70 hours a week for £140.

The flexibility fraud



Many more are accepting pay cuts of up to 10 per cent.

Choice and control don't come into it. From start to finish the discussion of flexibility has been dominated by double-speak. A serious case of fraud has been perpetrated, at our expense.

The 'flexible firm' was first conceptualised by industrial relations academics during the early 1980s, and was closely linked with the Institute of Manpower Studies. It was presented as an attempt to deal with problems of low output and poor productivity by reorganising the workforce. The idea was to employ people along lines which would allow the company to

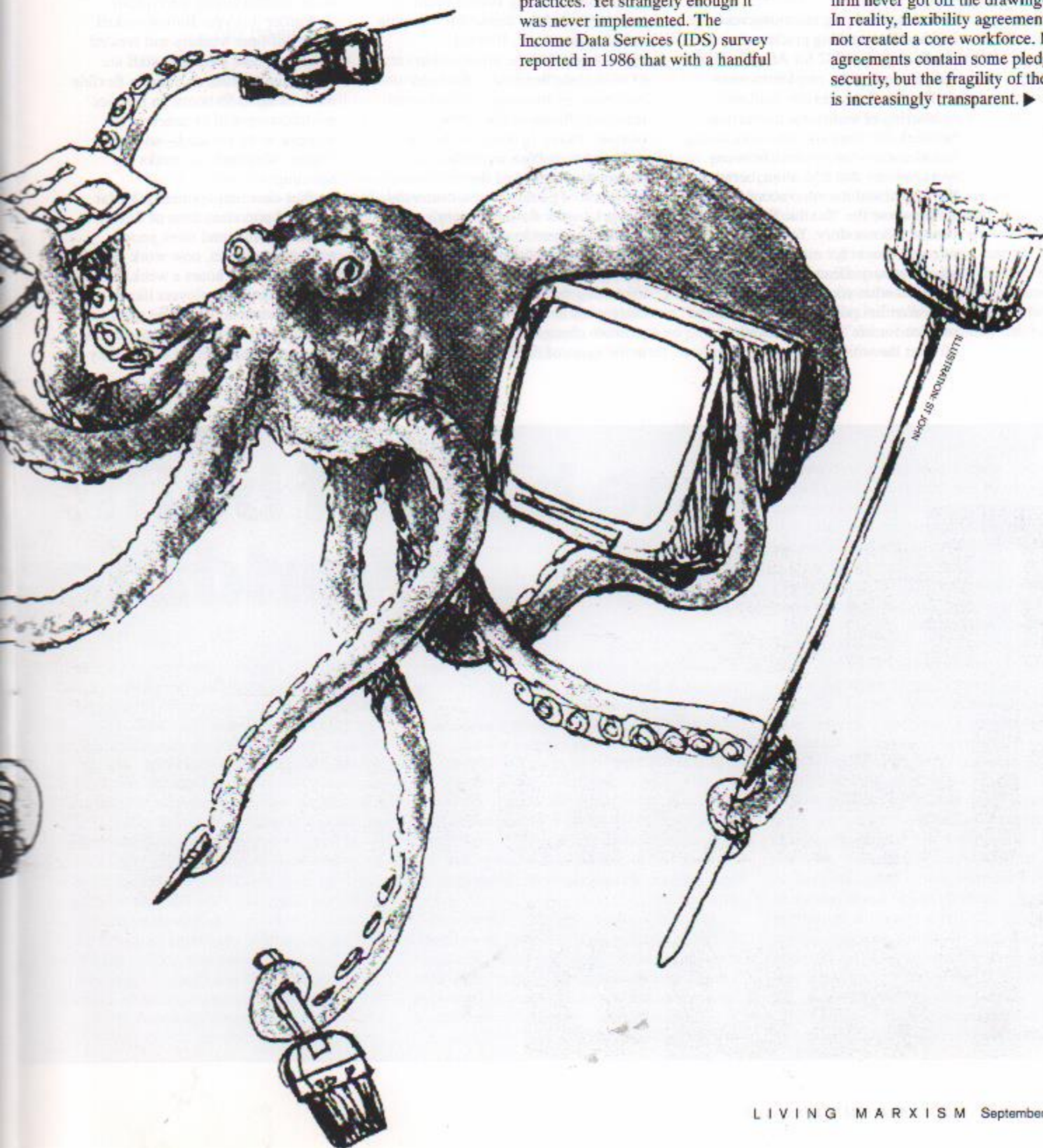
adapt to the expansion and contraction of the market most effectively—in practice, to hire and fire at will.

In theory, the 'flexible firm' model consists of a core workforce surrounded by a periphery. The core is made up of skilled full-time workers in secure employment. The periphery comprises more flexible, lower-skilled workers; part-timers, homeworkers, subcontractors. The idea is that the core workforce remains relatively stable, while the periphery expands or contracts depending upon the state of the market.

The model firm generated much enthusiasm and was seen as a breakthrough in employment practices. Yet strangely enough it was never implemented. The Income Data Services (IDS) survey reported in 1986 that with a handful

of exceptions the process of achieving full-scale flexibility had hardly begun. By 1988, the IDS had to concede that the much-vaunted 'flexible firm' model had turned out to be 'a tool with which to analyse a wide variety of changes in employment practice rather than a description of a real firm'.

Even in theory, the model is bad enough. It sets out the principle that the 'periphery' workforce has to take whatever it is given. These workers are to be employed only on the understanding that their jobs will disappear with the slightest shift in the market. The real flaw with the model, however, is the idea of a 'core' workforce. This element of the flexible firm never got off the drawing-board. In reality, flexibility agreements have not created a core workforce. Most agreements contain some pledge on job security, but the fragility of the promise is increasingly transparent. ►





The theory of the core workforce has not been put into practice because stagnant British capitalism cannot measure up to the model of industrial regeneration. In fact, the process of introducing flexibility has been a brutally straightforward cost-cutting

'Earnings flexibility' means that they can cut our wages

exercise, involving redundancies and harsher working practices.

As early as 1982 Sir Alan Cadbury indicated what the employers were really after from flexible working: 'a blurring of traditional distinctions between full and part-time work, being in and out of employment, between work, leisure and education, between the formal and informal economies'. In this sense the 'flexible firm' has been a success story. Today the reality of employment for many people is what Cadbury dreamed of—no stable job, take what you're given. As the *Guardian* has pointed out, the concept of a job for life 'is being abandoned all over the world'.

What exists today is an entirely flexible workforce, with no core but a lot of periphery. The 'flexible firm' model may not have been implemented in its own terms, but there have certainly been far-reaching changes. Today most of the British workforce works flexibly in one way or another; last year the *Employment Gazette* put the figure as high as 75 per cent of all employees. The reasons why have nothing to do with empowering the workforce, but everything to do with giving more control to management.

Exploiting insecurity

Even before the latest recession began, the *Employment Gazette* reported that the problems facing British business had 'increased the demand for flexible working practices'. It noted approvingly that the introduction of workplace flexibility 'has been facilitated by the improved industrial relations climate of the 1980s' (August 1989). In other words, the defeat of the labour movement in the eighties improved the employers' prospects of getting their workforces to work harder for less money.

Management have sought to take full advantage of that opportunity during the economic slump, exploiting the insecurity of their employees in order to force through punitive changes in working practices, in the name of flexible working.

The employers use a lot of jargon to sanitise the process of introducing low-pay, low-security jobs. They say, for example, that they have increased *numerical flexibility*. The Department of Employment calls this 'adjustment in the amount of labour used'. Nine out of every 10 changes in manning since 1980, it says, have been made in order to increase 'numerical flexibility'—reducing the number of people employed or reducing the hours they work, in order to save on the wage bill.

What this means is that the number of full-time jobs has been slashed and the number of part-time jobs increased. The changes imposed on the workforce at the Burton Group are typical.

Earlier this year Burton sacked 1200 full-time workers and created 3000 part-time jobs. The staff are scheduled to work an entirely flexible week of up to 39 hours. In practice the hours worked by much of the workforce are reduced—so wages are cut. Meal and tea breaks are now unpaid.

Part-time employment is by far the most prevalent form of flexible working. More and more people, especially women, now work part-time, for less than 16 hours a week. It is easy to see why the employers like to use part-time labour. Part-time pay rates are generally lower, and part-timers have far fewer rights at work. They

The 'feminisation' of the workforce is one of the most commented-upon consequences of flexible working. Over 70 per cent of women of working age now have a job, making up nearly half the total workforce. The fact that more women work is often used to suggest that the dark days of being chained to the kitchen sink are over. Equality has finally arrived.

Not only are more women working, we're told, but they are working on women's terms. In the past women were forced to make a choice between a career or a family. Now things are supposed to be different. According to a Department of Employment (DOE) pamphlet, *The Best of Both Worlds*, flexible employment practices today should enable women to work and have a family.

The DOE argues that employers should extend 'flexible working schemes' to allow women to return to work. They also need to establish a 'family-friendly' environment in the workplace, to give women the confidence to come back to work. In this way, the employers could allow women to establish the right balance in their lives between work and home.

In this scenario, the 'feminisation' of the labour force becomes a policy pursued by the employers in the interests of women. In reality,

The best of both worlds for

it is nothing of the kind. The employers' only interest is keeping their profits up by using women as cheap labour.

It is easy to see why employers are keen to take on women workers. Women's average pay is still only 71 per cent of men's. One reason for this wage difference is the tendency for women to work part-time. According to the DOE, over 40 per cent of women work part-time and around 10 per cent of them work for 15 hours or less a week. The wage rate for employment of this kind is far lower than for full-time work.

In addition part-timers are more 'flexible'. They can be taken on and laid off more easily. Employees who work less than 15 hours a week have no rights at all. In particular they have no right to maternity leave, which means the employers lose nothing by employing women in this way.

The DOE suggests that women choose to work part-time, which implies that they could do otherwise if they wanted to. This suggestion is highly suspect for two reasons. First, it presumes that full-time jobs are there for the taking if women want them. The author of *The Best of Both Worlds* should take a trip to his local job centre and marvel at the vast array of full-time jobs available.

In fact, the rise in female part-time employment has been mirrored by the shedding of full-time male jobs. Male unemployment is at its highest since the 1930s. The ratio of male to female unemployment is even more telling. Of the 3m officially unemployed in January this year, 2.3m were men and 0.69m women—a ratio of 3:1. This has changed significantly, even in the past few years; in 1986, the ratio was 2:1. The rationale is obvious—in a recession women are a bargain.

are much easier and cheaper to hire and fire. In Britain today a third of all workers have no protection at all. Homeworking, jobshares and subcontracting are also on the increase, for similar reasons.

The employers also talk about increasing *functional flexibility*, which also allows for a reduction in the numbers employed. Functional flexibility usually involves cutting the workforce and getting the remaining workers to do other people's jobs as well as their own. Employers can increase an employee's workload for the same amount of money, or end job demarcation and compel a worker to do tasks they were not employed to do.

No basic pay

In many companies, functional flexibility has been introduced via the mechanism of skill-based pay. Rates of pay are determined according to the skills the employee acquires. The more skilled staff are paid higher wages, but carry out more than one job. The main advantage of skill-based pay identified by employers is the ability to operate with a smaller workforce, so that the overall wage bill falls.

Then there is the concept of *earnings flexibility*, which results from the increase in numerical flexibility. This means that the employer can cut workers' wages. For example,

something called zero-hour contracts are the new trend in the retail business. Allied Home Furnishings employ 16 per cent of their workforce on this basis. The employer is under no obligation to pay out even one penny in wages. Zero-hour workers work only if the shop hits a busy period; during other times they wait for the call and earn nothing. The Allied bosses have no basic wage bill to pay. With this kind of flexibility in vogue, it is little wonder that the *Independent* has called the current situation 'the realisation of the Thatcherite dream—that wages should be flexible both up and down' (14 April 1993).

Other flexible mechanisms are also used to keep wages down. Profit-related pay (PRP) deals are on the increase. According to the IDS, the number of employees in Britain in PRP schemes leapt from 370 000 in September 1991 to three quarters of a million by the end of last year.

Under these schemes around 20 per cent of employees' pay is linked to company profits; that is, basic pay is cut by 20 per cent and replaced by the promise of profit-related bonuses. This is used as an alternative to pay rises, but in the middle of a slump it is a bum deal. As profits have plunged for most companies, so PRP pay-outs to workers have fallen with them. Last year, for example, there was no pay-out at all at Barclays, General Accident and

Midland Bank. In effect, PRP has meant a sizeable pay cut.

More broadly, in the era of flexible working, pay cuts and wage freezes are now commonplace. There is a significant rise in the number of pay deals worth less than two per cent. The public sector pay rise of just 1.5 per cent is the most significant, since it covers 20 per cent of all workers in the country. There has been a general fall in the level of pay deals this year. In the first half of 1993, three-quarters of all pay settlements were between two and 4.9 per cent.

100 per cent attitude

Being flexible—that is, willing to bend over backwards—is now widely seen as a prerequisite for being employed at all. Many companies at the forefront of bringing in flexible working undertake strenuous testing of job applicants, in order to establish that they have constructive attitudes as much as skills aptitude. For instance, Sony management has been quoted as saying that 'if it's a choice, we'll go for 90 per cent skill and 100 per cent attitude'.

If you are prepared to do whatever they tell you and earn whatever they give you, you might just get the job. Then you can enjoy the benefits of functional flexibility and earnings flexibility, at least until the next round of numerical flexibility catches up with you.

women?

Second, women cannot work full-time because of domestic responsibilities—as the employers well know. The key influence on women's participation in the labour market is the need to care for their children (and increasingly, for elderly relatives). Whether or not a woman has a job varies most according to the age of the youngest child. Far fewer women with pre-school age children go to work. So you could say that women with children 'choose' to work part-time or not to work at all. Or you could say that without access to decent and affordable childcare they have no option.

Other domestic responsibilities also force women to work part-time. As women part-timers recently explained in the *Employment Gazette*, the responsibility for domestic work means they couldn't work full-time even if they wanted to.

'I chose part-time. I have got a house to run and the meals to get ready for them all at night-time—and mine like their dinner on the table when they come home...my sons are 18 and 24 and there is also my husband...they all get home between five and six.

'I did full-time work for three weeks. I felt guilty for leaving them (the children) and then gully for coming home tired. I couldn't cope with it.' (May 1993) So much for women's liberation!

The DOE has turned reality on its head. Women work part-time because they are unequal to men, not because they are liberated. The prevalence of female part-time labour is a sign of the entrenchment of women's inequality, not of new-found freedoms. The fact that women's primary role in society is still considered to be as mothers and carers gives them responsibilities which tie them to the home, and deny them equality in the labour market.

It is not surprising that the government and employers get away with peddling tales of women's equality, since the opposition seems to agree with them. Harriet Harman, a member of Labour's shadow cabinet, is on their side for a start.

In her new book *The Century Gap*, Harman

claims that there has been a revolution in women's lives. Women, she says, have arrived in the twenty-first century ahead of their time. Men, however, are still stuck in the twentieth century. The main motor for Harriet's revolution is the prevalence of part-time work. 'Employees' enthusiasm about the flexible working practices that have been introduced show that women—and a growing number of men—expect and appreciate an increasing degree of control over when they work.'

For Harman, the change to part-time work has come about because workers demanded a cut in hours. So flexibility turns out to be about choice and control in your life. The author's main desire is to encourage men to work part-time, too. They should 'liberate' themselves from work and spend more time with the children.

It seems as if Harriet Harman will get at least part of her wish. We can be certain that more men will lose full-time jobs and be left with more time to do the washing-up, while the family tries to survive on a woman's part-time pay. Perhaps she could tell those families experiencing the joys of the flexible revolution how they are supposed to pay their mortgages.

'He lost his job for health reasons', goes the old joke: 'The boss got sick of him.' Kate Lawrence reports on the message behind management's new concern with employee health

If you cast your eye through the management journals of the past 12 months, you could be forgiven for thinking that the greatest threat to the nation's industrial competitiveness is the tendency of the British worker to take a sickie. From the 'Postie took 700 days off sick' headlines in the national press to the hours senior managers spend, absent from their desks, at conferences up and down the country discussing 'absenteeism', it would appear that the same old problem is standing in the way of Britain's bosses turning in a decent balance sheet—the lazy British worker.

But this is not all that the unfortunate captains of industry and finance have had to contend with. In August, yet another report about the quality of the British worker made national headlines. According to the report, Japanese inward investors have been turning up their noses at the poor skills and low quality of the workforce.

When it comes to Britain, it appears that the magic of those much vaunted Japanese management techniques just won't rub off. It must be a great disappointment to the special Department of Trade and Industry unit which has been hard at work selling Britain as the ideal site for foreign corporations to locate new businesses, on the basis that 'unit labour costs' in Britain are now among the lowest in Europe. (That's rubbish wages and working conditions to you and me.)

This kind of focus on the inadequacies of the workforce helps to shift the blame for mass unemployment and a failing economy away from the capitalist system itself. But more importantly, at a time when the only option left to struggling businessmen is to cut back labour costs and squeeze as much as they can out of every employee, the notion of the lazy worker can help to soften up reaction to redundancies and pave the way for tougher disciplinary measures within the workplace.

Of course, there is nothing new about employers blaming their inability

to expand their profits on the individual failings of the workforce, although the image of the problem worker has changed. In the 1960s the greedy militant worker, personified by Peter Sellers in *I'm Alright Jack*, who would call a strike over the slightest change to the tea break, was set up as the biggest obstacle to British commercial success. In the 1990s it's the skiving council worker or the car operative too stupid to keep up with the technological revolution who is held responsible for the public sector deficit and the slump.

Today, when management starts talking about 'managing your absence', or Department of Employment ministers urge employers to spend more on training and become 'Investors in people', it can sound like someone is trying to do you a favour. Some chance.

Over the past few years, management professionals have become increasingly obsessed with the lifestyle and life experience of their workers. This includes problems with health, alcoholism, debts, marital breakdown, stress, smoking, HIV, and most recently sexual harassment. All of these, say the management consultants are issues which employers should be concerned about because each one of them at their worst can cause—yes, you've guessed it—absenteeism.

In the past few years employers at the cutting edge of personnel management have introduced employee counselling programmes. The slightly less up to date call them

and line managers directly responsible for managing sickness absence, regular monitoring of sickness, training managers to deal with absence and improving occupational welfare services.

At Labour-run Camden council, staff now can be required to fill out a sickness form for taking just one day off. Meanwhile council workers who have regularly taken long periods of sick leave can be sacked even if their absence has been certified by a doctor. At Islington council, if a supervisor suspects a member of staff of skiving, they can be sent for a compulsory medical check from an outside medical adviser. At Tower Hamlets anyone who takes more than 10 days a year off sick or shows a regular pattern of absenteeism gets sent for 'counselling' from their manager. After two reviews, if they continue to take more time off sick without good enough reasons, they can be sacked.

Elsewhere, bosses more ahead of the game have dreamed up even better ways of meeting their sickness targets. For example at the Department for National Savings, attendance levels are assessed before a member of staff is considered for promotion or passing their probationary period. More recently Yarrow Shipbuilders introduced a scheme under which the less time employees take off sick, the more sick pay they get. Clearly it doesn't pay to catch anything more than a short bout of flu.

Unhealthy

occupational health schemes. Their function is to help employees through personal problems which might have a detrimental effect on their performance at work. Your marriage might be breaking up, but you can be sure that with a visit or two to your counsellor you'll still be putting in your contracted hours. It all sounds very caring for the 1990s.

But the lower down the job scale you go, the clearer becomes the real business of employee 'counselling', as public sector workers have recently discovered to their cost. In July an Audit Commission survey reported that London councils had reduced absence levels by a third, saving an average £1.5m each. The methods used included clear targets for reductions. Presumably if the employer tells staff often enough that they are not going to get ill, they do not get ill. Other measures included making supervisors

At the same time as risking disciplinary action, if you are unlucky enough to be off sick more than your workmates, your head is that much more likely to be the first on the chopping block when redundancies are announced. Last year a study by the research body Industrial Relations Services (IRS) found that in two thirds of organisations planning job cuts, employees who have poor attendance records are among those most likely to be dismissed.

Recently a much more straightforward way of knocking the lazy out of the British worker has caught the headlines. Rather than bothering with complicated counselling, more and more firms are now simply cutting sick pay. In a drastic revision of working conditions at Hoover's plant in Scotland, all new recruits are taken on as temporary workers with no sickness absence

payments for their first two years. The banking sector has long had a reputation for better than average working conditions and rates of pay. This year Barclays slashed annual sick pay entitlement from two months to two weeks for all new recruits until they have clocked up two years of service.

These companies are not alone in cutting back what was previously considered a standard part of working conditions. In July the *Financial Times* reported a study which showed that while just nine per cent of companies had made cuts in sick pay schemes, nearly 20 per cent were considering doing so within the next two years. As the *FT* put it: 'Cutting sick pay is a very direct, if crude, method of attempting to control absenteeism or, at least, minimise its financial effects.' (1 July 1993)

Goodbye lifo

While making your plans to get into better shape, don't forget to leave some time to do something about your work skills. The IRS redundancy survey found one group of workers that 73 per cent of employers say would be unlikely to be made redundant—employees 'who can be trained for or who can adapt to other work'. Many firms no longer use the old 'last in, first out' (lifo) system for selecting redundancies, on the grounds that it fails to meet 'business needs'. This means retaining workers who are regarded as the most valuable to management. According to the IRS study, engineering firm Hattersley Newman Hender warned that 'lifo loses good people'. Manufacturer Magneti Marelli Electrical rejects lifo 'because we must ensure that those who go are those making the least contribution to the business'. Warrington Borough Council said 'now that the council has to tender for its service, it is important that we retain a flexible, trained, experienced and responsible workforce'.

Of course to get your training, you can no longer rely on your employer to train you at work. More likely, you'll be spending long hours after work in the company's open learning unit which is open to anyone—as long as they don't mind giving up what little free time they have left to do their training.

So the message is if you don't want to be the one with your head on the block, you'd better start shaping up both physically and mentally. Who can blame your employers if they want to get rid of you for being low quality material? Sign up to the Health Education Council's 'Look after your heart' campaign now, and while you are at it, book yourself in for an extra European language. Get well soon. ●



conditions

An illegitimate

Daniel Nassim explains why Japan is no longer a one-party state



The results of the recent election in Japan show that even the most dynamic of capitalist powers is finding it difficult to cope with a changing world. Japan has been run as a virtual one-party state since the foundation of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in 1955. But the general election on 18 July 1993 marked the end of that era. A coalition of several parties, including three that are essentially recent splits from the LDP, have formed a new government. The LDP has suffered the ignominy of joining its arch-enemy, the Japanese Communist Party, in opposition.

This step alone is a dramatic move for Japan. In no Western country has the influence of a single political party been so pervasive during the postwar period. In many countries conservative and leftist parties have each spent some time in office (Britain, France, Germany). The choice in the USA has been between two brands of conservative politics. Not even the Christian Democrats in Italy can approach the LDP's record of permanent rule.

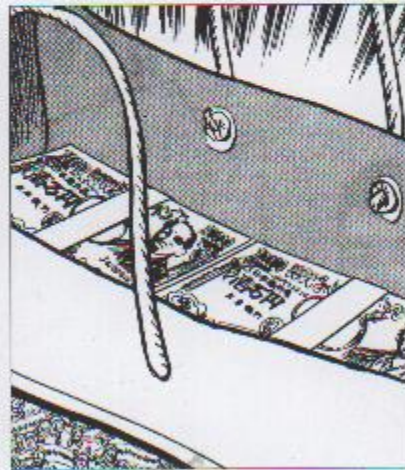
The LDP has been the party of

Japanese capitalism throughout the years of the 'economic miracle'. Now, however, Japan's business class is clearly reconsidering its relationship with the party. Although the LDP continues to receive donations from business, the new conservative parties have also managed to secure funds. The *Nikkei Weekly*, a top Japanese business paper, expresses a common view among businessmen that a shake-up of Japan's political system is necessary:

'Temporary confusion and instabilities are the prices we must pay for democracy. In the long run, we believe, the competition for power among the political parties will improve the quality of Japanese politics and eventually benefit the public.' (21 June 1993).

The emergence of a coalition government in Japan is, as the *Nikkei Weekly* suggests, likely to be just an interim step on the path to transforming the political system. It is clear to all informed observers that the old system is out of line with the demands of the 1990s. But the reasons for the current sense of malaise are less apparent.

The change is often explained in terms of the manifest corruption of the Japanese political system, which rivals even that of Italy. Three former prime ministers (Yasuhiro Nakasone, Noboru Takeshita and Sosuke Uno) were implicated in the recent Sagawa Kyubin scandal, which involved massive illegal contributions to the



superpower

LDP by Japan's second largest truck-delivery service. There is also evidence of links between the LDP and organised crime.

Yet many of the most ardent reformers in Japanese politics are also implicated in the old corrupt system. Ichiro Ozawa, widely acknowledged as the real driving force behind the Japan Renewal Party (JRP), is a former LDP secretary general. One reason he keeps a low profile is that he is closely linked to the Sagawa Kyubin affair.

Family matters

Even the new prime minister, Morihiro Hosokawa, is an integral part of the old system. Although he is head of the Japan New Party, he is a member of one of Japan's most established political families. Often dubbed 'Lord Hosokawa', he was an LDP governor of Kumamoto prefecture and a member of the upper house. His grandfather, Prince Fumimaro Konoe, was a prime minister of Japan during the militarist years of the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Nor is corruption a new factor in Japanese politics. For example, back in 1976 a former prime minister, Kakuei Tanaka, was arrested on charges of taking ¥500m of bribes from the Lockheed Corporation. After 17 years of deliberation in lower courts the case has finally reached the supreme court.

It is clear then that corruption cannot be the real reason for the LDP's sudden fragmentation. The reform movement comes from the very heart of the tarnished Japanese establishment.

A genuine conversion to clean politics on its part is about as likely as John Major deciding to sell *Living Marxism*.

The real reason for the current political tumult is that the end of the Cold War has exposed the lack of legitimacy of the Japanese system of government. As has previously been noted in *Living Marxism*, the anti-communist culture of the Cold War gave a sense of purpose and coherence to capitalist politics. The collapse of the Soviet bloc has removed that cement from the Western systems, catalysing the sort of political crises that are now visible everywhere from Europe to America. In this respect Japan has been no different from the rest of the major powers. But there are specific features to Japanese politics which mean that the crisis takes a different form.

Chain of history

In some ways the crisis of legitimacy is particularly acute for the Japanese authorities. Compare Japan's situation to Britain's. It is clear that contemporary Japan is a far more substantial economic power than Britain. Yet the British establishment does have the political advantage of being able to present its rule as part of an unbroken chain of history, stretching back hundreds of years. The British state can more easily be presented as part of the natural order of things.

By contrast, it is clear to all who care to look that the modern Japanese state was entirely built by the USA during the years of occupation following the Second World War.

Soon afterwards the LDP was installed as an unrepresentative all-powerful party. It is more difficult to present the Japanese state as a legitimate entity with a tradition stretching back to the distant past.

For over 40 years the Cold War helped Japan's rulers mask this problem. They were able to present Japan as part of a positive crusade being fought against international communism. The regeneration of the Japanese economy also gave an important boost to the self-image of Japan. But the end of the Cold War and the onset of world economic slump has brought Japan's underlying problems to the surface.

Junior partner

The Cold War was important to Japan in both its external relations and domestic politics. On the international front, the post-1945 relationship with the USA was legitimised through anti-communism. In return for Japan accepting a junior role, the USA agreed to provide a security framework in east Asia and beyond. Japan benefited enormously from this relationship throughout the years of economic boom. Accepting a junior partnership was seen as a small price to pay for an environment conducive to economic prosperity.

The Cold War relationship with the United States was codified in the US-Japan Security Treaty, and in Article Nine of the American-written 1947 constitution, which defined Japan as a pacifist nation. By curtailing its ▶





legal right to bear arms, the Japanese state effectively accepted a limit on its own sovereignty and acknowledged its junior relationship with the USA.

Just as important as the external dimension was the role of the Cold War in cohering domestic politics. The LDP defined its duty as preventing the alien scourge of communism from infecting the Japanese way of life. Anti-communism became an important part of Japan's national identity during this period. In uniting Japan against the supposed communist threat, the LDP gained a temporary measure of public legitimacy.

The demise of the Soviet Union has meant that anti-communism can no longer have the same sort of credibility. The Japanese ruling elite has consequently had to reorganise both its external relations and its domestic political framework. The problem is that there is no clear path to follow.

Political spectators

The collapse of the seemingly omnipotent LDP demonstrates how profound are the problems facing the Japanese authorities at home. Without the cloak of anti-communism, it will not be easy for them to promote a positive sense of what it means to be Japanese. The economy, although still dynamic compared to other major powers, is only spluttering along. And there is little in the political system to foster a positive sense of loyalty or legitimacy. As Ichiro Ozawa notes, 'the people of today's Japan have virtually no sense that the government is theirs. They see themselves as mere spectators in the political arena' ('My commitment to political reform', *Bungei Shunju*, December 1992, translated in *Japan Echo*, XX(1) Spring 1993).

This lack of legitimacy is behind the criticisms that conservatives frequently make of Japanese youth. The argument is that the younger

generation—often taken to mean anyone under 50—is too individualistic and distant from Japanese society. In other words, they have no attachment to the old institutions. It is a problem that Japan's rulers will not find easy to solve.

Contrary to the wishes of Japan's rulers, the confusion and instability in Japanese politics is unlikely to be temporary. It seems certain that they will be unable to win any new popularity through campaigns for electoral reform, at a time when even the most dynamic capitalist economy on earth is incapable of benefiting the majority of its people.

Options open

The trump card which the Japanese authorities have is in the international arena. Although Japan has a particularly acute legitimacy crisis, it also has more potential options than many of its rivals. In recent years Japan has started to develop a political punch in line with its substantial economic muscle. The end of the Cold War has accelerated the process of redefining Japan's relations with the USA and the rest of the world. The aim now is to try to recreate a positive national identity by projecting a sense of Japan's international mission.

This is the issue of substance behind the debate about reform in Japan. Both the reformers and many LDP members want to widen Japan's global role to help bolster the state's legitimacy at home. The debate is only about whether this aim can be achieved within the old framework around the LDP. Many on both sides would agree with Ozawa's contention that 'Japan's body has grown to gigantic proportions, but its brain and nervous system have failed to develop accordingly':

'Our country lacks the maturity to get along in the international community. This is why reform is

such an urgent issue. We must develop a political system capable of thinking for itself, one that can get down to work, move into action, and deal with the chores before it.' (*Bungei Shunju*, December 1992)

The attempt to develop a more 'mature' role for Japan in the world is probably best illustrated by its actions in Cambodia.

In September 1992 the Japanese government, after a long and harrowing debate, agreed to send ground troops to join the UN 'peacekeeping' forces in Cambodia—the first time Japanese troops had been sent abroad since the war. The UN agency which has been effectively running Cambodia has been headed by Yasushi Akashi, a Japanese. Cambodia has become a litmus test of Japan's ability to take on the broader responsibilities expected of a great power.

Benign conqueror

Japan has also started to project itself as a spokesman for Asia. In the run-up to the G7 summit in Tokyo in July, the deputy foreign minister for international economic affairs told Japan's leading business paper that 'Japan wants to emphasise two points of view: one as an economic superpower and the other as a member of the Asia Pacific region' (*Nikkei Weekly*, 28 June 1993). In the event, Japan formally conveyed the concerns of the non-aligned movement, representing third world nations, to the summit.

The last time Japan emerged on to the world stage it was as conqueror of Asia. This time it is seeking to do so in the guise of a benign capitalist superpower speaking on Asia's behalf. But the world already has too many great powers trying to resolve their domestic crises by jostling for the role of global missionary.





20 things I don't want to know

Britain's firms are out to boost business by copying the *Sun* and getting their prices down. Well, according to the *Sun* they are, anyway. It puts falling prices down to a 'lesson in *Sun*-economics'—in this case, the paper's price war with the *Mirror*. The main casualty so far seems to have been the *Sun*'s sub desk, whose slogans ('You get plenty for your 20', etc) fall well below the usual standard. The sacred front-page headline was simply a giant 20p.

The stunts arranged around the 20p theme are also somewhat tawdry, even compared to 1991's notorious 'Up yours Delors!' rally in Trafalgar Square, which attracted three supporters and one opponent (myself). So we were told that the village of Twenty in Lincoln was 'swamped by excited tourists as the price-busting *Sun*'s 20-mania swept the country'. Punters were buttonholed in high streets up and down the land for on-the-spot endorsements. PC Jeffreys in Bristol declared the *Sun* to be entertaining and interesting, while his partner PC Huckle claimed 'it tells you everything you need to know'.

The readers' messages of support (dotted about the paper under the logo 'I love my 20p *Sun*') are more transparently bogus. Most purport to be from *Mirror* readers who have just read the *Sun* for the first time and switched loyalties. Some, however, are written in verse and have the authenticity of madness about them. 'Friends in my neighbourhood call me Top Gun/ They know I'm wild when I haven't read my *Sun*' begins the poem of a sad man called Rob Abern from Northampton.

It was Mr W Gifford of Gravesend who intrigued me, though. His ode to the price cutting heroes ends with the lines: 'Forget the toffs who con us rotten/ It's the *Sun* that sticks up for folk at the bottom.' Such polemical talent deserves a regular outlet, I feel. Perhaps I can point Mr Gifford in the direction of a less successful tabloid competitor of the *Mirror* which may wish to use his doggerel in the service of its ground-breaking catchphrase: 'So-cialist Worker! O-O-nly 40p!'

Opponents of Fergie's short-lived appointment as a UN ambassador objected that she would use her position for self-promotion, and complained that she has been outspoken about atrocities which she has never seen, and subjects which she knows nothing about. I find it surprising that this should be considered a disadvantage. Perhaps she should look for a job in a field where this talent will be better appreciated. I can think of several foreign affairs editors who might be able to help.

It's nice to hear that the 'toffs who con us rotten' aren't having things all their own way. Lady St Oswald has staged the first aristocratic car boot sale, at which one of her mink coats was touted as a 'loss leader' for £30. The front gate of the Old Vicarage, Granchester, home of the eminent novelist Lord Archer, displays a sign offering a divan and mattress for £50. Most distressing of all, the Queen Mother—no doubt disoriented by the 'brain pills' which Barbara Cartland gives her to 'keep her young'—was seen parting with the best

part of a week's pension at the Sandringham Flower Show's white elephant stall. Her purchases included a children's cardigan for £6 and a £3 wastepaper basket.

Yet amid the scrimping and saving, there are, as always, islands of prosperity. Or so Harrods seems to believe. It now sells dark green bin bags stamped with the gold company logo at £3.20 for 10. The attached label reads: 'What does a Harrods rubbish bag say about you?' For once, words fail me.

Leaving aside the political implications of the government's Aids awareness campaigns, I always wondered what Mr Gummer and the rest made of the high-profile discussions of anal sex, etc. Now a report offers a tantalising glimpse of their trauma.

A DHSS official is quoted as saying that one minister closely involved in the campaign 'had real problems', being 'deeply ignorant' about sexual matters and unable to pronounce the word 'vagina'. A discussion about gays revealed that another minister didn't know what oral sex was. When told, he said: 'They don't, do they?'

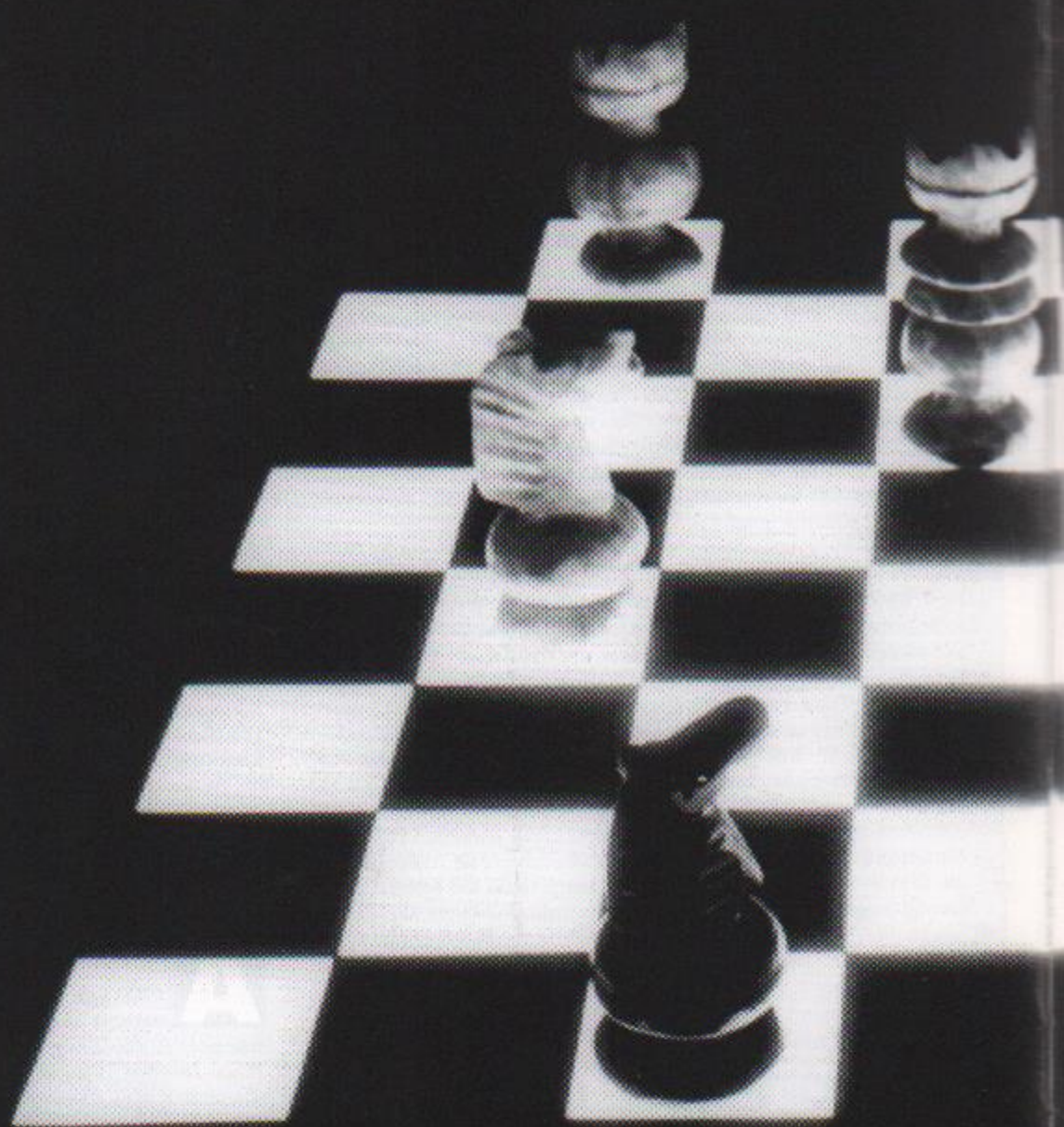
Things were apparently even worse for the chief medical officer Sir Donald Acheson, who tried to avoid any discussion of such matters, and had to be cornered on a train from Newcastle by DHSS officials keen to discuss the pros and cons of 'water sports', 'rimming', and so on. As one of them recalls: 'Business people were looking over as they wandered through to the buffet or the lavatory. So it was very difficult to pin him down.' It is not clear whether this refers to a practical demonstration. I would be interested to hear from any photography enthusiasts who 'wandered through' the compartment that day.

A while ago I alerted readers to 'Well Done!', a disagreeable statuette of a cherubic boy on a potty, manufactured by the reputable Royal Doulton china company. I am dismayed to learn that Royal Doulton is no stranger to such controversy, having received complaints from angry mums about its 'Bunnykins' nursery tea set. When curious toddlers asked what the bunnies depicted on the plate were doing, parents were horrified to discover a pair of rabbits apparently indulging in a practice familiar only to the more broad-minded cabinet minister. Although the rabbits' trousers are long since a memory, their jackets clearly indicate that they are both male, and a third (also male) is assisting from behind.

Far from expressing shame or regret, Royal Doulton decided to tough it out, claiming that the rabbits were drawn by a nun in the 1920s (as if that's any comfort). A spokesman offered the usual excuse that the picture had been 'taken out of context', and is a detail from a larger picture of a 'tug-of-war'. Having seen many tug-of-war displays by the finest teams in Britain (ie, Her Majesty's forces) I cannot recall ever witnessing these kinds of antics. I suggest they go tell it to the marines.

As the world chess championship opens in London, Eve Anderson talked to the man behind it, Raymond Keane—grandmaster, chess fixer, Thatcherite and sometime Hegelian

Chess



The genteel atmosphere of London's Savoy Theatre will be shaken up in September as Britain's Nigel Short meets Azerbaijani Gary Kasparov to decide the world chess title—and the small sum of £1.7m in prize money. Or at least the world chess title according to the Professional Chess Association—whose two members just happen to be Short and Kasparov. Meanwhile, over in the Netherlands, Jan Timman and Anatoly Karpov will be playing for the 'official' chess title as sanctioned by the International Chess Federation (Fide).

Even by the Byzantine standards of chess politics the current rumpus seems baffling in its complexity and sheer pig-headedness. Until a few months ago, both Kasparov and Short were leading members of Fide. Kasparov, the world champion, is acknowledged as one of the greatest players of all time. Short, the best player Britain has produced this century, had successfully negotiated the tortuous two-year route to the world championship final. Then Fide started to look for a venue for the championship. Manchester, seeking to boost its flagging Olympic bid, made a bid and Fide accepted. Short and Kasparov, outraged that they were not consulted and feeling that playing in Manchester was beneath their dignity, formed the breakaway PCA. Fide stripped them of their rankings, and organised an alternative final.

There is, of course, more to all this than simply pique and pride. 'Fide is a relic of the Cold War', says Raymond Keane. 'Its whole structure and its whole thinking is like the old USSR. It even has a central committee. The USSR has gone but Fide is still here. Campomanes [Fide's current president] is a dinosaur. He'd get a part in *Jurassic Park*. Camposaurus Rex.'

Keane is a chess grandmaster and close friend and confidant to Short. In the seventies he had a rating only slightly

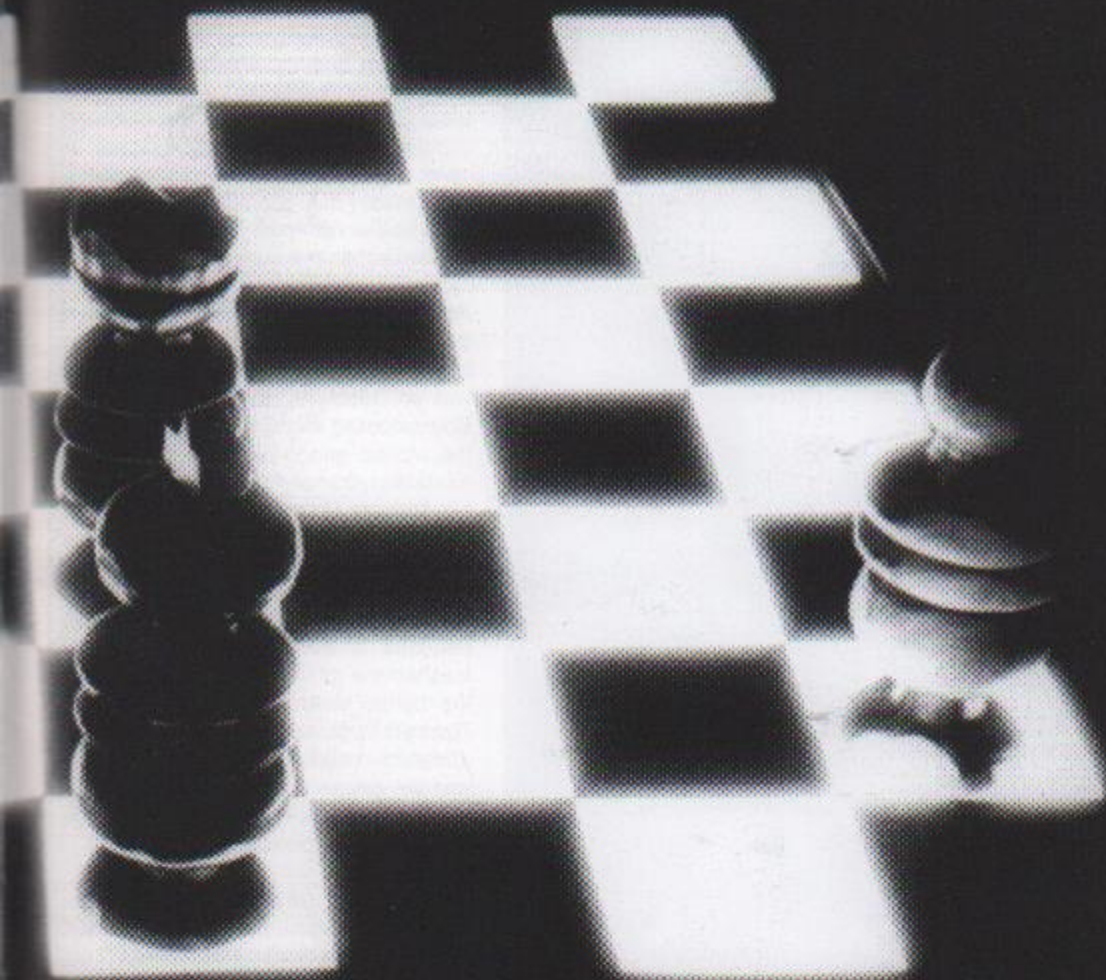
below that of Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky. He is now chess correspondent for the *Times* and has written some 80 books on chess ('a world record', he says proudly). He has also become a central player in the arcane world of chess politics, a Mr Fix-it of the chessboard.

To his critics, Keane is a cross between Arthur Daley and Macchiavelli. They accuse him of manipulating Short and Kasparov and of engineering the split with Fide for self-aggrandisement. Keane vehemently denies this. 'It was

Short and Kasparov who came to me', he says. 'It was their idea to have a fresh association. I was prepared to man the ship for them.'

Whatever the truth about Keane's role, his criticisms of Fide ring true. Fide has monopolised the chess world since 1924. Staid and conservative, it became a Cold War institution, a site for the intellectual struggle between East and West. Presidents were made or broken on the basis of intense diplomacy and complex alliances among chess bodies from the two superpowers and their allies.

pirates



After the Russian Revolution, Nikolai Krylenko, a former commissar for war, was appointed to promote chess as a weapon with which to demonstrate the intellectual superiority of the young Soviet state over the West. Chess became institutionalised as a part of the Soviet national culture under Stalin. Not only could chess demonstrate the prowess of the Soviet people, but it was cheap and labour intensive, even more so than other sports which came to play a similar political role in later years.

Meanwhile, in the USA, the search

began from the fifties for a player who could put the Soviets in their place, and demonstrate that market forces ruled supreme even on the chessboard. Washington's Cold War prayers were answered by Bobby Fischer, a chess prodigy who beat the Soviet champion Boris Spassky to take the world title in 1972. It was the match that above all else transformed the image of chess in the public mind.

Fischer, an ardent publicist for capitalism, became an overnight hero in the USA. Spassky lost favour with

the Soviet authorities, and in particular with president Leonid Brezhnev. Anatoly Karpov, who took the championship after Fischer in one of his eccentric fits refused to defend his title, became the Stalinist golden boy. Then in the eighties Kasparov emerged, as a favourite of president Mikhail Gorbachev. The rivalry between Karpov and Kasparov was billed as that between the old and new Soviet Union, between Stalinism and glasnost. (Kasparov's anti-communist ranting did not prevent Short, an ardent fan of Margaret Thatcher, from denouncing him as a Stalinist apparatchik up to the moment when the two joined forces against Fide—such is chess politics).

Keane blasts Fide for being out of touch with post-Cold War realities. 'We've seen the thesis, Fide, and the anti-thesis, the PCA, and before we see the synthesis, we're going through the upheaval which is historically inevitable, as I'm sure you'll appreciate', he says, deadpan. Thatcherism meets Hegelian philosophy.

So why, I asked Keane, is Britain relatively good at chess? Could it be that, like the old Soviet Union, Britain needs a game that is labour intensive at which to excel? Keane puts it all down instead to Britain's natural entrepreneurial spirit. 'There's something in the British psyche. We're very good at being buccaneers and pirates, and we're very good at being merchant bankers. Chess is very much like that, a sort of piracy of the mind, a sort of opportunism.' At least on the comparison between merchant bankers and pirates, I could not disagree.

The British economy might be going down the pan, but at least we can still play chess. 'The decline of manufacturing industry is probably an historical stage you have to go through to reach a new stage of development', says Keane. 'The wealth of the future will be created by other means: technology, communications, ideas, banking, leisure—thinking rather than making. The rise of chess and other thinking sports is inevitable because there's more leisure, because people are using their minds more.' Perhaps Kenneth Clarke should stop worrying about interest rates and productivity and just issue everyone with chess sets.

Some 20 years ago I played Nigel Short in the London *Evening Standard* chess tournament—and lost. Would Kasparov, I wondered, go one better? Keane is sure he knows the score. 'Kasparov', he says, 'will win by 13 points to eight. There will be seven wins to Kasparov, two to Short and 12 draws. The title will be decided at game 21 out of 24'. If this prediction turns out to be historically inevitable, remember you read it first in *Living Marxism*.

The good, the bad and the western

With a new series of spaghetti western videos on the market, Graham Barnfield reviews how the man with no name shot down the man in the white hat

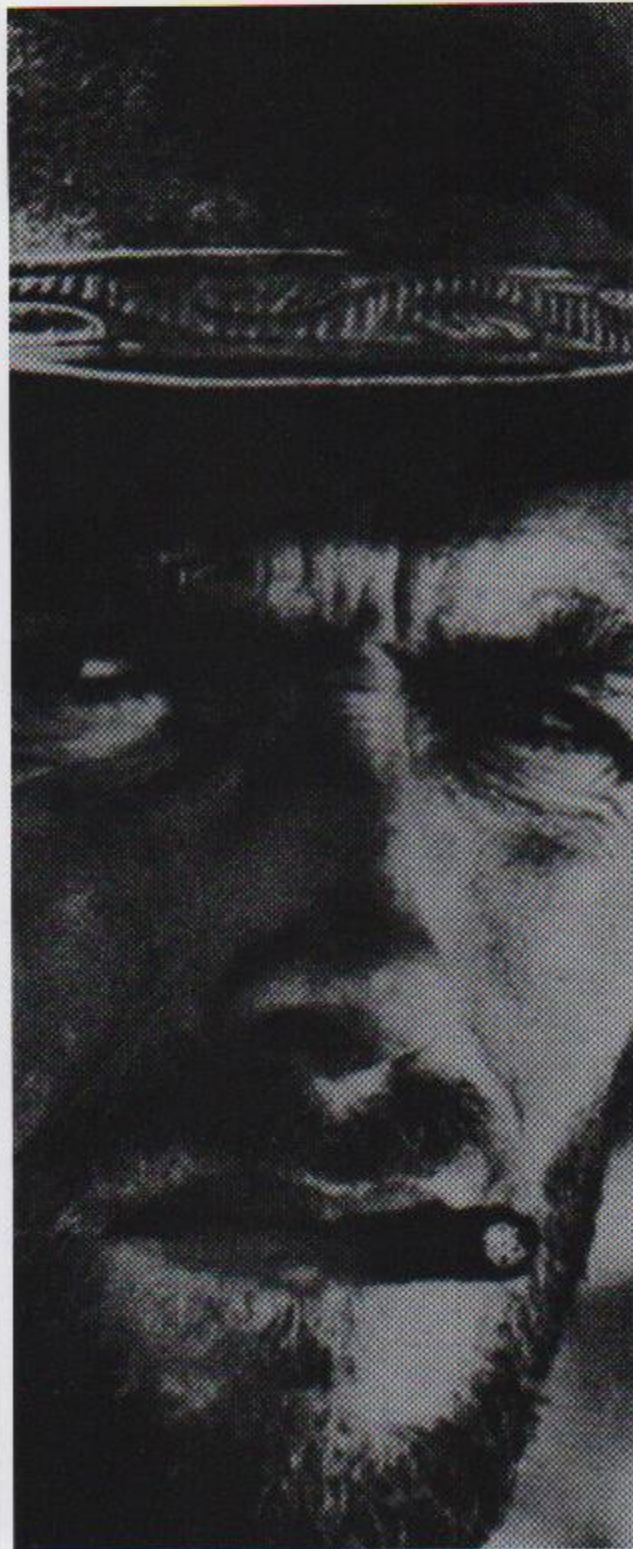
For years they were in the same league as Kung Fu films. Now they are treasured as cinema classics. The video release of a series of sixties' spaghetti westerns has been greeted with critical acclaim. The resurgence of the spaghetti western is testament to the decline of the traditional form.

The spaghetti western was born out of the clash between American and European cultures in the postwar years. In the forties and fifties Hollywood's output gained in appeal in Europe, especially in a country like Italy—anything seemed preferable to the decadent order that had brought Mussolini to power.

But the Hollywood connection proved ambiguous. While Marshall Aid dollars offered Rome's newest writers and directors a shot at film-making, many were repelled by American imperialism. Distaste for US harassment of Cuba and Vietnam gelled with an obsessive appreciation of the western, its aesthetics, its grim inner logic. Taking its cue from *The Magnificent Seven* (itself an Americanisation of Akira Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai*), and a fistful of other vaguely revisionist movies, the political western was born.

In contrast to the dream factory's output, directors like Sergio Leone presented the frontier as essentially amoral. Sure, the bad guys were really bad: the bandit chief in *For a Few Dollars More* pulls the legs off an insect to emphasise his wickedness. But the heroes were equally prepared to cut through swathes of men to get to their goal. In Leone's landscape there was no clear division between good and bad, just violence. His masterstroke was to cast Clint Eastwood, the cleancut character from the TV series, *Rawhide*, as the quintessential man with no name.

Leone's deconstruction of the traditional western won many admirers. But in the late sixties, a new generation of European directors sensed the shortcomings of Leone's critique of the frontier myth. It had been refreshing to see steely-eyed mercenaries replace white-hatted sheriffs, but there was a danger of replacing



one myth with another. Initially it seemed subversive to equate cowboys and bandits. But as national liberation struggles swept three continents such relativism seemed condescending and tokenistic. The new generation of directors wanted to take sides—to portray America's war in Vietnam and elsewhere as the continuation of genocide against native Indians and the slaughter that followed the declaration of war against Mexico in 1846. To directors like Sergio Corbucci, who made the notorious *Django*, the West was won by men, not as bad as, but far worse than the outlaws.

As the gunfights became political allegories, so the films became westerns in name only. To the Mexican peon there was no West, only an oppressive North. Counterposed to the suffering peasant is the wicked gringo capitalist. Spaghetts made it customary for the latter to meet his doom in front of an aggrieved mob.

The growing commercial success of spaghetti westerns, especially of Leone's dollar trilogy, ensured that Hollywood imported the cream of Italian directors to work in California. It also touched the growing disillusionment with the frontier myth within America itself. The traditional western had spawned the spaghetti version. Now the spaghetti western began to influence Hollywood's output. Spaghetti aesthetics became the norm, slowly unpicking the legend.

Through the seventies and eighties films like *High Plains Drifter* and *Pale Rider* borrowed repeatedly from Europe's 'opera of violence' until the main victim was the orthodox western itself. Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, one of last year's Hollywood highlights, confirmed that the western could no longer be seen as synonymous with American greatness. The irony of Eastwood's dedication of *Unforgiven* to Sergio Leone would not have been lost on either man. It was an acknowledgement that the man who rejuvenated the western also helped to bury it in its traditional form. ●

Aktiv's *Spaghetti Western Collection* is now available. Price £12.99 each



Crimetime news

Nick Ross—the king of the curtain twitchers—is back with a new show, *Crime Limited*. His last series, *Crimewatch UK*, aimed to create a generation of super-citizens who would report all strange goings on; jot down the numbers of stolen cars in their Letts Crimebuster diaries, and keep an eye open for anyone resembling last night's photofit.

Crime Limited is slightly different. Every week there is an item called 'Landmark cases' in which the sort of actors who normally only get the 'screaming victim of industrial accident' parts in *Casualty* act out great scenes from legal history. There are updates on developments in forensic science and crime prevention. It looks at first like background knowledge for the Homewatch zealot. It has a Teach Yourself feel to it. But why teach yourself if you trust the experts?

Crime Limited, though still addressed to the paranoid home-owner, is no longer the voice of the police groupie. The week I watched it, the forensic breakthrough was about a sex killing that took the cops 13 years (and a lot more sex killings) to solve. And the 'Landmark case' was about a West Midlands fit up. Ross himself is on record as a critic of the government's record on law and order. Where *Crimewatch* was for the Homewatch, *Crime Limited* is for the posse.

The news has been full of vigilantes this month, the most celebrated being the 'Village vigilantes' who kidnapped a teenager for nicking motorbikes. Their actions are usually linked with the recent 'white people have had enough' premise of movies like *Falling Down*. The nightmare scenario of an unholy alliance between the police and the property owner seemed to be confirmed by the *Panorama* special on one case. *Panorama* found that the village bobbies, like the RUC, had leaked the name of the culprit who they (being the police) could not hope to convict, and stood back while the citizens did their worst. The twist was, of course, that the citizens got sent down for it.

The story that these incidents are usually made to tell is that of the police and citizens together trying to keep the peace but being let down by a judiciary which is soft on villains and hard on victims. 'If you go on the rob they'll never catch you, but if you "have a go" at a burglar then you'll be sent down', etc.

But a new story is starting to emerge now. The people of St Anne's in Bristol have become the *Jurassic Park* of the vigilante world. They were on *Panorama*, *World In Action*, and endless news features in all the media. They formed a residents' association which has hired a private security force (Nighthawk) to patrol its streets and which is now thinking of putting in a video surveillance system. At first sight this might seem like a logical extension of Homewatch. In fact it is the opposite.

The St Anne's project is not supplementary to the police; it is instead of the police. The members are not lining up with the state

in the fight against the underclass or single mothers or whoever is the latest panic. They are not preventing crime, but moving it on, away from their street and into the next one. It is not public spirited. It does not take the 'public' as such into account. It is by and for the residents only.

We are used to seeing—and approving of—this sort of organisation in groups that the state has written off. For instance, the police refusal to admit the existence of race attacks, leads to the formation of community based protection mechanisms. But the people of St Anne's are the very people the government sets out to represent. They are the 'Property owning democracy' and suddenly they are as alienated and disaffected as a gang of teenage car thieves.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of this development. In classical British constitutional theory, the deal is roughly that you surrender your 'natural rights' (eg, the right to hit him if he hits you) in return for legal rights (eg, the right to have him locked up if he hits you). The basis of the state, its *raison d'être*, is the protection of property and the maintenance of order. The very basis of citizenship is allowing due process of law to take its course. This is why the act of revenge excites us so much.

Revenge is the most forceful assertion of the individual against the social order. People who avenge themselves, who take the law into

their own hands, assert their individuality in a basic, primal way. They become in a sense pre-social beings, like tooled up children. That's why all the big revenge stories—from *Hanley* to *Shane*—end with the avenger either moving on or being killed. Heroes who overstay their welcome are called dictators.

Violence is a highly specialised activity and any political process that is driven by violence will eventually leave power in the hands of the specialists. It is the antithesis of democracy. One of the big

modern heroes is the maverick cop—whether it's Regan or Dirty Harry. This figure is an attempt to resolve within one person the tension between the social and the individual. The perfect balance is achieved, I suppose, at the end of each episode of *Scooby Doo*, where Shaggy, Scooby and the rest deliver the bad guy (usually disguised as a ghost) into the hands of the police. The bad guy says 'tsk, tsk, if it hadn't been for those pesky kids...'. The heroic citizen's function is merely to inform.

The fact that the *Scooby Doo* option no longer exists is perfectly demonstrated by the case of Clive Stone. One night recently Mr Stone—a homeless person sleeping rough in London—saw a car come squealing round the corner with a teenage thief behind the wheel. Thinking quickly, he threw the cardboard box in which he was living at the time, against the windscreen of the car. It crashed into a wall and stopped. 'I didn't want it to go on and kill someone', said Citizen Stone. Then the police arrived and arrested Mr Stone. He is now on remand for obstructing the traffic. The car thief, of course, got away. ●

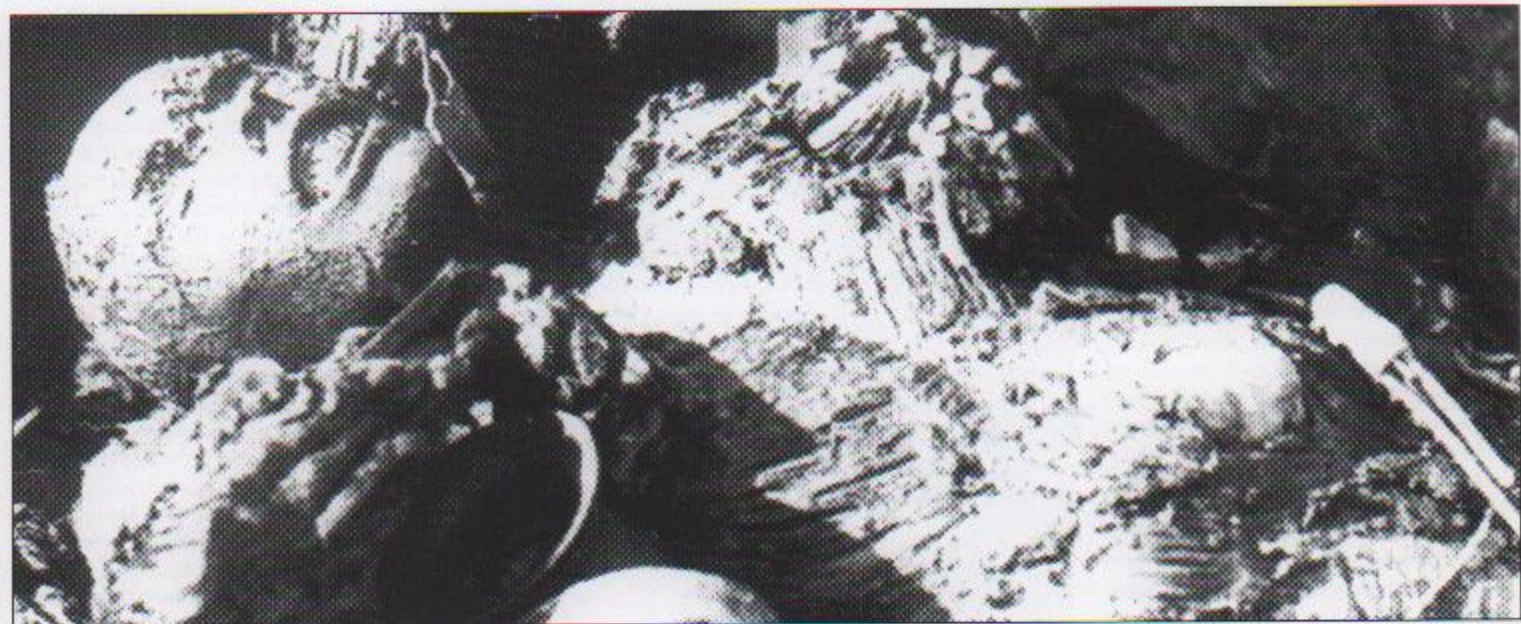
The people of St Anne's have become the *Jurassic Park* of the vigilante world

Kayode Olafimihan on a book that reveals the truth behind the images of war that we are allowed to see



Censored in the USA: (above, left-right) Severed head of a Japanese soldier in Burma; American corpses being piled on to a truck, 1945; captured Japanese troops; (below) American serviceman killed on board ship in the Philippines, 1944

The true picture?



The *Censored War* is a timely book. George Roeder's well-researched and finely illustrated book is a detailed account of how the US authorities manipulated and censored images of both friend and foe during the Second World War, to help win public backing for the war effort. But the book is not simply history. As the Gulf War, the conflict in Yugoslavia and Operation Restore Hope in Somalia show, the manipulation of images remains a key aspect of militarism today.

There is another reason, too, why the book is important. As Roeder observes, the Second World War remains an event of key importance to the political elite today because it is widely regarded as a time when 'America was on the right side'. Hence politicians and historians, advertisers and teachers, film-makers and novelists, will continue to call on...the message of World War Two to bolster

their authority, support their causes, and offer moral guidance'. The British establishment relies even more on Second World War images to 'bolster their authority' today.

Roeder shows that the idea of the war as a crusade of the good against evil was manufactured by the public relations machine. Because of public scepticism about overt propaganda the US government promoted a 'strategy of truth'. Instead of prettified images of comic strip heroism they simply suppressed information or presented it in a partial way. The American people were allowed to see no images of racial conflict among US soldiers or fights between GIs and their allies, and none of the results of US chemical experiments or civilian victims of Allied bombing.

The US authorities had few scruples, however, when it came to the demonisation of the enemy, particularly the

Japanese. In the 1945 film *Action at Anguar*, produced by the War Department, footage of Japanese soldiers being burned alive was accompanied by the following voiceover: 'By this time we had shot, blasted, or cooked 600 of the little apes.' Even the supposedly more sophisticated Office of War Information had this to say in 1944: 'The Japanese should be described as brutal, but not as slimy; cruel rather than bestial; tough and wanton instead of toothy; scheming, fanatical and ruthless rather than rat-like, yellow, and slant-eyed.'

Fifty years on, instead of scheming, fanatical, ruthless Japs, we have vicious Serb rapists and degenerate Somali warlords. The enemy might be different today, but demons they remain. ●

George H Roeder Jnr, *The Censored War: The American Visual Experience during World War Two*, Yale University Press, £19.95 hbk

MARXIST

REVIEW OF BOOKS

Charles Longford explains the confusion and demoralisation that has followed America's Cold War triumph

America's Pyrrhic victory

Around the Cragged Hill: A Personal and Political Philosophy, George F Kennan, Norton, £16.50 hbk

Seize the Moment: America's Challenge in a One-Superpower World, Richard Nixon, Simon & Schuster, £19.99 hbk

A Cold Peace: America, Japan, Germany and the Struggle for Supremacy, Jeffrey E Garten, Times Books, \$22 hbk

The Consequences of the Peace: The New Internationalism and American Foreign Policy, James Chace, Oxford University Press, £15 hbk

Forty-six years ago, George F Kennan, architect of America's postwar foreign policy, wrote a famous article, under the pseudonym 'X', entitled 'The sources of Soviet conduct' (*Foreign Affairs*, July 1947). The article advocated the containment of the Soviet Union in order to 'promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power'. When the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989 and, along with it, the Soviet Union, it was with apparent justification that many Western foreign policy experts congratulated Kennan for having finally had his Cold War policy thoroughly vindicated.

Kennan's new memoir *Around the Cragged Hill* provides a personal and political insight into the man whom many regard as the sage of America's post-Second World War foreign policy success.

The title comes from the poet John Donne's Satyre III—the image of Truth standing on a huge hill, cragged and steep, about which he who would reach Truth must go. In a lucid and patient response to scholars who he notes have laboured to extract from his writings over the years 'something resembling a coherent personal and political philosophy', Kennan circles around a variety of topics that are important to him. Despite the fact that he has little to say directly about the Cold War, his skirting of the craggy mountain of America today reveals truths that many of his supporters will have difficulty accepting. What Kennan exposes, in direct opposition to those who trumpet the end of the Soviet Union as proof of American greatness, is that far from scaling the heights of craggy mountains, America is stuck in a swirling creek below without a paddle.

The man who is held responsible for the defeat of the Soviet Union is very sombre about the America that won the Cold War. Forty-six years ago, in the conclusion to his seminal 'X' article, Kennan described the Cold War as

'a test of the overall worth of the United States as a nation among nations'. Moreover, he argued back then that there was no cause for complaint:

'[The] thoughtful observer...will rather experience a certain gratitude to a Providence which, by providing the American people with this implacable challenge, has made their entire security as a nation dependent on their pulling themselves together and accepting the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history plainly intended them to bear.'

However, 46 years later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kennan's conclusions belie any notion of America having successfully accepted its weighty responsibility to history. Instead he concludes that the post-Cold War era marks 'something close to a major crisis in the life of the nation. In the question as to whether this deficiency can be corrected, it is nothing less than the adequacy of our form of government to meet the unprecedented challenges of the modern age that is at stake' (p248).

Kennan suggests that the 'major crisis in the life of the nation' today is at least as great as that of the past. However, this time Kennan does not tell Americans to thank Providence for providing them with such a historic challenge. On the contrary, he emphatically rejects any and all 'messianic concepts of America's role in the world: rejecting, that is, the image of ourselves as teachers and redeemers to the rest of humanity, rejecting the illusions of unique and superior virtue on our part, the prattle about Manifest Destiny or the "American Century"' (p182). And to cap it all, the architect of global containment ends by advocating a 'very modest and restrained foreign policy...far less pretentious in word and deed than the ones we have been following in recent years. It means, in particular, a rejection of the ►

tempting but fatuous assumption that we can find, in our relations with other countries or other parts of the world, relief from the painful domestic confrontations with ourselves' (p183).

According to Kennan, the 'painful domestic confrontation' America has to make will involve an attack on all the things that were supposed to make America great: democracy, freedom and the individual pursuit of happiness. Kennan's America is a nation fatally wounded by

Kennan sees democracy and even the market as the source of America's problems

modern tendencies—unbridled technology, the cults of consumerism and growth, by the proliferation of cities, by the spread of bureaucracy, by the overfondness of bigness, and by the overdoing of egalitarianism.

In his chapter on 'The addictions', Kennan castigates the national infatuation with the car, television and advertising. Most American conservatives would probably share Kennan's nostalgia for the past in which people lived in the countryside, walked in forests, read books, travelled on railroads, employed domestic servants and inhabited separate cultural and ethnic communities (seeing no 'intrinsic virtue in the melting pot'). But it is when allotting blame for the 'nation being seriously out of control' that Kennan says out loud what most conservatives would prefer kept quiet.

For Kennan, the common element of all of America's difficulties is that they are 'long-term problems rather than short-term ones'. It is the failure of modern democracy, which he contends is ill-equipped to deal with long-term problems because voters demand short-term benefits. He goes even further in blaming what he calls 'unbridled free enterprise' and the indifference of public authority to advertisers who have no 'public commitment, educational, intellectual, aesthetic, or otherwise' (p159). Indeed, in his epilogue, Kennan goes so far as to argue for 'limits...beyond which free enterprise should not be permitted to go, and that it is the duty of the government to make those limits clear and to insist on their observance' (p252).

This is a theme Kennan had begun to develop even before the Cold War ended. In the spring of 1987, for example, he wrote in an article, 'Containment then and now', that 'the first thing we Americans need to learn to contain is, in some ways, ourselves' (*Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1987). In *Around the Cragged Hill*, Kennan is less restrained. His solution is, as he admits quite freely, 'unrepentant elitism' (p133).

'If we are to have a hope of emerging successfully from the great social bewilderments of this age', he points out, (unlike last time when Americans as a whole

were urged to rise to the task), then 'the weight must be laid predominantly upon the spiritual, moral, and intellectual shaping of the individual with a view to the development of his qualities for leadership, rather than on the prospects for unaided self-improvement on the part of leaderless masses'. And it is within this elite that the material must be found for Kennan's proposed Council of State—an advisory body drawn from a national pool of outstanding persons, which would be charged with addressing national problems freed from the exigencies of party or electoral politics. Thus it could ensure that government followed through the resolution of 'long-term' problems, without worrying about public opinion.

Here Kennan presents the exact opposite of what his most fervent supporters would have us believe about America's victory in the Cold War. Where people like Arthur Schlesinger argue that American democracy and its free market ethos destroyed 'Marxist totalitarianism', Kennan sees democracy and even the market as the source of America's current problems. Far from presenting these American institutions as universal for all to emulate, he calls for their restriction. Where most establishment thinkers present the end of the Cold War as a victory, Kennan sees it differently. He describes the world which 'appears to be devoid of anything that could be seen as a major great-power enemy of this country' as a 'problem for which few of us are prepared' (p180).

Kennan's fears about the lack of a worthy opponent for America are almost as remarkable as his criticism of democracy and unbridled free enterprise. Throughout the Cold War years, the world apparently lived under the threat of nuclear annihilation. You might imagine that the lifting of this threat to America would be welcomed with relief and celebration. Instead, *Around the Cragged Hill* echoes with pessimism and disillusionment.

In attempting to describe the post-Cold War malaise of American society, Kennan unwittingly puts his finger on an uncomfortable truth about American capitalism and Western societies in general. What he describes is a slump-ridden society which no longer has the Soviet system to look good against. Robbed of the Soviet Union, America now has to stand on its own merits—an exercise in which Kennan has revealed it to be severely wanting. His disillusionment with American values, like his rejection of their universality and international applicability, simply exposes the fact that whatever resonance they had in the past relied upon the contrast with 'totalitarian communism'. The problem for America today is not the advertising which Kennan lambasts, but the loss of the Soviet system which acted as the best advert for capitalism, endowing the West with much needed legitimacy.

Kennan's bleak vision reveals the embarrassing truth that the ending of the Cold War has robbed America of a precious mechanism for promoting a positive self-image. When Kennan discovers there is little to be positive about today, this is not because he has not looked hard enough, or because he has looked in the wrong place. It is because there is nothing inherently positive about Western society. This is why Kennan can only see the end of the Cold War as a problem. By exposing the malaise in American society, America's victory has been revealed to have been a Pyrrhic one.

While *Around the Cragged Hill* concentrates on the consequences of the end of the Cold War for America's domestic malaise, the ending of the Cold War presents a similar problem for America's foreign policy today. It was inevitable that the collapse of the Soviet Union would provoke a debate in the West about the implications for the future of international relations. It was inevitable, too, that the debate would be most sharply focused in America, the leader of and inspiration behind the postwar Western alliance.

James Schlesinger, former secretary of defence and CIA director, has written that 'with the end of the Cold War...the United States has lost the magnetic north for calibrating its foreign policy' ('Quest for a post-Cold War foreign policy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol72 No1, 1993, p17). Schlesinger was highlighting the fact that not only America, but the whole Western world had lost its foreign policy. The problematic question posed by these events was more than simply how to establish a new 'magnetic north for calibrating foreign policy', but what position an economically weakened America would occupy in any New World Order.

It is the quest to find the new 'magnetic north for calibrating foreign policy' which has come to occupy the minds of America's foreign policy experts, policy-makers and academics. Jeffrey E Garten, a managing director of the Blackstone Group who has held senior posts in the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations, argues in *A Cold Peace*, for example, how easily serious

insist that the world takes orders on how to run the global economy, nor impose an international *Pax Americana*. He sees a new global balance of power coming into being, within which America would have to abandon any pretence to being the only superpower. Chace's call for a new 'American internationalism' ends up with a similar message to that of Kennan and Garten: that America's ability to play an essential leadership role in the New World Order will depend upon repairing its economy. But just how that can be achieved remains as elusive as ever.

Former president Richard Nixon, on the other hand, has little doubt about America's role in the world. He sees international conflict remaining a fact of life which by definition gives America its global duty. Being the most powerful military power on Earth means America will continue to have a leadership role. Where Chace, Garten and others see economic revival as part of America's future security, Nixon insists that the goal of US policy must now be the expansion of freedom. Invoking that which Kennan explicitly rejects, Nixon argues that America now has 'a moral imperative to use (its) awesome capabilities as the world's only superpower to promote freedom and justice'. A Nixon-style 'moral' foreign policy would mean a bullish assertion of American power in the third world, such as you might expect from the man who carpet-bombed Vietnam and Cambodia in the name of freedom throughout his ill-fated presidency.

Seize the Moment illustrates one of the more confusing aspects of America's foreign policy debate—the ease with which people switch from dove to hawk and back again. Nixon's own foreign policy under Henry Kissinger was famous for its pragmatism. In contrast to the Kennedy and Johnson years of hawkish challenge to the Soviet bloc, Nixon pursued a policy of detente. Today, however, Nixon sounds uncharacteristically principled for someone who was forced out of office for bugging his opponent's offices in the 1972 elections. Kennan, meanwhile, along with many conservatives, now counsels a more cautious foreign policy, while younger liberals are at the forefront of demands for a pro-active foreign policy, a 'New Internationalism'. Beneath the policy confusion lies a real uncertainty about America's role in a post-Cold War world.

In fact the malaise is even worse. As the protagonists in the debate have attempted to discover something that will cohere the international system and give America a leading role within it, so further divisions have appeared. What began as a triumphant discussion about America's ascendancy has produced bitter acrimony and an end to the old anti-communist consensus.

Kennan and his colleagues will find that the absence of the Stalinist system in 1993 makes all attempts to regenerate American foreign policy elusive. What *Around the Cragged Hill* shows is that America and the West only temporarily resolved the malaise within their own societies when they could rely upon their sworn enemies' system to give them some purpose. These books should be read by those who are concerned about the dangerous drift of international relations, and who wish to gain an insight into the depth of the problems facing the Western elites today.

Beneath the policy confusion lies a real uncertainty about America's role in the post-Cold War world

frictions can arise between Germany, Japan and the USA and how difficult it will be for them to retain their cooperation in the absence of the Cold War. 'The roots of the world as we have known it are being pulled up', resulting in 'the forces of divisiveness, not of cooperation...gaining momentum' (p45).

While he sees little hope for Japan or Germany taking responsibility for international affairs, which by default allows America to retain its global position, Garten, like Kennan, believes the priority is for America to deal with its domestic economic weaknesses and social problems. But while Garten can easily assert that a strong America at home will renew America abroad, he is as silent as the other experts on the question of how the decades of capitalist stagnation in the USA can suddenly be reversed.

In *The Consequences of the Peace*, Professor James Chace of Bard College, the former managing editor of *Foreign Affairs*, recognises that America can no longer

May the Lord in His Mercy Be Kind to Belfast,
Tony Parker, Jonathan Cape, £16.99 hbk

This is a book you cannot put down. Despite Tony Parker's off-putting description of himself as a 'middle-class English agnostic pacifist', his chosen style of letting his 64 interviewees tell their own stories makes for a powerful read. Parker's professed aim is to counter the inaccurate media coverage of Northern Ireland by allowing the ordinary people of Belfast to have their voices heard 'for the first time'.

The polarisation of Belfast society is clear. Everyone identifies themselves in relation to the national question. People live in Protestant or Catholic areas. Many Protestants profess never to have met a Catholic and vice versa. In his introduction Parker describes the tell-tale signs: 'Someone who's given his dog a Scottish name is bound to be a Protestant...someone pressing you to convey the positive side of life in Northern Ireland is probably Protestant middle-class.'

There's plenty here to assist those who see the war as a conflict between British imperialism and Irish national liberation. Not least the admissions by Loyalist paramilitary groups that they regularly receive information and weapons from the British security forces and the statement from the Royal Ulster Constabulary that they are engaged in a war. One IRA volunteer tells Parker, 'you don't join the IRA for the same reasons soldiers join your army, like a settled career, good money and good housing. Those are the things you give up when you join the IRA'.

'Everyone's a story, eh Tony, aren't they for sure?', asks Eamon Collins, a republican. 'And depending on who's telling it, it'll look different in different ways.' Collins' comment sums up the problem with Parker's book. It cannot see the wood for the trees. Concentrating exclusively upon individual experiences, taken out of their wider context, leaves the substantial questions about the causes of the war and the potential resolutions unanswered.

Giving a voice to both sides of the divide does little to shed light on the causes of division or indeed the means of overcoming it. The British media's enthusiastic reception for Parker's book reflects the current vogue for presenting the Irish War as a religious feud defying rational explanation.

Fiona Foster

Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War, and US Political Culture, Noam Chomsky, Verso, £9.95 pbk, £29.95 hbk

Veteran anti-war campaigner Noam Chomsky's *Rethinking Camelot* demolishes the myth that president John F Kennedy would have pulled America out of the Vietnam war but for his assassination in 1963. The myth of Kennedy's secret wish to end the war was the story of Oliver Stone's three hour-long paranoia epic *JFK*. In Stone's telling America's Central Intelligence Agency got wind of the president's plans and had him killed.

JFK summed up the nostalgia for a lost idealism of the Kennedy era, thwarted by the conspiratorial efforts of America's military-industrial complex. If only Kennedy had lived, the argument goes, America would have been saved the anguish and lost innocence of the Vietnam War.

Chomsky traces back the origins of the withdrawal myth principally to Democratic Party historian Arthur Schlesinger who, in his 1978 biography of the late president's brother Robert, has John Kennedy taking advice from Douglas MacArthur that it would be a "mistake" to fight in South-east Asia'. As Chomsky points out, this was a judgement that Schlesinger did not advance in his memoir of John Kennedy's administration, *1000 Days*, where we read '1962 had not been a bad year...aggression checked in Vietnam'. And this was a description of America's escalation of the war against Vietnam.

Chomsky meticulously traces the actual policy statements of the Kennedy administration to show that there is no evidence of any secret plan or even desire on Kennedy's part to withdraw. On the contrary all evidence points to a determination to pursue whatever course was necessary to win.

Most pointedly Chomsky overturns the traditional view of the war as being led by the military and opposed by the liberal wing of the Democratic Party and the media. *Rethinking Camelot* provides ample evidence that the media and the Democratic Party were overwhelmingly in favour of escalation at a time when many military advisors, like MacArthur, counselled caution.

Only after the Viet Cong's spectacular successes in the Tet Offensive of 1968, when it seemed that the Americans would lose, did the media and the liberal wing of the party criticise US involvement. Until that point, liberals like the Kennedys and Arthur Schlesinger, as well as the US press corps, outstripped even the generals in their demands for a decisive victory in Vietnam.

Lynn Rawley

The Revolt Against Change: Towards a Conserving Radicalism, Trevor Blackwell and Jeremy Seabrook, Vintage, £5.99 pbk

'We began to wonder if the reason why parties advocating radical change were so unsuccessful was because they were striking against the resistance of people who had changed, who had been compelled to change, too much.'

With that thought, former radicals Jeremy Seabrook, a contributor to the *New Statesman and Society*, and Trevor Blackwell adopt the mantle of conservatism. Indeed they criticise conservatives for having sold out to change, disrupting ordinary communities in the name of economic progress.

'We are all abused children', they write, 'injured by the longing for permanence, stability and continuity, whereas our experience is all of separation, dissolution and disruption'.

Cut the apron strings, you big sissies.
James Heartfield



NEW
**CAMPAIGN
AGAINST
MILITARISM**
T-SHIRTS

Single size extra large £8
plus 80p postage and packing

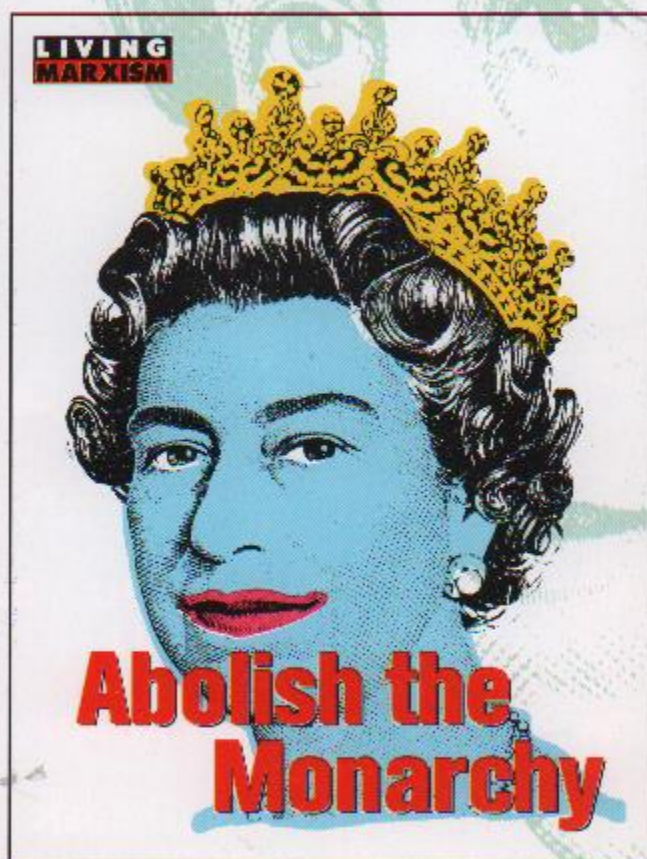
Available in burgundy and cream
on grey t-shirt and marine blue and
cream on white t-shirt. Please state
preference when ordering.

Make cheques payable to
Campaign Against Militarism.
Send to CAM, PO Box 469,
Sheffield S8 0QZ

Abolish the Monarchy t-shirts

**Single size extra large
t-shirt £8 plus 80p
postage and packing**
Black, red, blue and yellow on white

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



SISTA ROSA

DEBUT SINGLE

WORLD GONE CRAZY



Photography by Sheyi Antony Banks

OUT ON RELEASE AUGUST 23RD

LIVE DATES

- | | | | |
|------|----|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| AUG | 29 | FESTIVAL OF THE SUN | NORFOLK |
| | 29 | THE BREEDON BAR | BIRMINGHAM |
| SEPT | 7 | CAMPAIGN AGAINST MILITARISM PROTEST | |
| | | TURNMILLS | CLERKENWELL ROAD, LONDON |
| | 14 | THE ROCK GARDEN | COVENT GARDEN, LONDON |
| | 19 | THE GARAGE | HIGHBURY AND ISLINGTON, LONDON |

Infekshus Records