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TO BE IRISH ON

ST PATRICK'S DAY

# LM98

The mag ITN tried to gag

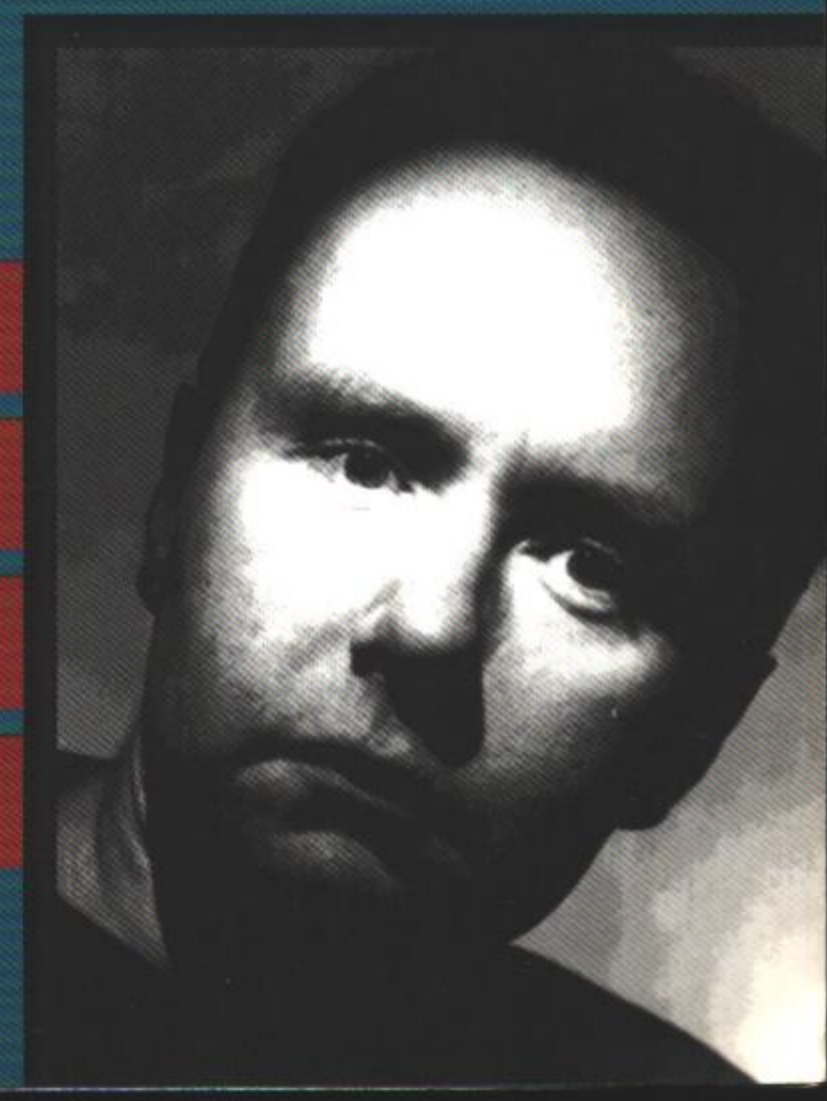


**BOSNIA**



# 'GOOD LIES' MAKE BAD NEWS

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the  
**TRUTH**  
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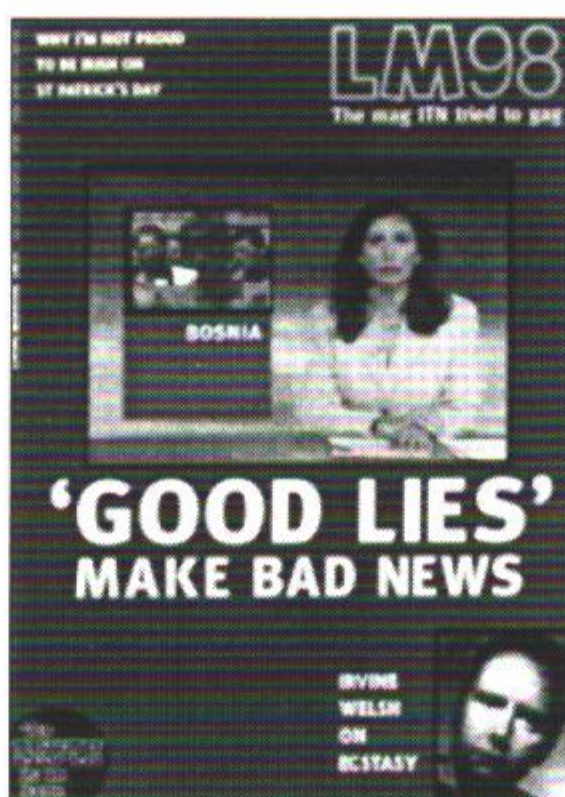
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## THE MAG ITN WANTS TO GAG

ITN is using the libel laws to try to silence *LM* magazine. This is an unprecedented attack on press freedom by a media giant. But the battle has only just begun.

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# LM 98

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## THE PICTURE THAT FOOLED THE WORLD

February's issue of *LM*, which ITN tried to have pulped, contains Thomas Deichmann's investigation into their award-winning pictures of a Bosnian camp. It has been one our best-ever sellers—but there are still a few available

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# MICK HUME

Editor



# 'GOOD LIES' MAKE BAD NEWS

ITN HAS USED GAGGING ORDERS AND libel writs to try to silence *LM* magazine, after our February exposé of their award-winning reports on a Bosnian camp (full story, p16). The row over those world-shaking ITN pictures has helped kick off a wider debate about who is making the news—and how.

For the half century since the propaganda excesses of the Second World War, Western journalists have denounced media organisations which serve as government 'lie machines' in the Soviet Union or South Africa. In the liberal mind, distorting the news to suit a political agenda has become part of the 'Orwellian nightmare' of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

We are all rightly outraged whenever the truth is turned into a negotiable commodity to be bought, sold or stolen in the service of powerful interests. By and large, however, such corruption has been seen as something that goes on 'over there'; British journalists have prided themselves on their objective, professional reporting.

It was disturbing, then, to see the way in which such a distinguished television journalist as Kate Adie was criticised by BBC bosses last year for the 'inappropriate' tone of her reports from Dunblane. It appears that Ms Adie's mistake was to assume she was covering a news story, and that her job was to broadcast the hard facts about the shooting dead of 16 school children and their teacher. What the BBC required, however, was less a clinical report about the dead and injured and more a moral parable about evil and innocence. The Kate Adie affair showed how the mood is changing in the media. The reporter's rulebook is being rewritten, as different news values are encouraged and journalistic standards are revised.

There is a growing trend for journalists and editors to justify putting a particular moral slant on a story. It seems that the facts are

no longer the only factor to consider when deciding what to report. Instead there is now a powerful notion that there can be a Bigger Truth involved in a story, bigger than the simple truth of who, where, what and when. Most disturbing of all is the new inference that journalists might justifiably report less than the full facts if, in their moral judgement, it will serve the cause of that Bigger Truth.

A stark example of this came up last summer, when a leading commentator in the national media expressed his public support for the concept of the 'Good Lie'.

In June 1996 official figures revealed that, outside of the high-risk groups, only 161 people

had ever contracted Aids through heterosexual intercourse in the UK. A gay group spokesman then admitted that they had deliberately helped to inflate the threat to heterosexuals, in order to attract support for the anti-Aids campaign. The right-wing press ranted about millions of pounds of government money being wasted on futile advertising campaigns promoting 'safe sex' for all.

Mark Lawson, *Guardian* columnist and host of BBC 2's *Late Review*, took a different view. 'The government has lied', he wrote, 'and I am glad' ('Icebergs and rocks of the "good" lie', *Guardian*, 24 June 1996). Lawson's point was that, yes, people had been bombarded with misinformation about Aids. But so what? He believed that the effect of this dishonesty had been positive, because it had helped to popularise condoms and sexual restraint, planting in young people's minds 'the nagging second thought about casual intercourse'.

'Philosophy, theology and problem pages have fretted for centuries about the possibility of a "good lie"', Lawson concluded: 'Well, here was one.' Trying to get people to obey your wishes by scaring them with lies would once have been considered the practice of foreign tyrants. Yet today it is championed by a pillar of the liberal British media.

Such upfront public endorsements of the 'Good Lie' are still rare. But the spirit of Lawson's stance on Aids—the belief that there are circumstances in which facts might be made subservient to a Bigger Truth—is seeping into other aspects of journalism. Which brings us to the discussion of war reporting, and the reac-

## It seems that the facts can now be

tions to *LM*'s revelations about ITN's Bosnian camp pictures.

POST-BOSNIA, THE FASHIONABLE VIEW is that war journalists cannot be neutral reporters, but have a duty to side with the angels. Martin Bell, veteran BBC war reporter, is the most prominent voice to argue against the tradition of 'detached and dispassionate, clinical neutral... "bystander's journalism"' in conflict situations.

Since Bosnia, says Bell, war reporters are 'no longer spectators, but participants...and it is only natural, in the face of such suffering, to take the side of the victims'. 'I do not believe we should stand neutrally between good and evil', he concludes, 'My answer is what I call the journalism of attachment, journalism which cares as well as knows'.

Martin Bell is no supporter of lies, 'good' or otherwise. He believes in 'the sacredness of fact'.

He has accused those who simply repeat Nato press releases of practising 'puppetry' rather than journalism, and has denounced the 'sheer mendacity' of some fraudulent British TV reports from the Balkans. But in proposing a 'journalism of attachment', Bell is opening a gateway into dangerous territory—one that others are ready to rush through.

When journalists see fit to appoint themselves as the judge of who is 'good' and who is 'evil', and suggest that they should 'take the side of the victims', the warning lights should start flashing. The role of objective reporter of fact sits uneasily with that of caring crusader and participant in a victim support group—or what Bell calls 'the something-must-be-done-club'.

Martin Bell has spoken with approval of changing the 'focus and tone' of war reporting, of making it 'a little bit more humanised and compassionate'. This theme has been taken up more stridently by those journalists, women and men alike, who in Bosnia and elsewhere have pioneered a more 'feminised' school of war reporting, one which declares that it is less interested in politics and armies than in 'people'.

Here we are entering a journalistic minefield, where emotions can easily overwhelm hard evidence, and a clear view of the bigger political forces shaping events can get lost beneath the weight of human interest stories. Human suffering is not hard to find on any side in

the Muslims, that most British reporters never met a single Serb throughout the conflict—and consequently, that he had difficulty getting the BBC to accept reports like his account of a bloody Muslim ambush of a Serb convoy. The facts did not fit in with the 'really simple' view of a Bosnia divided between Victimised Muslims and Evil Serbs; so the facts had to be wrong.

OR LISTEN TO WHAT IAN WILLIAMS, ONE of the ITN reporters now suing *LM* for libel, once said about the world media's feverish reaction to the famous Bosnian camp pictures: 'In a sense, it's almost the power of the image going two steps ahead of the proof that went with them.' Presumably the world's press corps did not wait for the proof before screaming 'death camps!' because they were already predisposed to see the Bosnian Serbs as the new Nazis. The pictures told them the story they wanted to believe.

The danger implicit in the nineties approach to war reporting has been made explicit in the reaction to *LM*'s story about those ITN pictures. In this discussion, the journalism of attachment meets the notion of the 'Good Lie'.

As we have tried to get a hearing for our story, and ITN has gone all-out to impose a media blockade on it, there have been heated debates among reporters and editors about how

the means, the final goal legitimises the 'Good Lie'. Where does that argument end up? Where do we draw the line? Would it be alright to plant a few 'specific' dead bodies in order to get world opinion to accept 'the Greater Truth'? If not, why not?

At *LM* magazine, we have no problem with the principle of people taking sides in any conflict. As I have said before, *LM* tends to be a partisan publication itself. It is one thing, however, for people to take a stand according to what they believe to be true. It is quite another for them to pick and choose their facts in order to support a 'Greater Truth' that is founded more on unquestioning emotional attachments and 'really simple' moral convictions than on the complexities of the real world.

One issue on which *LM* has never taken sides is the civil war in former Yugoslavia. The magazine which I edit is now accused, among many things, of being pro-Serb. But I have no attachment of any kind to Serbia, Croatia or Bosnia. They are, as somebody once said, far away countries of which I know little—at least not first-hand. What I do have, however, is a powerful attachment to the truth as I understand it.

Of course, nobody should be naive about the war reporting of the past. It has always been 'cooked' to serve a cause. *LM* was among the first to challenge the Anglo-American

## ignored in the service of 'the Greater Truth'

a war. It can make moving news reports. But it cannot make sense of what is happening, or why.

Andrej Gustinic of Reuters has revealed the limitations of adopting what you consider to be the victims' point of view: 'The political context just seems so irrelevant when you're out in the field....because you're watching human beings. Whether you want to or not, you become what is called a colour writer, because you become involved in events, you care about the people, you're scared a lot of the time. You don't think about the political context, or your political views become really simple.'

There is always a danger that journalists and editors with some kind of attachment in a conflict will end up seeing what they want or expect to see, rather than all that is really there. In his account of reporting in Bosnia (*In Harms's Way*, 1996) Martin Bell himself notes that many journalists clearly sided with

to respond. A central argument which has been mobilised against *LM*'s story by senior figures in the world of newspapers and television has been that Thomas Deichmann's 'specific' evidence, which shows those pictures are not all that they seem, counts for little when set against 'the Greater Truth of Bosnia'.

What is really being said here? It is that, even if the *LM* article is right (and most journalists concede that all of the evidence about the barbed wire fence at Trnopolje camp supports our case), it does not really matter. The 'specific' facts—the true picture—can be ignored in the service of the 'Greater Truth', which is presumably that the Serbs were the baddies who needed to be taught a lesson.

In other words, the way in which the entire world was fooled by the ITN pictures is justified, because the result was to swing international opinion further in favour of Western intervention against the Serbs. The ends justify

myths of the 1991 Gulf War, like the tale of how Iraqi troops dumped imaginary Kuwaiti babies out of non-existent incubators. (I suppose the fact that we nailed media lies about Iraqi Islamicists during that war means that *LM* must be part of a global Serb-Muslim conspiracy.) The difference today, however, is that many of the liberal media people who might have exposed war propaganda in the past now seem willing to justify a selective approach to the truth.

Under the headline 'Sometimes the facts get in the way of the truth', Michael Mansfield QC recently wrote of the problems facing films about controversial issues such as Ireland. He was talking about docudramas and Hollywood movies; but it seems more and more as if the same sentiments could apply to the 'hard' news. And that is bad news for all of us who would rather face the uncomfortable truth than swallow a Good Lie anytime.

# LOOKING FORWARD TO THE GENERAL ELECTION?

*No and yes, writes Mike Fitzpatrick*

If it carries on like this, most people will be glad when it's all over. The looming spectre of Page Three girl Melinda 'the country could do with a change' Messenger mud wrestling with Geri of the Tory-loyal Spice Girls in the tabloids well reflects the tone of the impending contest.

On the one side, we see the collapse in the morale of the Conservative Party, well personified by the lugubrious George Gardiner, ousted from his Reigate constituency after a long and rancorous dispute about nothing of much interest to the rest of the world. Meanwhile at the top of the party, the central concern is not with winning the election, but the succession after John Major's long-anticipated defeat. Michael Portillo and John Redwood spar in public while Stephen Dorrell, who is still Health Secretary, declares his candidacy through speeches about Europe, Scottish devolution and perhaps soon, the weather. Poor Major is reduced to choosing a date between 10 April and 1 May for the encounter with the electorate that cannot be postponed any longer.

On the other side, we see the pathetic spectacle of a Labour leadership desperate to jettison any policy commitment that might possibly give offence to those few swinging voters identified by its pollsters as the key to victory. 'Tax 'n spend'? No—Gordon Brown has pledged that New Labour will not increase basic tax rates. Public sector pay rises? No—a two year freeze. Abolish grammar schools? Read David Blunkett's lips: *never*. An end to GP fundholding? Shadow health minister Chris Smith says New Labour would guarantee 'some flexibility to allow some practices to retain individual budgets'. Soft? No way: 'zero tolerance' for the homeless, beggars and criminals. Tough? And proud of it: workfare for single parents and a new yacht for the royals.

If this is what passes for politics in Britain today, it is not surprising that, for some, digging tunnels under roads appears to be an exciting political

initiative. The coming general election is sure to confirm the growing Americanisation of British politics, a trend accelerated by New Labour's emulation of Bill Clinton's recent presidential campaign.

Clinton's campaign confirmed the ascendancy of micropolicies and miniproposals over big ideas, doctrines and ideologies. Concentrating on school uniforms, teenage curfews, a five-day delay on gun purchase and the offer of two-year college education for all, Clinton coasted to victory.

## Dead from triangulation

A similar pattern is already clear in Britain. Tony Blair is committed to shuffling hospital waiting lists, banning cigarette adverts, school contracts, repressive measures against all sorts of anti-social behaviour and little else. Having already tried to occupy the moral high ground and failed (remember 'back to basics'?) Major is torn between depicting New Labour as Old Labour in disguise or as sham Tories, both tactics appearing equally unconvincing.

Much of the credit for Clinton's winning campaign strategy went to the disgraced Dick Morris and his now legendary 'triangulation' method:

'Stop thinking of politics as a straight line...with the left at one end and the right at the other. Free yourself. Imagine politics as two-dimensional, with yourself hovering in the centre, above the line, drawing ideas from both left and right.' (*Sunday Times*, 27 October 1996)

Perhaps this was the true purpose behind the technique of 'yogic flying' promoted by the Natural Law Party in Britain in the 1992 general election. Though Britain's transcendental triangulators appear not to have reaped much electoral benefit, Morris' advice clearly helped Clinton. Neutralising the right on tax, crime and welfare, and appeasing the liberals on education, the environment and abortion, he



turned the tide against the Republicans.

Triangulation means drawing a circle with a smaller and smaller compass around what is considered admissible to the political agenda. The consequence of party machine electoral politics, governed by opinion polls, focus groups and media management, is to restrict politics to the concerns of a smaller and smaller constituency of middle class electors. Any policy which might upset the petty preoccupations of this constituency is automatically

With policy on the cheap, both parties have short-changed the electorate



**LM-MAIL HAS BEEN HELD OVER TO  
MAKE ROOM FOR  
THE STORY OF THE PICTURE THAT  
FOOLED THE WORLD (SEE PP16-23)**

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ruled out. As a result most of society is effectively excluded from the political process.

One of Blair's more faithful press hacks, the *Guardian's* Martin Kettle, recently explained how this process works in relation to New Labour's tax policy. Loyal Labour voters favour 'tax 'n spend', but 'swing voters are much less willing to pay higher taxes for better services than are the voters of any of the main parties (including Tory voters)' (8 February). So, calculating that its supporters will vote Labour anyway, New Labour adopts a policy contrary to their interests in an attempt to win the votes 'that matter'. As Kettle grimly observes, this is 'a reminder that public affairs are being grotesquely distorted by the requirement to gratify a handful of voters who have our whole future in their hands, but whose views are often extremely untypical of the majority'.

Triangulation confirms the ascendancy of policy as technical intervention, over policy as an expression of a wider ideological and political commitment. It means closing down options and diminishing choice.

The decay of party politics has created much greater scope for the activities of diverse lobbyists, think-tanks, pressure groups and single issue campaigns. Whereas in the past, such campaigns sought to exert influence through individual MPs, today they have much higher ambitions of setting the agenda on particular issues and dictating the terms on which public policy is formulated. As a result small groups of—unelected and unaccountable—individuals enjoy greatly enhanced social power.

### **Choice, not**

Take, for example, Frances Lawrence's crusade for family values or the Snowdrop campaign to outlaw handguns. Though the leaders of these campaigns affect a modest demeanour and appear to lobby MPs in the traditional manner, in the current climate of distrust towards politicians, they are able, with the help of the media, to make emotional appeals to the public over the heads of their elected representatives. Politicians who dare to question such appeals risk a public mauling.

Instead of opening up debate, such initiatives curtail it; far from extending democracy, they allow a small number of individuals, provided they can get the backing of at least a section of the elite, to short-circuit the democratic process. The invariable result is another measure of state repression.

In America, the Republican Party's attempt to rally the conservative Christian 'moral majority' has encouraged an upsurge of prejudice

on issues such as abortion and homosexuality. Unfortunately, Tony Blair's public declarations of piety have brought religion back into the political sphere in Britain. The rush of rival politicians to proclaim their religious fervour reveals their lack of confidence about making a political appeal to the electorate. Worse, this public religiosity inevitably enhances the influence of established religious leaders, at a time when they are all troubled by declining congregations and scandals. The return of the bishops is the high price we have to pay for the survival of the politicians.

With religion comes moralism. The moralising trend in British politics is currently at its most strident in relation to issues of parenting and education. Proposals for a whole series of measures, from parenting classes and school contracts to compulsory homework and curfews, indicate the authoritarian dynamic. The most insidious aspect of the moralising trend is its quest for scapegoats and the mentality of the witch-hunt that this encourages. As ever, New Labour leads the way in its responsiveness to middle class insecurities and in its readiness to propose the most intrusive policies to deal with them.

It is quite understandable that more British people are likely to emulate their American cousins in another respect: refusing to vote. Campaigns for young people to register to vote simply for the privilege of democratic participation are unlikely to make much impact. In the past, in both America and Britain, people fought and died for the right to vote because they believed that voting could bring about change. Today, people are being invited to vote so that they can participate in making sure that things remain exactly the same. Being offered the choice between two virtually identical alternatives is in a sense worse than having no choice at all: it amounts to an invitation to participate in your own manipulation by those who control the political machines and the media.

And yet, though the election itself will be irrelevant to the concerns of most people, it does offer the opportunity to challenge the state of politics today. The public attention it will generate opens up the possibility of putting forward an entirely different approach to the issues that matter.

There is no point in voting for any of the established parties. But why should we accept that the options facing modern society should be reduced to the choice between Major and Blair? Politics does not have to be about micropolicies and micropersonalities, and we do not have to accept their definition of what issues are legitimate to argue about and fight around. ●

*Brian Harvey of East 17 has been witch-hunted as a heretic for saying that he enjoyed taking Ecstasy. Andrew Calcutt and Neil Davenport watched the 'great drugs debate' become an inquisition*

# ECSTASY AND APOSTASY

In a radio interview broadcast in the early hours of 16 January, Brian Harvey said he enjoyed taking ecstasy and boasted about how many drugs he could do—a boast made by countless young men every weekend. Within hours, East 17 records were banned by 13 radio stations, a DJ smashed their single on air, and they were dropped from the launch show of the midweek Lottery.

Harvey was forced to issue a retraction and humble apology; sacked from the successful teenybop band he formed with his erstwhile friends; instructed to go for counselling; told he will have the deaths of future drugs victims on his conscience; threatened with prosecution for inciting others to take drugs; accused

of seducing a school girl; and arrested for behaving like a 'football hooligan' towards a photographer outside Stringfellows nightclub.

Hounded by the press, politicians and a posse of 'secondary victims' of drug abuse, Harvey has been excommunicated from Planet Celebrity ('I will go back to nothing', he says), and branded a modern-day heretic. Nowadays saying the wrong thing about ecstasy, even if it happens to be true, is tantamount to apostasy—renouncing your membership of the community.

While Harvey is branded the biggest anti-Christ since Johnny Rotten, the bereaved relatives of those who have died after taking drugs are treated as near-saints. Journalists and presenters always adopt a pious tone when they introduce the ubiquitous Paul and Janet Betts, the parents of 18-year-old Leah who died in November 1995. Their comments are sacrosanct and to dispute their opinion is to insult their dead daughter's memory.

As Decca Aitkenhead pointed out in the *Independent on Sunday* (19 January) 'in post-Leah Betts Britain, ecstasy is the equivalent of slaughtering babies'. She also noted that Harvey would have been welcomed with open arms if he had confessed to having a drugs problem; his sin was to tell a 'my drugs heaven' story.

Previous sinners to be denounced by the ecstasy inquisition include the band Chumbawumba, who last year issued publicity material which parodied anti-drugs posters ('Sorted. Just one ecstasy tablet took Leah Betts') with the caption: 'Distorted. Statistically you're just as likely to die from swallowing a

bay-leaf than from taking an ecstasy tablet. So what's all this publicity about then?' In April 1996, Glasgow social services director Mary Hartnoll was pilloried for writing in a confidential report that 'ecstasy is a relatively safe drug—the risk of death has been calculated at one in 6.8m (the risk of dying from an ordinary dose of aspirin is very much greater)'. 'Totally irresponsible' retorted Paul Betts. 'To come from such a prominent person, it's absolutely stupid. She should get her facts right.'

No one pointed out that Hartnoll's facts about the statistical risks of taking ecstasy are right (and Chumbawumba's were not far wrong). In today's superstitious atmosphere, 'right' is always on the side of the anti-drugs crusaders, as Harvey found out when journalists from the *Mirror* tailed him, confronted him with a picture of Leah Betts in a coma, brought him close to tears and then touted his apology ('She was just a baby. I am so sorry I offended her parents. I did not mean to.') in the following day's 'Ecstasy shock issue'. Truly, media-hell awaits those judged to have committed heresy on the ecstasy issue.

## Storm in a tea cup

Fire and brimstone were temporarily re-directed at Noel Gallagher of Oasis when the victor of the NME Brat Awards declared that 'drugs is like getting up and having a cup of tea in the morning'. Gallagher was one of the few music people with enough balls to defend Harvey in public. Tory MP Tim Rathbone, chair of the all-party Drugs

### BRIAN HARVEY (12.01am, 16 January):

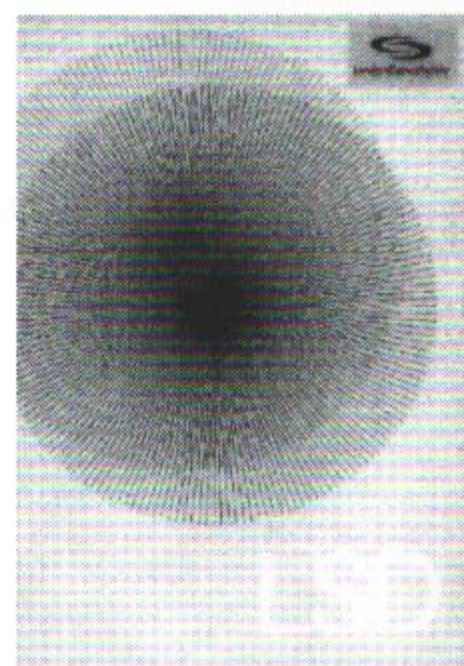
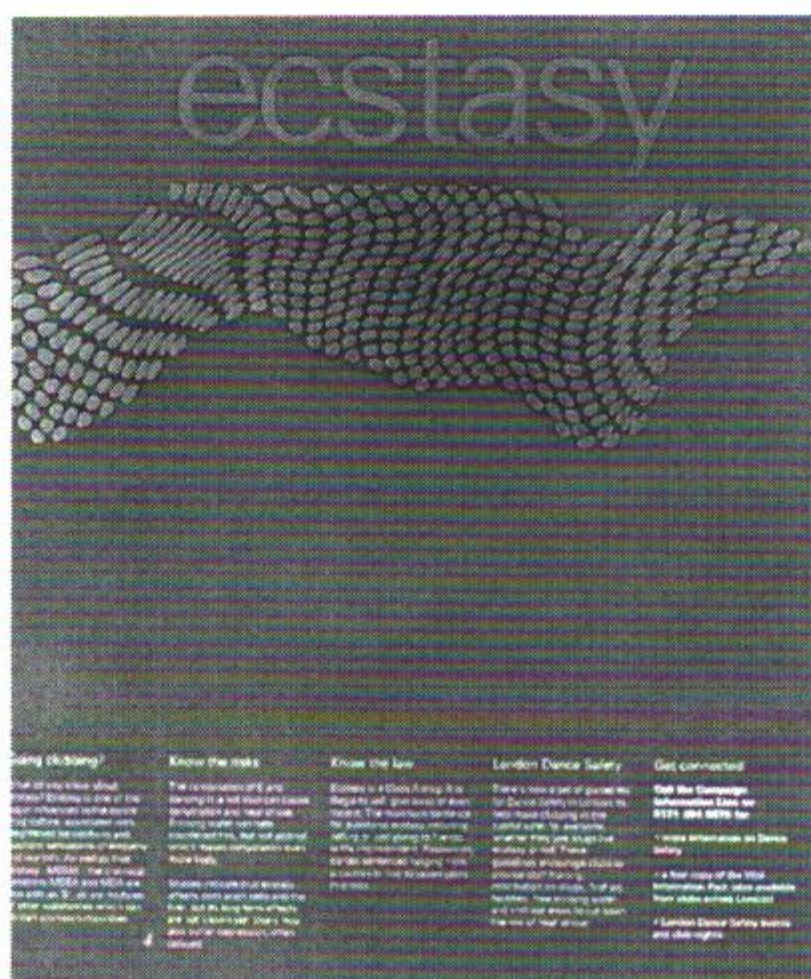
**'It's a safe pill and it ain't doing you no harm. I don't see the problem. I've done 12 in one night. If it makes you feel better and gives you something to do at the weekend and you go out and have a good time, I don't see why not, man, because life's too short. There's too many restrictions about. If you want to go out and do something, go and do it, that's what I say.'**

### BRIAN HARVEY (4 pm 16 January):

**'I now realise that I was being very irresponsible and I would like to apologise as I have obviously caused offence. I would especially like to apologise to the family of Leah Betts whose tragic experience just goes to show what harm just one ecstasy pill can do. Now that I know more about the deadly dangers of ecstasy I realise I was completely out of order and I am horrified at the thought that anything I have said could influence anyone. All I'd like to say now is never take ecstasy—it can kill you.'**







**NOEL GALLAGHER, Oasis (29 January):**

**'If Brian Harvey did 12 Es in one night and he's saying that he did—if he's being honest then fair enough. If you can't be honest in this country we might as well live in China, know what I mean? It's all about honesty at the end of the day. If he done that, then fair enough—everybody does it. As soon as people realise the majority of people in this country take drugs, the better off we'll all be. It's not like a scandalous sensation. Drugs is like getting up and having a cup of tea in the morning.'**

**'We're not criminals, we're not devils, we're not the anti-Christ—we're just people. Our Liam can be a mad head. Phil Collins is a role model, George Michael is a role model, the Royal Family are role models. Oasis aren't role models—we're honest. This is what we do. Liam won't apologise and I'm not going to either.'**

**NOEL GALLAGHER (30 January):**

**'If saying a few seemingly outrageous things has helped to instigate an open and honest debate about drug abuse in this country then I'm pleased. I've never condoned the use of drugs. I just slam as hypocrites those politicians who simply condemn drug abuse as a criminal activity and think they're doing something positive. The criminalisation of drug users simply isn't working.'**

Misuse Group, called for him to be prosecuted. But then Gallagher issued a statement which referred to the 'harmful side of drug taking' and called for 'an honest and open debate about drug abuse in this country'. His call was taken up all round.

George Howarth, New Labour spokesman on drugs, was said by his staff to have 'welcomed' Gallagher's suggestion. The *Mirror's* front cover declared 'Why Noel's RIGHT on drugs' (31 January), and its leader gave Gallagher a pat on the back: 'His words will not persuade a single youngster to turn to drugs'; but they may have started an instructive debate, in which case 'he will have achieved much more than the politicians'.

**Self-criticism**

Had the discussion about drugs been miraculously transformed from a witch-hunt into an open debate? Hardly. Regardless of what Gallagher had in mind, in the current climate every discussion is closed. Even if every TV chat show for the next year was about ecstasy, it would still be a non-debate. Every programme would be built around the sacred testimony of Paul and Janet Betts or some other unfortunate parents.

Nicholas Saunders, author of a fairly sensible account of contemporary drug use, *Ecstasy and the Dance Culture* (1995), has come to regard such programmes as a set up to be avoided. During the hounding of Harvey he was 'invited to go on TV twice with the Betts, which I refused since I have found it impossible to have serious debate

with a strong emotional element. In fact that is now the seventh time I have refused to go on with the Betts. I also refused the *Kilroy* show as they said they would have bereaved parents'.

In media coverage of ecstasy, the 'strong emotional element' has the status of a Papal Bull. Every other consideration is made to seem insignificant by comparison. The result is not a debate, but a theatre of humiliation in which participants are required to bow the knee before icons of suffering such as the Betts family, or risk being consigned to pariah status like Harvey.

The *Mirror* gave the game away when it advocated 'a debate which makes young people aware of the perils'. What's on offer is a debate with only one possible outcome. This outcome is already being enacted. Backed by all the parties, Barry Legg's private member's bill passed through the House of Commons on the same day that Brian Harvey was chucked out of East 17. It empowers the police and local councils to close down any premises (clubs, student unions, sixth form centres) where drugs are alleged to be sold and consumed. No room for debate there.

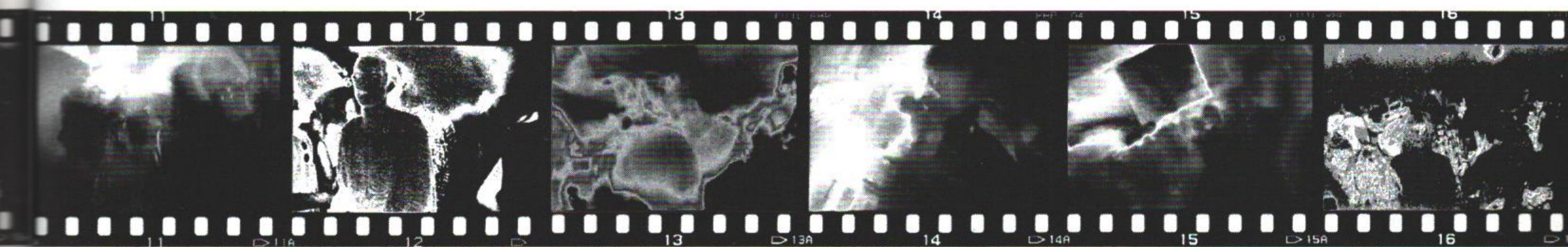
A debate with a foregone conclusion is no debate at all; it is as staged as a show trial. Seems like Noel Gallagher was on the ball when he said that, 'if you can't be honest in this country we might as well as live in China, know what I mean?'

Nicholas Saunders' website is at <http://ecstasy.org>

**THE GOVERNMENT TAKES DRUGS**

**very seriously indeed**

**Tory minister Ian Lang**



*Irvine Welsh, author of **Trainspotting** and **Ecstasy**, talked to Bruno Waterfield about **E** and all that*

# 'WE HAVE GOT TO ACCEPT IT, TO FUCKING EMBRACE IT'

**Bruno Waterfield** What do you think about the Brian Harvey case?

**Irvine Welsh** I feel a bit sorry for him because I think if he had toughed it out he might have been able to retain some credibility. But he has been forced into retracting that statement. It has done him no good at all. It was too late to sort things out.

It is interesting that he was really pounced upon, there was this vitriolic outrage against him, whereas when Noel Gallagher responded they were a bit more standoff-ish, the same knee-jerk stuff but not the same kind of 'let's hang him' stuff. There was a recognition that they are not going for people that are taking drugs, but trying to put along this message to the younger people like Brian Harvey's kind of audience, the teenybop audience. In a sense it is just a way of playing on people's fears.

**Was it irresponsible for Harvey to say what he did?**

No, it's irresponsible for people to react in that way which sends out a far more dangerous message to the kids than anything that some pop star can say about drugs. It shows kids that there is a climate of fear and that you are not allowed to speak up and say what you want. You are not allowed to say anything that relates to drugs or any kind of social life in this area. You see that somebody can be ostracised or witch-hunted just on the basis of saying that. That is all kids will learn from that.

**But what about people like Paul Merson, who have talked about drug use without being ostracised?**

If you are prepared to be a victim. In Scotland you had the St Mirren football

player, plays for Hibs now, Barry Lavety and he took ecstasy one night and went clubbing. And because it was found out that he had done this he had to go to a drug rehabilitation centre for a month. All they need is to make a fucking example of you in order to be portrayed as a victim.

British football, particularly in London clubs, is just completely awash with cocaine. If you think about the enormous amount of money that Premiership footballers get, of course they are going to fucking do it.

**Do you think it is positive when people like Merson come forward?**

I think there a confessional culture has emerged. It is always used in a way that is affirming to the status quo. "I've been to hell and now I'm back", the "born again" culture. I think that is a lot of shit, I really think it's a lot of fucking nonsense. It's the whole idea that you must atone for your sins.

One of the things that really gets on my nerves is when you hear wankers like Eric Clapton saying "Don't take drugs it fucked me up". He's sitting there with all these fucking Rolls Royces in the garage and all that. And what are these kids going to think when they see something like that? "Oh yeah it really fucked you up completely didn't it Eric. I'll have some of that." These people think they are being helpful. They are not at all, they should just shut the fuck up.

**A lot of people now talk about the need for pop stars or footballers to act as role models. Is the idea of role models in music dodgy?**

We've got all these fucking pissheads in the House of Commons that are going in voting on how they are going to run

our lives. They are talking about role models, but these are the people that are fucking inappropriate role models.

It's all those sad right-wing fuckers that need role models. Kids don't need role models. Do you see, they are putting someone up on their bedroom wall because they're a band that they have been following, because they like to belong to something. But that's it. I was into Bowie when I was like twelve, thirteen, but when he said he was bisexual it doesn't mean I want to go out and start shagging loads of guys.

People come to their own understanding of morals based on what is going on around them. They don't come to it based on what somebody says. What a pop star says is probably of even less influence than what a politician says, if that's possible.

**Noel Gallagher said that taking drugs was like having a cuppa, is this either true or helpful?**

It has been true for a long time, five or six years at least. There are millions of people who do drugs in Britain and I would say that very few of those people have what could be termed as any sort of drugs problem. There has always been a drug culture, it's just that the menu has got bigger. That's all that has happened.

You see, what the danger is, you get addictive and dangerous drugs, like heroin, and you get the establishment who cry wolf on ecstasy. I think it's going to encourage kids to take drugs like heroin, because young kids say "Well they say ecstasy kills but that's bullshit because I've been fucking doing it for years, and people like friends and family have been doing it for years and years, and fuck all is wrong with them—and so it'll probably be the same with heroin". But it isn't, you know. So that "just say no" and whipping up that climate of fear approach is nonsense.

I mean you have got these "Scotland against drugs" adverts that are anti-speed, anti-acid and anti-ecstasy. I never knew that Scotland had a big acid problem. What the fuck are they doing? Having adverts that point out the dangers of acid when people are drinking themselves to death in Scotland and have been for fucking decades. What the fuck are they doing? A couple of people are having a silly trip once in a while, it's absolute fucking nonsense, the total ignorance of these cunts is absolutely fucking staggering, completely mind bending. Just when you think that there is some kind of control conspiracy behind it, you think surely they can't be that fucking ham-fisted. I don't know if it is just idiocy or ignorance, or whether there is actually some malevolent force behind it. I would think both. One just seems to trip up the other all the time. ♦

'You hear  
**WANKERS LIKE  
ERIC CLAPTON**

saying "Don't take drugs it fucked me up".  
He's sitting there with all these fucking  
Rolls Royces in the garage'



**The thing that comes up all the time is Leah Betts and the views of her parents, what are your feelings on that?**

It is a very powerful image and a very powerful thing to happen. It is probably wrong to be swayed by something pumped up in the media, but I know that it really affected me when that lassie died because there was something so poignant about it. What I can't understand is, after the horror of it, the Betts family went away to Amsterdam looking at all the things that were going on there. And there seemed to be this kind of trying to think about how "Just say no" isn't enough, that there must be other ways of trying to do it. But now the whole thing has been hijacked and co-opted by this kind of rancid right-wing politics.

control culture and social life. And there should be a social life that people have outside of the state. Against that is, it raises the question of what is the state here for? Is it here for everybody, and if it is here for everybody then everybody should be happy to be integrated into it, because it is meeting their needs and serving all aspects of the community, all cultures. Obviously it's not and it is now at war with the poorest members of the community and it has been for the last 20 years. So everything has to be seen in that context as well. There's not been any big campaigns against cocaine, but ecstasy yeah—because coke is seen as a rich man's drug.

If you wanted to control everything you would license it, you would bring it

person who is doing it, but so many deaths in violent assaults and murders when people are pissed up—so it kills other people. But it's OK because it's freedom of choice, as a society we are able to accept this, but we can't accept this new drug. We have got to come to a new psychology and say 'Look this is a drug and the consequences of that could be this'. So we have got to accept it, to fucking embrace it.

**Why does drug culture seem so important to young people nowadays?**

There is a lot more uncertainty and despair, I mean, working class young people have no opportunities, no fucking jobs, nothing happening for them. Even upper working class and middle class people see an uncertain future in terms of jobs and stability. That's made a big difference.

The way that people have a good time is probably a lot more fucking hardcore than it used to be. That is because everything is invested in their social life rather than some kind of idea that you would be able to self-actualise in some kind of way: to be able to do it through work, through politics, through some kind of collective involvement. All these collective institutions have been destroyed. So the idea that you can go into a collective like a club or a pub or whatever and just go for it seems to make much more sense.

**Doesn't that sound a bit like Tony Blair's 'community'?**

What happened when the thing started up was the collectivity went into clubs because they had fucked up trade unions, churches and the rest. A lot of people on the left said we should rebuild the trade unions and all that, and were hands off-ish and disdainful because of that. But you have to go where the action is, and a lot of people are taking an interest and moving into that kind of area.

At the moment there is no big idea, all it is is an empty interaction, but you can't just say to people 'come to us'. The people who form around something else, that's when ideas have to be generated. I think that there is going to be a whole new kind modern, socialistic collective exposure in the millennium that's not going to be based around fucking trade unions or anything like that. I think that all these structures are going to be completely brushed away. There's going to be a whole new fluid movement that will emerge.

Special thanks to Iain Marjoribanks

Irvine Welsh is currently working on a film version of his book, *The Acid House*

## On Leah Betts' parents: 'the media is USING SOMEONE'S PRIVATE GRIEF to browbeat people'

You are put in a position where if you question something like that you just come across as a callous bastard, because their daughter has died. It's the way the whole system is set up. To me it's like the media is exploiting someone's private grief by using it as a sledgehammer to browbeat people. And it's not helpful, it's not helpful at all.

**What do you think of safer dancing campaigns?**

See things like the Lifeline punters in Manchester or the Crew 2000 people in Edinburgh and the punters in the Underground advertising (*Release et al*). All that they are trying to do is something good and useful. They are trying to say that people take drugs, they have taken drugs since the garden of Eden, they'll always fucking take drugs, now how can we make it safer? How can we control this to put it into a more sensible legal framework? Then you can get licensed products, you can get quality control, you can stop some of the dangers. No kid should take an ecstasy tablet and drop down dead. As long as the sole policy is criminalisation then a pill could contain anything. You should have more chance of taking an aspirin and dying than taking an ecstasy tablet and dying. But then people have got to be taught how to take drugs.

**Is that not another form of control, who wants their fun to be licensed?**

I have a lot of sympathy for that view as well. I think that the state should not

in, you would integrate it. But people are so used to doing it on their own, the spirit of it, that once it becomes a bit too fucking pristine they're off. They're off on the burn again. There's always going to be a resistance to that.

**Should safety be a main consideration where drugs are concerned?**

People will always get off their tits. I think when a drug gets into a culture it changes and the way people relate to it changes. There will always be a market for new underground drugs, for something widespread like ecstasy that is not going to go away. There is a responsibility for society to acknowledge that, and to say we can either accept risk or minimise the level of risk by making licensed products and giving people the option of whether they want to go for those licensed products.

For a drug that is in the mainstream culture, like ecstasy, there are all kinds of statistical arguments and counter-arguments about the risks, one being that it is not as statistically harmful as aspirin. But against that it would be daft to say that people haven't died from ingesting it, ingesting something like it or in combination with something else. You have got to make some kind of informed judgement, you've got to allow freedom of choice as well.

People know that cigarettes kill and they kill people passively. We all know alcohol kills, and not just the

ANN BRADLEY

# Get a life



Am I the only person in Britain profoundly unmoved by the daily reports of developments in Diane Blood's attempts to be inseminated by her dead husband's sperm in an effort to have his child?

Usually I am enthusiastic about any use of the new reproductive technologies which pushes back the boundaries of nature. In principle I am enthusiastic about this one. The notion that a man can father children after his death is rather awesome and worthy of celebration—but everything about the Blood case has become tawdry.

It is a tale of irrational obsessions. Diane Blood is obsessed by the need to give birth to a child of the man she once loved but who has been dead for two years. The media are obsessed with

it is to draft legislation which tries to regulate, in detail, clinical practice. Doctors need the flexibility to decide what is clinically in the best interests of their patients without having to fear prosecution because they might have trespassed into areas which parliamentarians find objectionable.

Medical decisions, especially those concerning reproduction, are taken in the light of individual personal circumstances. What is felt to be wrong in general, can be absolutely right in certain cases. Traditionally doctors have made decisions about treatment in consultation with their patients, and in general it has worked rather well. There are no laws which try to set in stone how and when a mastectomy should be carried out, but there is no great public concern about that. We let

circumstances where a woman has to conduct a public battle to get treatment could not be good for the patient.

My gynaecological guru thinks that doctors today are losing their confidence to make judgements. Others might say they are losing their arrogance, which is not altogether a bad thing. But I would rather be treated by a pompous git who knows what he is doing and finds legal interference in his practice an affront.

The media spotlight and the parliamentary interest in the Blood case have turned it into a spectacle of the worst sort, from which nobody could benefit. In all likelihood, Diane Blood will be able to export her sperm to Belgium and use it. But only after she has paraded herself on any chat show that will have her, to argue about what a wonderful mother she will be. In her attempt to take advantage of medical progress she has appealed to the most backward, traditional values, insisting that she and her husband had specifically included a family values clause in their wedding vows. She has presented herself as a saintly 'good woman' thwarted from fulfilling her natural maternal ambitions. And this is why the media have championed her cause.

Usually the tabloids are inclined to torment and ridicule single women attempting to get pregnant 'artificially'. Mrs Blood, however, has been their darling. Few voices have dared to suggest that her obsession with having her dead husband's child might indicate that a psychiatrist could meet her needs better than a gynaecologist. No one has pointed out that her chances of *not* conceiving from the much-discussed sperm are at least twice as high as her chances of getting pregnant.

I sincerely hope Diane Blood gets a life. If she fails to get a living child at the end of the treatment, I hope she gets to live for herself in the here and now rather than existing in constant reference to what happened years ago. It is surely time for Mrs Blood to define herself as a woman with a present and a future, not a widow with a past.

## In Diane Blood's attempt to take advantage of medical progress she has appealed to the most backward values

turning a private medical matter into a test case of the nation's ethics.

There is no doubt in my mind that Blood should have been able to use her husband's sperm for whatever purpose she thought fit. The law which demands written consent from sperm donors is clearly a nonsense in this particular case—the guy is dead and beyond caring what his sperm is used for. Routinely, the next of kin give permission for bits of a loved one's body to be donated to those who need them—why should the same not apply to sperm?

The important aspect of the case (and the only aspect worthy of attention) is that it serves as an example of how idiotic

the medical profession get on with it. We accept that they as doctors and we as patients can make sensible, responsible decisions outside of any restrictive framework imposed by politicians and judges.

This is what should have happened in the Blood case. One wonderful, paternalistic, retired gynaecologist told me that he could not work out what the fuss was about. Had the issue arisen at his clinic he would have carried out the requested insemination without a second thought. He was confident that he would have been acting in the spirit of the law, and that his actions would have been the best for his patient. He felt that creating the

# TABOOS

*Alison Bryant cannot swallow the Health Education Authority's campaign to get women to take vitamin supplements before pregnancy*

## PROMOTING NEUROSI

**T**he Health Education Authority wants women who plan to get pregnant to take supplements of the B vitamin, folic acid, for three months before they intend to conceive and for the first three months of pregnancy. It sounds like an unobjectionable health promotion campaign: folic acid supplements can lower a woman's chances of conceiving a disabled child.

It has long been recognised that folate deficiency might affect a woman's chance of having a child with a neural tube defect. In the late 1980s scientists further established that if a woman who had given birth to one affected child took a 4 milligram supplement of folic acid for three months before and after conception, her chances of having a second child with the defect were significantly reduced. The Medical Research Council has now established that a daily 0.4 milligram supplement of folic acid can also offer some protection against neural tube defects for women who have no history of the problem.

Neural tube defects (NTDs) occur if the brain and/or the spinal cord fail to develop correctly around the fourth week of embryonic life. The results can be tragic. Spina bifida, which occurs when the spinal canal in the vertebral column is not closed, is the most widely known NTD. Infants born with the condition can suffer a wide range of disabilities. In the more extreme forms the spinal cord bulges out of the back, the legs and bladder may be paralysed, and obstruction to the fluid surrounding the brain causes hydrocephalus. With another NTD, anencephaly, most of the brain and skull are missing, which results in stillbirth or death soon after birth.

Nobody could question the suffering of those born with NTDs or their families. So why should anybody question the HEA's campaign to prevent them? Perhaps because it is a campaign with questionable motives and consequences. It is unlikely to make a significant impact on the numbers of babies suffering from NTDs, and it is one more way

of heaping guilt and worry onto pregnant women.

NTDs may be life-shattering for those who have them—and for their families—but they are very uncommon. An 'expert paper' published by the Department of Health in 1992 points out that fewer than three babies in every 10 000 are born with an NTD—a total of around 200 a year. Admittedly, one reason why this number is so tiny is that most NTDs can be detected in routine antenatal screening and women with affected fetuses are usually offered an abortion. This means most affected pregnancies are terminated. But even if we look at the number of pregnancies affected by the condition, rather than live births, it is still very rare. The HEA leaflet rather coyly says that 'every day in England and Wales at least two babies are conceived with neural tube defects' which sounds rather more alarming than the total figure of about 700 affected conceptions a year.

### It could be you

The risk of spina bifida is remote—but the HEA campaign plays on the fact that, like the lottery, it could be you. And, indeed, it could be—but the sad fact is that even if you religiously take your folic acid supplement every day, there is no guarantee that your child won't be born suffering from an NTD.

Nobody has claimed that dietary supplements of folic acid could prevent all cases of NTD, because it seems that there are many other factors involved. Family history plays a big part. If a man or woman has already had an affected baby, or if either suffers from the condition themselves, their risk of an affected baby rises tenfold. Older mothers are more at risk of an affected pregnancy and for some reason (not entirely understood), some regions of the country have a higher prevalence than others.

The upshot of the HEA campaign is that millions of women who will never conceive a child affected by an NTD are alarmed into thinking they very well might. Hundreds of thousands are dipping into their purses to pay for unne-

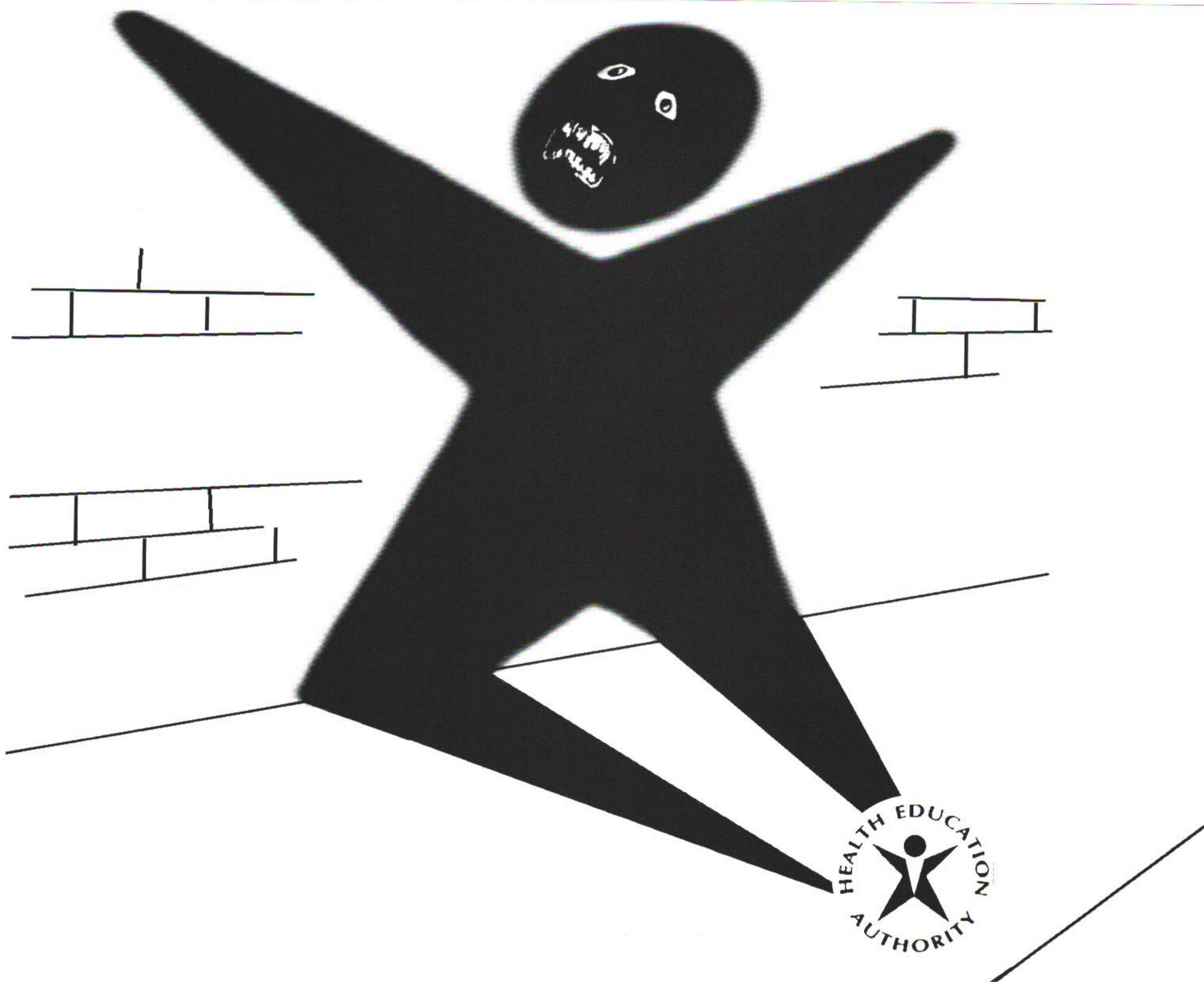
cessary dietary supplements—and folic acid supplements confer no benefits except those relating to NTDs.

Even the HEA's own promotional literature has to admit that it does not actually make much difference whether women take the supplements or not. Having insisted that women should take the supplements before pregnancy, the HEA then has to reassure the many pregnant women who will pick up their leaflet having never heard of folic acid supplements: 'Please do not worry... remember that most babies are born in perfect health.' Too true.

You are almost inclined to think that the campaign must be sponsored by the vitamin pill industry, since they seem the people most likely to benefit. But an HEA spokeswoman insists that every penny is coming from the Department of Health. It will probably come as no surprise to learn that, although it is keen to sponsor the HEA's promotional campaign to the tune of tens of millions of pounds, the government is not prepared to provide folic acid free on the NHS—perhaps the ministry realises that the practical health benefits will be negligible.

But the negligible impact on the number of disabled babies does not mean it has a negligible impact on public attitudes. And it seems that this is what health promotion campaigns which stress the need to 'prepare for pregnancy' are really all about. These days women, and increasingly men, are bombarded with advice about how to prepare for pregnancy: give up smoking, cut down on alcohol, take vitamin supplements, don't diet, cut out caffeine, avoid foods high in Vitamin A, see your doctor to check whether you are immune to rubella.

The impression given is that pregnancy is something that needs careful planning, when in reality nothing could be further from the truth. For a vast number of women healthy pregnancies just happen regardless of how they have been living. Studies suggest that about a third of conceptions resulting in births (rather than abortions) were unplanned, and a third of these are to women who were trying not to get preg-



nant. Yet nobody suggests that the babies born to these 'unprepared' women have a significantly increased risk of birth defects.

Women conceive while they are crash dieting, stoned out of their heads, leglessly drunk and still have healthy babies. In fact, as women who deliberately tried to end their pregnancy, in the days before legal abortion, discovered, pregnancies are remarkably resilient. Such women were as likely to poison themselves as their fetuses.

The resilience of pregnancies is illustrated by the fact that things which are considered hazardous in our culture are encouraged in others. In her excellent book on birth cultures (*Birth Traditions and Modern Pregnancy Care*, 1992), sociologist Jacqueline Vincent Priya explains how different societies recommend different diets to women who are pregnant or trying to be. For instance, Yoruba women in Africa are encouraged not to eat protein foods such as meat and fish, the opposite of the advice given to women in developed countries.

In Bangladesh women are told not to eat too much so that the baby will be small and so born more easily; a large bonny baby could spell disaster to a woman without access to a sophisticated maternity service.

When push comes to shove in the delivery room, the overwhelming majority of babies are born healthy whatever the mother does. And the majority of those that are not are affected by inherited defects or problems with the delivery—not the mother's lifestyle before or during pregnancy.

### Antenatal screening

Insofar as lifestyle does make a difference the most important influence on the well-being of a new-born baby is the socio-economic circumstances of the parents. Perhaps a more appropriate health promotion would be 'wealthier people have healthier babies—demand that wage rise now'.

Campaigns like the folic acid one have little impact on public health but they do have an impact on

women's attitudes. They make us neurotic about pregnancy and fearful that the sins of the mothers will be visited upon their children: our 'irresponsible behaviour' will cost us a healthy baby. Many women are already encouraged to be neurotic about their behaviour during pregnancy by midwives who constantly stress the need for women to be conscious of their pregnant state. Pre-conception care extends the neurosis to before pregnancy even occurs.

A more effective way to address the very small risk of NTDs would be to improve antenatal screening techniques, to allow for the already good detection rate in pregnancy to be improved, and to combine this with a sympathetic abortion service. This way the few hundred affected pregnancies could be identified and ended, if the woman bearing the child wished. The rest of us could get on with our pre-pregnant and pregnant lives without worrying too much about whether or not to take the tablets. ●

# THE MAG ITN V



PHOTO: DAVE CHAPMAN

ITN is using the libel laws to try to silence *LM* magazine. This is an unprecedented attack on press freedom by a media giant. But the battle has only just begun.

The controversy centres on Thomas Deichmann's article, 'The Picture that Fooled the World', published in our February issue, which raises serious questions about ITN's award-winning pictures of Trnopolje camp in Bosnia, first broadcast in August 1992.

On 24 January 1997, before the magazine even went on sale, *LM* editor Mick Hume received an urgent fax from ITN's lawyers, Biddle & Co—the same firm who acted for prime minister

John Major in his punitive libel action against the *New Statesman*.

ITN's lawyers demanded that Hume immediately withdraw February's *LM* and pulp every copy, apologise to their journalists and pay damages. The kind of gagging order normally associated with a Robert Maxwell or a Sir James Goldsmith was now being attempted by one of the world's most prestigious news organisations.

When *LM* told ITN what to do with their threats, they issued writs for libel. The magazine now faces a long and very costly legal battle to establish our freedom to publish the truth. Meanwhile ITN has used all of its influence and

'There is a simple way to resolve this matter.

## ITN SHOULD SHOW THE WORLD THE

that its team shot at Trnopolje on 5 August 1992.



## EVADING THE CHARGES

*ITN and their supporters have had a lot to say about everything—except the actual questions which Thomas Deichmann raised in his LM article. Eddie Veale cross-examines their case*

The central issues raised by Thomas Deichmann's article, 'The Picture that Fooled the World', seem simple and straightforward enough. To summarise:

On 5 August 1992, a British news team led by Penny Marshall (ITN for *News at Ten*), with her cameraman Jeremy Irvin, and fellow reporters Ian Williams (ITN for *Channel 4 News*), and Ed Vulliamy (the *Guardian* newspaper) visited Trnopolje camp in the Bosnian Serb territory of northern Bosnia. They left with striking pictures of the emaciated Fikret Alic and other Bosnian Muslims apparently caged behind a barbed wire fence.



These pictures were broadcast around the world, and immediately became the defining image of the horrors of the war in Bosnia. In particular, the world media held up the picture of Fikret Alic behind the barbed wire as proof that the Bosnian Serbs were running a Nazi-style 'concentration camp', or even 'death camp', at Trnopolje. The impact of these images was to colour all subsequent coverage of the war, and to prove instrumental in persuading the American and British governments to adopt a more interventionist policy towards Bosnia.

But the image of Trnopolje as what British newspapers called 'Belsen '92' was misleading. Fikret Alic and the other Bosnian Muslims in the picture were not encircled by a barbed wire fence. There was no barbed wire fence surrounding Trnopolje camp. The barbed wire was only around a small compound next to the camp, and had been erected before the war to protect agricultural produce and machinery from thieves. Penny Marshall and her team got their famous pictures by filming the camp and the Bosnian Muslims from *inside* this compound,



# WANTS TO GAG

its lawyers to scare the rest of the media off the story. 'ITN does not, of course, seek to stifle fair public discussion' declares one letter their lawyers sent to *LM*. They could have fooled us.

Britain's libel laws are a censorship charter which the rich can hire to silence their critics. Those who believe in the freedom of the press must surely oppose this attempt by a multi-million pound corporation to buy immunity from criticism through the courts.

Yet the ITN journalists responsible for the Trnopolje reports, Penny Marshall and Ian Williams, have put their names to the libel writs against *LM*. And the *Guardian* journalist who

accompanied them in Bosnia, Ed Vulliamy, has lent his support to ITN's libel prosecution. So much for Vulliamy's attempt to win a reputation as a crusader against the abuse of power.

In February, many celebrated when a High Court jury threw out a police libel action against the *Guardian*. 'It's a good day for the press', said the paper's crime correspondent, Duncan Campbell; 'It would be an even better day if the libel law were changed to give better protection to smaller papers who have been forced to cave in when threatened with the huge costs of fighting an action'. We could not agree more

with Mr Campbell. We are still waiting for the statements from the *Guardian* and the rest of the press taking a principled stand against ITN's attempt to make *LM* magazine 'cave in' before the libel law.

If a cave-in is what ITN expects, we advise them not to hold their breath. *LM* magazine stands by Thomas Deichmann's story, and is prepared to fight all the libel writs and gagging orders they can throw at us. But we are going to need all the help we can get. ●

Details of the *LM* libel appeal, the 'Off the Fence' fund, can be found in the advert on page 23.

## FULL, UNEDITED VIDEOTAPE

'Then everybody will know the truth.' *LM* Editor, Mick Hume

1. ITN reporter Penny Marshall (in UN flak jacket) enters the south side of the small agricultural compound next to Trnopolje camp, through a hole in the compound's barbed wire fence. The people in front of her are Bosnian Muslim refugees who have come into the compound to sit in the shade of a tree.



2. The ITN crew approaches the north side of the compound, where curious Bosnian Muslims gather inside the camp, but outside the area that is encircled with barbed wire. Note the wheelbarrows, remains of the farm goods which the barbed wire fence was erected around the compound to protect long before the war.

3. In one of the famous shots which ITN did broadcast, Penny Marshall shakes hands with Fikret Alic and other recent arrivals from camps at Omarska and Keraterm, through the compound's fence. Eagle-eyed readers might spot that the wire is attached to the pole on Alic's side, showing that it is the news team which is fenced-in by barbed wire, not the Bosnian Muslims.



taking pictures through the compound fence of people who were actually standing *outside* the area fenced-in with barbed wire.

Whatever the British news team's intentions may have been, their pictures were interpreted around the world as the first hard evidence of concentration camps and a 'Holocaust' in Bosnia. Penny Marshall and Ian Williams have not called Trnopolje a concentration camp; nor did Ed Vulliamy at first, although he later seemed to remember that it was one after all (see page 20). All three British journalists have expressed concern at the way in which others have used their reports and pictures as 'proof' of a Nazi-style Holocaust.

Yet none of them has ever fully corrected the false interpretation placed upon those famous pictures, by telling the world the full story of that barbed wire fence and how the Trnopolje pictures were taken. Why?

That is, in essence, the question which Thomas Deichmann's investigative report asks of the ITN team and Ed Vulliamy of the *Guardian*. ITN has answered it with threats and libel writs, Vulliamy has responded with

a libellous article of his own about Deichmann and *LM* in the *Observer*, and their allies have rallied round in support. The strange thing is, however, that none of them has yet addressed the actual questions which Deichmann raised. Instead they have deployed various bogus arguments as evasive manoeuvres.

### THE 'MERE DETAIL'

Rather than responding to Deichmann's revelations about the famous barbed wire fence at Trnopolje, some in the media world have tried to make out that this is a 'mere detail' in the story of the Bosnian camps, a 'single example', and that *LM* is simply 'splitting hairs'.

This seems a peculiar reaction from people who, until Deichmann questioned it, had insisted that the picture of Bosnian Muslims supposedly caged behind a barbed wire fence was the key image of the camps, indeed of the entire conflict, and the one thing above all others which had turned world opinion.

'That picture of that barbed wire and these emaciated men made alarm bells ring across the whole of Europe', Penny Marshall herself told German television in 1993: 'I believe that the report would not have caused such a reaction had it been transmitted without that picture, although the facts would have been the same.'

When Marshall and Williams' reports from the Bosnian camps won a Bafta award in March 1993, ITN took out a newspaper advert to congratulate itself (reproduced opposite). The image ITN chose to symbolise its triumph? The 'mere detail' of Fikret Alic and the barbed wire which, the advert's text boasted, had become 'a worldwide symbol of the horrors of the war in former Yugoslavia'. ITN was in no doubt which aspect of the story had changed American and British policy towards Serbia: 'world outrage was aroused by ITN's reports', it recalled with pride, 'and the picture of the emaciated Bosnian behind the barbed wire at Trnopolje appeared on front pages the world over. Western opinion began to move towards a policy of military "peacekeeping"'. The 'single example' of the Bosnian Muslims apparently imprisoned behind a barbed wire fence at Trnopolje was the key to the way in which the Bosnian camps story was interpreted around the world. It was the image which prompted all of the comparisons with Nazis, Holocausts and the Second World War. Without it, the whole story would be called into question—as indeed would the dominant view of the war itself. Why else would Thomas Deichmann's investigation of a 'detail' have provoked such a reaction?

### CAMP CARICATURES

Some of our opponents have chosen to 'respond' to an imaginary article which Deichmann never wrote. Typical of this caricaturing tack was the letter in the *Observer* from Carole Hodge of Glasgow University, which claimed that the aim of the *LM* article was to 'cast doubt on the existence of camps in Bosnia where non-Serb civilians were tortured and murdered in 1992'.

Thomas Deichmann's *LM* article was based on the careful study of several hours of unedited (and largely unbroadcast) videotape shot by the ITN team during their visits to Bosnian Serb-run camps in August 1992, and on his own research trip

to Trnopolje during which he inspected the camp site and talked to people who had been guards and Red Cross officials at the camp during the war. He also interviewed the respected Dutch attorney Professor Mischa Wladimiroff, who has conducted his own investigations into Trnopolje and the barbed wire. If at the end of all that Deichmann had tried to deny the existence of camps in Bosnia, he would deserve either the Stalin award for rewriting history or an eye-test.

Drawing on his extensive research, what Deichmann did was to present a dispassionate view of Trnopolje camp, free from the usual histrionics. There is no such thing as a 'good' camp, and the ITN rushes show that many Bosnian Muslims in Trnopolje were bewildered and frightened people who would undoubtedly rather have been somewhere else. Yet many were refugees who, as Deichmann makes clear, came to Trnopolje of their own volition and stayed there voluntarily, seeking some degree of safety in a Bosnian Serb-controlled region ravaged by war. Others were waiting to be transported out of the region. For many of the people there, Trnopolje was the lesser evil compared to the alternatives in the war zone outside.

The real distortion of the history of Trnopolje has not been perpetrated by Thomas Deichmann, but by those who seized upon the ITN reports as proof that it was a concentration camp where people were penned behind a barbed wire fence. Thomas Deichmann has done more than 'cast doubt' on that distorted thesis; he has exploded it.

### YOU CAN'T SAY THAT

A favourite tactic of Deichmann's critics has been to ignore the facts which he has uncovered altogether, and simply to declare that it is illegitimate to raise such questions. The message is that the 'truth' about Bosnia and Trnopolje camp has been set in stone, and cannot be questioned. Anybody who attempts to criticise the accepted wisdom will find themselves beyond the pale and liable to heavy punishment.

This is the perspective from which the likes of Ed Vulliamy have been screaming 'Holocaust denial' and 'Historical revisionism' at *LM*. It is a favourite witch-hunting tactic of our times. As even the British government has discovered, the cheapest way to discredit somebody these days is to try to associate them with Nazism. People like Vulliamy will now

# THE DANGEROUS MR DEICHMANN

*German journalist Thomas Deichmann replies to his critics*

'Ask yourself, "Who is Thomas Deichmann?" He was a defence witness at the War Crimes Tribunal!' This was what a spokesman for ITN is reported to have told some journalists seeking information about their dispute with myself and *LM* magazine. The allegation that I cannot be trusted because I gave evidence at the trial of Dusko Tadic has been repeated elsewhere many times.

This is the cheapest scare I have come across since some old person once told me that Russians eat children for breakfast. To set the record straight: I gave evidence at the International War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague as an *expert* witness. On the basis of my experience reporting the war in Bosnia, I was asked by Tadic's respected Dutch defence advocate, Professor Mischa Wladimiroff,



shout about Holocaust denial whenever somebody dares to disagree with them. And yet he has the nerve to accuse *us* of trivialising genocide and insulting its victims.

In similar vein, ITN management took the unusual step of posting a statement denouncing Deichmann and *LM* on the staff noticeboard inside their HQ. It declared that 'ITN believes these allegations will only serve the interests of those who choose to deny the extent of the crimes that took place in northern Bosnia during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia'. So never mind whether the allegations are true or not—the point is that only those who deny war crimes would want to state such a truth.

Crying 'Holocaust denial' and 'historical revisionism' serves as an all-purpose excuse for ITN and its allies. If they can brand *LM* and Deichmann as beyond reason in this way, it relieves them of any responsibility to account for their own actions and arguments—in particular, to account for the reports and pictures which the world wrongly interpreted as proof of a Holocaust in the first place.

## GET DEICHMANN

The last recourse of ITN and its allies has been to sink to a petty campaign of personal abuse and character assassination against Thomas Deichmann. It has been said that Deichmann's evidence is tarnished because he is married to a Serbian woman (half-right—he is married to a woman), he is a Communist, he is a Nazi, etc. We are still waiting for somebody to discover that he is really an alien involved in an X-files conspiracy.

Deichmann is quite capable of replying to the attacks on his integrity. It need only be noted here that whenever people start such frenzied mud-slinging one can be sure that somebody has something to hide. The baiting of Thomas Deichmann looks like a desperate ploy to distract attention from the issues his report raises. It seems McCarthyism is alive (if a little unwell) in ITN's HQ on Gray's Inn Road.

It is about time ITN, Ed Vulliamy and the rest stopped the scaremongering and addressed the real questions. Better still, they should show the full, unedited film which they shot at Trnopolje on 5 August 1992, and let the world judge for itself.

ITN ad, *Guardian*,  
23 March 1993

Thomas Deichmann  
(left) and Mick Hume  
outside ITN HQ

PHOTO: DAVE CHAPMAN

to compile a factual, statistical report about how the Tadic case had been reported in the German media. I gave evidence on this rather boring report, full of endless figures, before the court. If anybody wants to challenge this report—try it. Otherwise shut up and stop questioning my professional integrity.

Listening to those who claim it discredits me to be associated with the defence case in any way, you get the impression that they would have preferred Tadic to be sentenced (or maybe shot) without any defence whatsoever. On the other hand being a witness for the prosecution, like Ed Vulliamy was, is considered a fine thing. But I think, if my report contributed to a fairer trial, I am glad to have been in the witness box. I prefer a legal system with benches for both

prosecution and defence lawyers rather than a Stalinist show-trial or a witch-burning.

I have never sided with any of the warring parties in the Balkans. I hate Serbian nationalism just as I hate any form of nationalism in other countries—including Britain and Germany. Reporting from Bosnia, I saw the tragic consequences of the war for people on all sides. I respect people like Fikret Alic who did not give up and survived the conflict. One incident I will never forget was when I drove a young Croat without valid papers through military checkpoints across Bosnia to reach his family in Split, by sticking my Unprofor presscard on his jacket and pretending he was my translator.

Those who accuse me of some kind of Holocaust denial should ask some Holocaust survivors from around

Frankfurt what they think of that defamation. For the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, I was editor-in-chief of a major exhibition about Frankfurt under the Nazis, which taught school children about what happened using film shows and discussions with survivors.

I have built a reputation in Europe as a freelance journalist with high standards, for whom a clear distinction between facts and fictions is an unbreakable rule. My investigation into the ITN pictures of Trnopolje camp has been published in prestigious papers across the continent as well as in *LM*. It raises serious questions about the image of the Bosnian Muslims behind barbed wire broadcast by ITN on 6 August 1992. I am still waiting for a serious, professional answer instead of more insults.



**"20 minutes after this report was broadcast on American television President Bush changed his policy towards Serbia"**  
Sunday Times 9/8/92

Who can forget the haunting images ITN sent back from a Serbian prison camp in Bosnia? The reports from Ian Williams for Channel 4 News and Penny Marshall for News at Ten, rapidly became a worldwide symbol of the horrors of the war in former Yugoslavia.

On Monday at the BAFTA awards, Director of the Serbian Prison Camp, took his place for Best News & Actuality Coverage. The award recognises the way in which ITN's story galvanised world opinion, and follows an IFTS International News Award, Gold & Silver award at the Annual Film & TV Festival of New York, a Broadcast Magazine Special Award, and Top prize at the Seventh International Scoop and News Festival in Angers, France. When the first full reports were

shown on August 6th 1992 the British government was still insisting on its policy of 'international inspection not military intervention'.

By the next day, world outrage was aroused by ITN's reports, and the picture of the emaciated Deichmann behind the barbed wire at Trnopolje appeared on front pages the world over. Western opinion began to move towards a more military peacekeeping.

On August 13th, the Russian jets responded to ITN's reports and Penny Marshall was allowed back to the camp to film the barbed wire down, and the first Coca

canvassed in. Winning the BAFTA award is a great achievement for ITN and it is proud of its continuing commitment to news and current affairs. The world's best news.

BAFTA

ITN

INDEPENDENT TELEVISION NEWS IS INDISPENSABLE TELEVISION NEWS.

## TAKE BACK THAT BAFTA

The ITN team carried off armfuls of prizes for their reports from the Bosnian camps, winning prestigious awards from Bafta, the Royal Television Society, the Film and TV Festival of New York, *Broadcast* magazine and the Scoop and News Festival.

Now that Thomas Deichmann's investigation has called into question the way that the ITN pictures from Trnopolje were produced and interpreted, *LM* magazine has written to the organisations concerned, asking that they withdraw those awards.

The pictures that fooled the world may be worthy of some kind of film award; but not for 'best news and actuality'.

# ED VULLIAMY'S RECOVERED MEMORIES

Mick Hume



Ed Vulliamy of the *Guardian* is the only one of the three British journalists present at Trnopolje on 5 August 1992 to have replied in person to the *LM* article 'The Picture That Fooled the World'. A central plank of his argument is that he knows the truth because he was there on that day and Thomas Deichmann was not.

For one who places such emphasis on the role of the eye-witness, however, Vulliamy seems to have a lot of trouble with his memory. His recall of what he actually witnessed at Trnopolje has changed more than once in the past four and a half years.

Take the contentious issue of the barbed wire fence at Trnopolje camp. Vulliamy's first eye-witness report on the camp was published in the *Guardian* on 7 August 1992, and was probably written before he had seen the ITN pictures from Trnopolje that were broadcast the night before. In this article, Vulliamy stated that 'Trnopolje cannot be called a "concentration camp"'. He did not say a word about any barbed wire fence.

A few months later, however, Vulliamy was recalling how he first saw the emaciated Fikret Alic 'behind the barbed wire of Trnopolje concentration camp' (*Guardian Weekend*, 10 April 1993).

The following year, 1994, Vulliamy published his book on Bosnia, *Seasons in Hell*. By now he appeared to have become even more certain about the importance of the barbed wire fence. He describes his first view of Trnopolje camp as 'another startling, calamitous sight: a teeming, multitudinous compound surrounded by barbed wire fencing' (p104, emphasis added).

By the start of this year, Ed Vulliamy's memory seems to have taken another turn. In January 1997, he told BBC World Service about his visit to Trnopolje, 'a place which has been made celebrated by ITN's footage'. Now Vulliamy recalled more than one barbed wire fence around the camp: 'We got out of the van to find all these men packed behind barbed wire fences, some of them skeletal in the most appalling condition' (*Newsday programme*, 26 January 1997).

That interview would have been conducted before Vulliamy had read Thomas Deichmann's investigative report on the ITN pictures of Bosnian Muslims supposedly caged behind barbed wire at Trnopolje. A week later, Vulliamy responded to the *LM* article in a vituperative *Observer* feature (2 February 1997).

He began by recalling the 'unforgettable sight' that first met him at Trnopolje: 'a group of men gathered behind a barbed wire fence, some of them skeletal, talking of mass murder in yet more camps'. The rest of the article, however, suggested that his memory of that 'unforgettable sight' had somehow altered slightly again during the previous week.

Stating that the men in the famous ITN pictures were being held in 'a small fenced-in area', Vulliamy now described how 'One of the four sides of this area was made of barbed wire. It was an existing fence on one side of a garage area which had been reinforced with new barbed wire and chicken wire'.

Ed Vulliamy remembers a barbed wire fence that has gone from being unworthy of mention to 'unforgettable'; a barbed wire fence that 'surrounded' the camp compound, then multiplied into more than one fence, but is now only one of four sides of a fence patched up with chicken wire.

He knows, because he was there.

ILLUSTRATION: HUGHES

# HIDING BEHIND THE HOLOCAUST

James Heartfield balks at the fashion for accusing people of Holocaust denial

Say anything that falls out of the mainstream of acceptable opinion these days, and it seems you risk being vilified as a neo-Nazi Holocaust-denier. Question the government's safe sex campaign and you can be accused of contributing to the 'Aids Holocaust'. Question the persecution of Hutu refugees in Rwanda and Zaire and you will be charged with denying the Rwandan genocide. Question the Western media's reporting of the Bosnian war and you will be accused of revising and sanitising the history of the Serb-run 'concentration camps'.

The accusation of 'Holocaust denial' is the trump card in any dispute. Pinning the charge of Holocaust denial on an opponent is like catching them with indecent photographs of children—it is the end of all doubts as to the rights and wrongs of the case. The Holocaust, the Nazi extermination of six million Jews, is an event that no good or sane person would want to deny. To underscore the importance attached to the Holocaust, Tony Blair has said that he will make Holocaust denial an offence (See Jenny Bristow, 'Who's afraid of Holocaust denial', *LM*, February 1997).

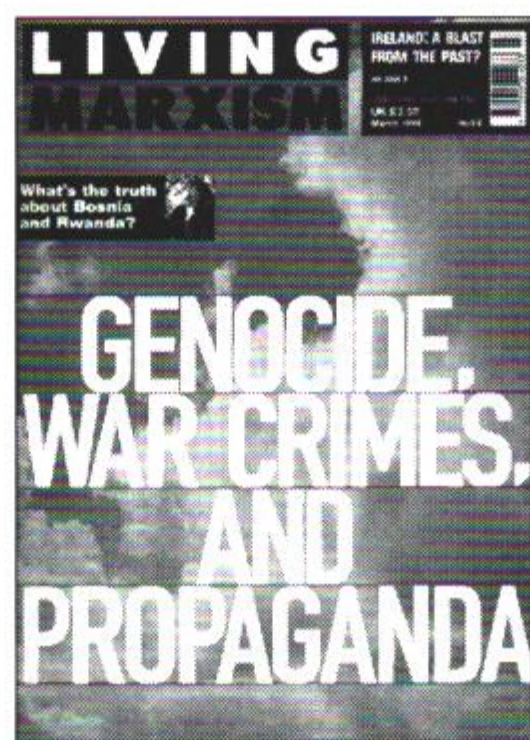
The problem with making something into a moral touchstone is that it can be rapidly debased. Once the word 'Holocaust' became a generic term for evil, instead of the description of a singular event, it was bound to be abused. The inflationary accumulation of twentieth-century 'Holocausts' is an indication of how the real meaning of Hitler's 'Final Solution' is being debased.

It is an indication of the limited moral resources of the time that people feel the need to plunder such a terrible event to lend *gravitas* to their own petty concerns. Like the teenager who denounces his parents as fascists because they want him to clear up his bedroom, today's determination to remember the Holocaust often serves only to trivialise the killing of six million Jews.

In the nineties, radical minded journalists have discovered ever newer Holocausts in far-off places. In Iraq, they imagined



Above: *LM*, March 1993  
Above right: *LM*,  
March 1996



## PINNING THE CHARGE OF Holocaust denial on an opponent is like catching them with indecent photographs of children

that they had found Hitler's reincarnation in Saddam Hussein. In Bosnia, one side in the civil war was volunteered for the role of genocidal killers—the Serbs. In Rwanda, where conflict had broken out between RPF guerillas based in Uganda and the government—leading to a barbaric slaughter—journalists rushed to recast the conflict as a clash between genocidal 'Hutu extremists' and their Tutsi victims.

Each of these newly minted 'Holocausts' in the media serves to mystify real events. These conflicts are horrific enough in their own right—but they are in no way comparable to the Nazi extermination. The Holocaust was not a civil war in an underdeveloped country. It was a systematic slaughter of six million Jews by the one of the most advanced, and supposedly civilised Western powers. It was the dreadful culmination of the racial policies that were prevalent in the West and an indictment of the assumption of racial supremacy. To equate the holocaust with the bloody local wars that have broken out in the Balkans, Africa and the Middle East is to misunderstand and trivialise it.

And just as the discovery of new Holocausts trivialises the meaning of Hitler's Final Solution, so too does it misunderstand these newer conflicts. The desire to rediscover the Holocaust serves to impose a ready-made schema of good and evil onto events that resist such a black-and-white interpretation. Ironically, the reinterpretation of these conflicts as Holocausts serves to make a case for the military intervention of today's great powers against relatively powerless adversaries.

In the reporting of Bosnia, complex events are re-played as if they were a Hollywood war film. The Muslims are 'today's Jews' explains John Keane in his book *Reflections on Violence* (1996). The policy of the Serbs is a 'Muslimfrei' state according to Ed Vulliamy, echoing the Nazi policy of a 'Judenfrei' (Jew-free) state. But clearly that was not and is not the case. The Serbian population living in Bosnia were opposed to the country's secession from the Yugoslav federation. The civil war that followed the Muslim president's declaration of independence was without doubt a vicious conflict where many atrocities were committed on all sides. But it was not a Holocaust.

Portraying the Bosnian war as if it were a Holocaust has an obvious consequence: it becomes imperative to take sides with the Muslims against the Serbs. Any atrocities committed against the Serbs, as in Krajina, can be covered up because they do not fit the frame. For some, it seems that any manipulation of the facts is justifiable in pursuit of the 'Greater Truth' that Hitler has been reincarnated yet again, this time as Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic.

By the same token, anyone that challenges the received wisdom about the civil war, especially anyone who exposes the war propaganda that passes for the news, must be guilty of 'revising' the Holocaust. So journalist Ed Vulliamy equates *LM* with Holocaust revisionist and far-right historian David Irving, because the magazine questioned the famous ITN pictures of Bosnian Muslims behind barbed wire at Trnopolje

camp. The charge of 'Holocaust revisionism' serves to prevent any debate. Anybody who questions the false equation of the events in Bosnia with the Holocaust is deemed as guilty as the apologists for the Nazis.

The myth of the Bosnian Holocaust has provided the moral justification for Western military intervention. In fact behind these mystifications, it is Western intervention itself that has stoked the conflict in Bosnia by forcing the partition of Yugoslavia. As Dave Chandler shows elsewhere in this magazine, the consensus that the Serbs are Nazis has served to justify the establishment of a Western dictatorship over the whole of Bosnia (see *Reading Between the Lines*, p43).

Sadly, the charge of 'Holocaust revisionism' is one that springs readily to the lips of loudmouths everywhere these days when they are confronted with the truth. In 1995-96, *LM* exposed the one-sided interpretation of the Rwandan civil war imposed by the United Nations Tribunal on Genocide in Rwanda. The consensus that Hutu extremists had been engaged in a systematic campaign of ethnic genocide in Rwanda in 1994 had obscured the real causes and consequences of the conflict. *LM* argued that this was not a conflict that could be neatly fitted into boxes marked good and evil, and trying to do so could only make matters worse.

The source of the conflict did not lay in tribal animosities, as the pundits claimed. Rather a local dispute was turned into a bloody slaughter by the West's own willingness to provoke the conflict between the mainly-Tutsi RPF, who were armed and trained by the USA, and the old Hutu-run Rwandan government which Belgium and France continued to support. The prejudice that this was a 'genocide' only increased the authority of the West to intervene more, further exacerbating the conflict—and also increased the RPF government's moral authority to hunt down the 'Hutu extremists' without mercy.

Not surprisingly, the apologists of the RPF regime were outraged. Human rights campaigners and even the Simon Wiesenthal Centre joined with the Rwandan Embassy in denouncing *LM* for 'denying' the Rwandan genocide. All of the bluster about Holocaust denial only served to hinder the discovery of the truth, by placing the events in Rwanda—and especially the role of the West—beyond real debate. (For the full story, see 'Rwanda: the great genocide debate', *LM*, March 1996.)

Since then, *LM*'s warnings about the likely outcome in Rwanda have been fully justified. Government troops are reported to have committed new atrocities against Hutus in Rwanda; the accused in the war crimes trials have been denied access to defence lawyers and subjected to summary justice; and more than 200 000 refugees are still hiding in Zaire, having fled Rwanda in fear of their lives. But for the self-appointed Holocaust commemorative committee the real suffering of these people is of little account. Indeed these wretched refugees are not even protected from the accusation that they are 'Hutu extremists', biding their time for when they can return to the killing fields. That is no way to remember the Holocaust.

# MAKING WAR FILMS

*Media images of war have often been 'improved', either on location or in the editing suite afterwards. Andrew Calcutt reports on the staging of history*

Some of the most famous war footage and war images have been at the very least "improved" and not infrequently faked for the camera,' says Roger Smither, keeper of the film and video archive at the Imperial War Museum. The staging of history is as old as war photography itself.

First World War: 'It does give a wonderful idea of the fighting', wrote Rider Haggard of the 'over the top' sequence at the climax of the film *The Battle of the Somme* (1916). Noting that one of the 'casualties' crosses his legs and looks back at the camera, and that the cameraman would probably have been shot dead if he had filmed a real battle from that angle, Smither concludes that the sequence is 'not genuine... its development into a classic part of the imagery of the First World War is one of the ironies of how media images shape historical memory'. (*Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol 13, No 2, 1993.)

The staging of the First World War is ongoing. Landmark television documentary *The Great War* (1964) made up for a lack of actual footage with imported movie material. This was 'wholesale and without acknowledgement', says Smither.

Spanish Civil War: Legendary cameraman Robert Capa is thought by some to have staged several of his pictures, and questions have been asked about the authenticity of his most famous shot, captioned in *Life* magazine as 'a Spanish soldier the instant he is dropped by a bullet through the head in the front of Cordoba'.

Second World War: Newsreel footage depicted Hitler dancing a jig as he waited to accept the surrender of the French in 1940. The film editor who created this sequence later admitted that Hitler only did 'a minute little jump of joy', which he then looped, freezing it at the 'silliest...sissiest point' to make Hitler look effeminate (*Esquire*, October 1958). This creative piece of editing was carried out by John Grierson, widely revered as the founding father of the British realist school of film-making.

One of the most famous pictures of the Second World War, which appears to show Desert Rats running into battle against the Germans at El Alamein, is believed to have been staged by a photography unit known as 'Chet's circus', described in *The Camera At War* by Jorge Lewinski as 'well known for their skilful fabrication of war pictures'. The Australian troops depicted are thought to have been storming their own cookhouse.

Because of the impossibility of filming night battles, some footage for the highly acclaimed film *Desert Victory* (1942) was shot at Pinewood Studios. Director Roy Boulting insisted that the re-enactment was not false. 'Sometimes fiction is the

ultimate truth', he claimed (*Sunday Times*, 11 June 1995). General Montgomery is also said to have arranged for 'action' scenes to be filmed behind the front line and before fighting began. In his autobiography Hollywood director John Huston recalls how the US army faked the Tunisian landings for the film *Tunisian Victory*.

Footage purportedly of the D-Day landings was filmed during the invasion rehearsal in Devon. Joe Rosenthal's famous photo of US marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima was staged after hand grenades thrown by a Japanese survivor disturbed the filming of the original event. The editors of *Life* initially refused to print Rosenthal's composition, but after its publication in *Time* they relented, and Rosenthal went on to win the Pulitzer Prize. Pictures of what really happened remain in existence, but the staged re-enactment has become the official version.

According to Jerome Kuehl, the 'guru' of historic film fakery, dozens of films purporting to show Nazi death camps are misleading. The pictures normally shown are of Westerborg, a German camp in the Netherlands, or from a Polish film showing Auschwitz a year after the war (*Sunday Times*, 11 June 1995).

Gulf War: Broadcast film of two British Tornado pilots shot down over Iraq showed their bruised faces and gave the impression that they had been tortured into saying what the authorities in Baghdad wanted them to say. This message was repeated in blanket press coverage. Meanwhile a copy of the complete, unedited film was given to the wife of one of the pilots on condition that she kept quiet about it (*Private Eye*, 15 March 1991). On that part of the tape which was not broadcast, the airman sent his love to his family, and told them not to worry about the bruising to his face which, he said, had occurred when ejecting from the cockpit of his aircraft (a common enough injury in such circumstances). The misleading impression given in the edited version of the film remains uncorrected by the mainstream news media.

The photograph of a cormorant soaked in oil, allegedly as a result of the release of oil into the sea on the orders of Saddam Hussein, is widely believed to have been taken in Alaska.



PHOTOS: IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

## THE EYE-WITNESS FALLACY, BY Malcolm Muggeridge

It is sad to reflect that the more reputable the eye-witness, the greater the caution with which his testimony should be received....The accomplished, the opinionated, the reputable writer, liable by virtue of these very qualities to see what he wants to see and hear what he wants to hear, will easily persuade and delude, where the hack's obviously slanted reporting gets disregarded. Out of righteousness and sincerity have come more deception than out of villainy and deliberate deceit. The tabloid press, with many readers, deludes few. Serious newspapers, like the *Times* and the *Guardian*, with fewer readers, delude many....

For myself, I find it difficult to see how truth could ever be extracted from this plethora of eye-witnesses, whose ostensible credentials are so impressive, but whose testimony is so dubious....[A]bsurdities abound, relating to all countries, all regimes, all the desiderata of our time, and all bearing the eye-witness hallmark. It is not surprising that Pilate did not wait for an answer when he asked his famous question: 'What is truth?' He, too, had doubtless been studying eye-witnesses' reports, including, of course, that of Judas Iscariot.

(*Tread Softly for You Tread on My Jokes*, 1966)

**LM** libel appeal

The **OFF THE FENCE** fund

**ITN**

tried to have every copy of February's *LM* magazine

**PULPED,**

to stop people reading our story about their award-winning pictures of a Bosnian camp.

The magazine refused to comply with that gagging order.

Now ITN is trying to silence *LM* by suing for

**LIBEL,**

a censorship law that the rich can hire to stitch up their critics.

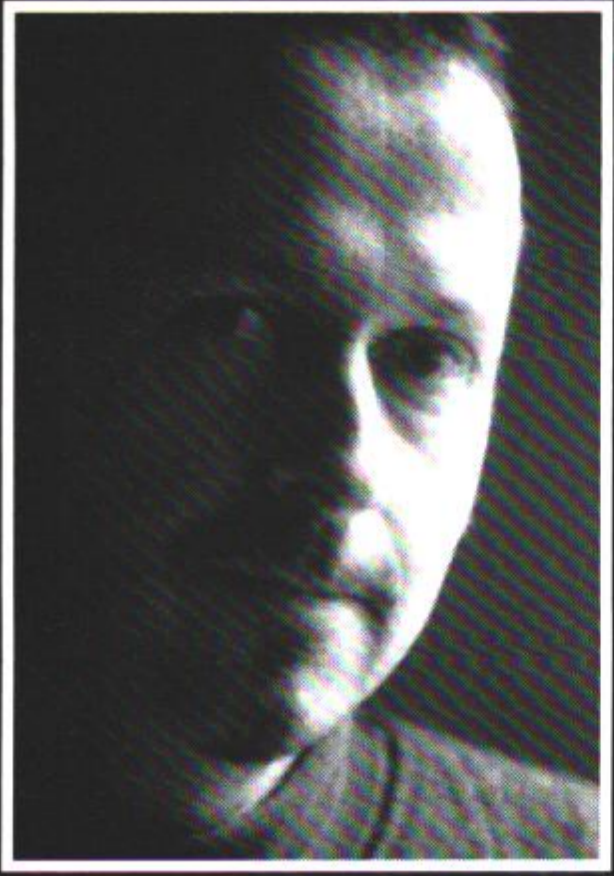
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# WHY NO





**I AM**

*It's St Patrick's Day on 17 March. And from pubs to poets, Irishness is in fashion. But unlike the Murphy's/Caffrey's/Kilkenny, Mark Ryan is bitter*

# IT IS PROUD TO BE IRISH

**S**ome months ago, walking through Les Halles in central Paris I came across a beggar with a sign saying 'Aidez-moi pour manger et vivre'—help me eat and live. I had almost passed when I noticed that at the bottom he had written 'Je suis Irlandais'—I am Irish. My first response was one of disgust that Paddywackery had reached such a global level of intensity that even the beggars in Paris were now claiming to be Irish. I have since been reliably informed of sightings of other beggars in Paris carrying the same message.

At first those three words—'I am Irish'—had a doleful ring about them. But as I reflected on the incident, the dolefulness was augmented by a tone of haughtiness and pride bordering on superiority. 'It is because I am Irish that I can take the liberty of scrounging from the rest of you', could be at least one interpretation of the beggar's cryptic message.

I was reminded of this incident some time later when reading of the Albert Reynolds libel trial at the High Court in London. Reynolds was the Irish Prime Minister credited with helping bring about an IRA ceasefire in August 1994. He had brought a case against the *Sunday Times* over a piece written at the time of his downfall in November 1994, which described him as a 'gombeen man' (an Irish petty usurer). One particular exchange between Reynolds and counsel for the defence stood out. Questioned over subsidies to the beef industry, with which he had some murky connections, Reynolds proudly replied that of the £100m Irish beef trade with Iraq, the European Union had contributed £90m in subsidies. It was hard to know which was the more astounding, the figures themselves or the pride with which Reynolds revealed these figures to the court. It is the same sense of pride or lack of shame that the beggar displayed, though of course on a vaster scale.

This is the first reason I feel no pride in being Irish. Of the seven deadly sins pride is the one which has lost all its transgressive power as a result of overuse. We have gay pride, black pride and disabled pride, and now we have Irish pride. To claim pride in any of these you need not have done anything at all, in fact you could spend your whole life in bed, or like the beggar, do something which most people would consider shameful and still feel proud of yourself. The fact ♦



◆ that simply being Irish is sufficient cause for pride makes it utterly worthless.

However there is something peculiarly odious about Irish pride which demands more than just abstention. The Irish have become something special in the eyes of the world. Go to a city almost anywhere in the world and you will find an Irish pub. Tell the citizen of San Francisco, Tokyo or Timbuktu that you are Irish and you will be immediately told how wonderful you are. There is no nation on the face of the Earth so flattered and fawned upon as the Irish. This is why the beggar in Paris could carry that sign, because Irish pride is indulged in a way that black pride is not.

In one way the Irish today are like the new Uncle Toms whom everybody loves because we are so harmless, endearing and ready to entertain. However Uncle Tom was a figure of contempt, which the Irish are certainly not. If anything we are envied and looked up to with genuine reverence and respect. This is actually worse because it is such a delusion. It is certainly no cause for pride.

It grieves me that we have become this nation of amusing buffoons. For most of my life I have supported the cause of Irish nationhood and independence from Britain, not because I thought that the Irish were in some way special and more deserving of freedom than others, but for precisely the opposite reason, because I wanted Ireland to be normal, to have what other countries have and for the Irish to be treated as equals. For Ireland to have achieved full independence would have been like the individual reaching full adulthood—once reached there is no more talk of the pains and stresses of growing up.

Instead of gaining independence, however, Ireland seems to have had a state of perpetual childhood ordained for it, so that the mere declaration 'I am Irish' allows for a special zone of indulgence to be created around the subject, a zone in which the normal rigours of the world are suspended. And rather than confront its oppressions, 'and by opposing end them', Ireland has now taken to marketing its unfortunate history as something to be proud of. The Famine, the diaspora, '800 years of oppression', and the rest of it are now a cherished part of 'Irish identity' as it is called. One of the more memorable lines from Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments* is that one about the Irish being 'the blacks of Europe'. It is the pride contained in that statement which is so distasteful.

I wince every time I read something about Ireland these days. Whether written by someone Irish or not, it is always the same sort of indulgent pap. Everything the Irish do is magnificent. They are so creative, so gifted in their use of the English language, and it is not even their own! The fact that the Irish have been speaking English as we know it for as long as the English themselves seems to have escaped many people. Then there is the remarkable levity of the Irish, that despite the terrible history, all they want is a 'bit of craic', which after a few pints of Guinness turns forlorn and wistful as they start to dream of 'the oul sod'. I also sometimes wonder if there is a central committee of censors somewhere who vet every piece written to ensure that some reference is made to Irish maturity and self-confidence.

Excessive praise is always stupefying and corrupting. It promotes narcissism and destroys any sense of discrimination, especially of the self. If we had achieved something that merited all the praise, there might be some cause for pride. But at a time when the country appears willing to trade anything for handouts from Washington and Brussels we are being treated to the most excessive flattery.

All the Irish have to do in this trade-off is peddle their identity. Irishness is now big business. It is difficult to assess the scale of it, but it would seem that an increasingly large portion of economic life in Ireland is now devoted to the marketing of Irish identity, primarily through the booming entertainment industry. This is the narcissistic economy, in which the image of Ireland has become the motor of real activity and enterprise.

The only problem in all this is that the image of Ireland which the Irish are so in love with is an image created by others, and must be constantly adapted to suit others' tastes. Unlike the awkward and rebellious Ireland which once existed, the new Ireland has no independent reality of its own. Irish identity is a pure fake, and like all fakes it is fanatically committed to the proclamation of its authenticity. Let us take for example the Irish pub.

The ersatz Irish pub has arrived at last in Britain, having conquered Europe and the rest of the world. The IRA ceasefire of 1994 seems to have opened the floodgates for this type of outfit. The O'Neill's chain plans to open 50 pubs in London alone. What is less widely appreciated is that there were hundreds of real Irish pubs in London before any of

Interviews: Brendan O'Neill

## PETER MCGOVERN, LANDLORD, MCGOVERN'S PUB, KILBURN, LONDON



'What makes McGovern's a good Irish pub? Well it's in an Irish area for a start and Irish people drink here. Most of our customers are either Irish or from an Irish background. A lot of young Irish men who come to England for work drink in McGovern's; I think they like the idea of having a place like that to go to, where they can be with other Irish people. But you know, Kilburn is very much an Irish area, so McGovern's is a popular place every night. We only have live music on the weekends; most other nights people just want to relax with a drink after a hard day's graft, usually on some building site or other.

'I've heard a bit about these new Irish pubs which are opening up in places like Highbury, and I suppose everyone can have their own interpretation of what an Irish pub is. I don't know very much about these so-called Irish theme pubs, except that not very many Irish people drink in them, which is a bit strange. What makes McGovern's a real Irish pub is that lots of Irish men and women drink here. I don't see how you can really have an Irish pub without Irish people, do you?'

## The FAKE IRISH PUB is never done with telling you HOW IRISH IT IS

these fake ones arrived. The real Irish pub, however, looked English: it had an English name, and sold the worst English beer. The clientele was made up almost entirely of Irish labourers of every age for whom a night's hard drinking might be rounded off by a brawl at closing time. For decades the Irish were the principal incumbents of police cells and hospital casualty wards in English cities on a Saturday night. I remember my first ever visit to London in 1981, walking into what appeared to be a spacious, well-appointed traditional English pub on the Kilburn High Road (for reasons which I have not yet worked out I went straight to Kilburn from Euston station). I had only walked through the door when I was nearly bowled over by a mountainous barman dragging two good-for-nothings along by the scruff of the neck and flinging them into the street. It was in such places that 'the fighting Irish' built their reputation.

Now whether you think the real Irish pub was perfect for a good night out, or the sort of dump you would not want to

be seen dead in, is not really the point. The fact is it was real. The pub and all its clientele existed, not in order to conform to someone else's image of what they should be, but to satisfy their own needs.

The fake Irish pub, however, exists in another dimension altogether. While the real Irish pub is thoroughly indifferent to its own image, and appears on the surface not to be Irish at all, the fake Irish pub is never done with telling you how Irish it is. Every spare surface is crammed with Irish junk and memorabilia. And as with the real Irish pub, the more you look, the more Irish it is, so with the fake Irish pub, the closer you look the less Irish it is. The Irishness is so insistent that it becomes a parody of itself. In the fake Irish pub you are guaranteed 'craic' more-or-less on tap, like all the recently-invented 'Irish' ales. And it all goes down in a nice PC environment with mission statements declaring the pubs to be 'safe, secure and women-friendly'.

The narcissistic, spurious and childishly insistent nature of Irish identity is evident also in the growing numbers discovering their Irishness. Often this acquires quite ridiculous proportions with English people suddenly developing Irish accents or gaelicising their names. The increasing numbers claiming to speak Irish might appear at first sight to be a throwback to the Gaelic revival of the turn of the century. The difference is that the revival actually had the broader aim of building a spiritually independent Ireland. Whether this was a noble or a silly ideal is not the point. It was at least inspired by something more than a concern with self-image. Gaelicisation today, however, is no more than a private affectation, rather like body-piercing.

Changing your name is a particularly clever piece of narcissism because it has the effect of drawing attention to even the most thoroughly uninteresting character. Let us take a fictional Englishman with Irish parents living in London and give him the real Irish name of Joe Snoddy. Now Joe feels that he does not get the attention he deserves, and so in order to preserve what he thinks is his threatened identity, he decides to change his name. Suddenly plain old Joe Snoddy becomes Seosamh O'Snodaigh and causes consternation everywhere he goes because nobody has the faintest idea how either to pronounce or spell his new name. All of a sudden familiar Joe seems about as familiar as an Uzbek herdsman.

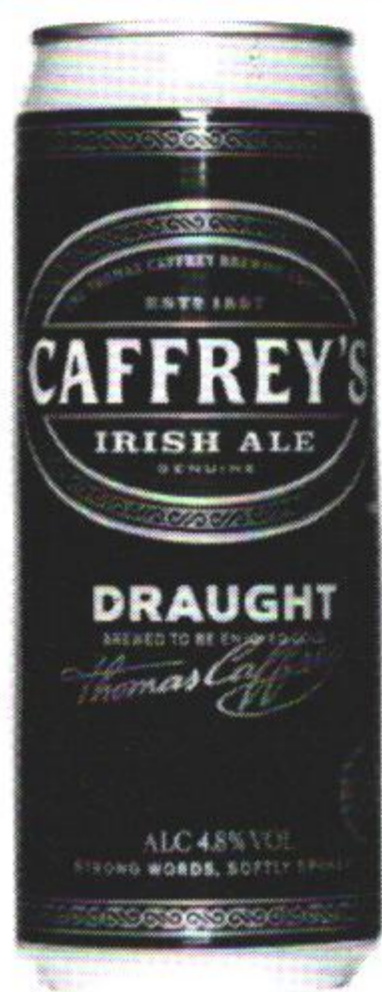
### AMANDA COLDRICK, BRAND MANAGER, O'NEILL'S PUBS



'The O'Neill's pub has been Bass Charrington's most successful pub chain ever. We started off in 1994 by doing a load of market research into what people wanted from pubs and what they liked best. When we examined the market research, the Irish theme just seemed perfect. You know, Irishness is about having the craic, having a good atmosphere and just friendliness in general. In our pubs you won't just find young people getting drunk on lager. And it's not just Irish people that come to our pubs. It's English, Irish, Welsh, Scottish, everyone. And, importantly, there's a 50/50 mix of male and female also.'

'In O'Neill's pubs we obviously have Irish music and we serve Irish food, but the main difference is the people. We employ people who are able to provide a welcoming and friendly environment which is central to the Irish way of life.'

'I think there are a lot of pubs out there which just put up a few shamrocks and leprechauns and call themselves an Irish pub, and there is nothing genuine about them at all. But we spent a lot of time and money on research and design. And we did a lot of research into traditional Irish names, and O'Neil has a lot of heritage; and when we trialled it, it proved extremely popular.'



◆ Reactions to Joe's new identity tend to take two forms. The more silly and indulgent English play up to Joe's narcissism and ask him how he came by this beautiful name, want to know about his efforts to learn his 'native tongue', and sympathise wholeheartedly with his tales of how the scars left on the Irish mind by the loss of the language have never healed. Joe now finds to his delight that with his new identity he has become the centre of conversation.

The other, more sensible reaction from the English is one of irritation at this ridiculous conceit which turns the simple act of giving your name into a major social ordeal. Joe is equally pleased with this reaction because it shows him just how ignorant and racist the English are and retrospectively confirms for him the wisdom of changing his name in the first place. Faced with the imperialist mentality of the English, he tells himself, he must assert his identity at all times. By now Joe is beginning to find himself so interesting that he decides to enrol on an Irish Studies course at the University of North London. There he will study his diasporised, hybridised, gendered, ambivalent and plural identity for three years. By the end of it he will be more convinced than ever that Irishness is perhaps the most fascinating and complicated state of being that he has ever found himself in as a woman.

The obsession with Irish identity is a relatively recent development. A decade or so ago being Irish was a fairly straightforward thing to which nobody gave a second thought, most people rightly assuming that those who lived, or were born in Ireland, were Irish. Now, however, the question of who is Irish has become so complicated that nobody can make head nor tail of it.

For some years Irish politicians and academics have talked about creating 'an inclusive definition of Irishness'. This meant breaking from the traditional definition of nationalism, which was held to be 'exclusivist' and insufficiently accommodating of the rich plurality of Irish identities now being studied so furiously. Instead of a single, indivisible, phallogocentric Ireland (as some feminists like to call it), the pluralists proposed 'varieties of Irishness', no single one of which would be superior to another. Thus Unionists, for example, who wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom, would be no less Irish than those who wanted a united Ireland. A word game originally aimed at dissolving a set of nationalist beliefs which had become

an embarrassment to the Irish establishment ended up dissolving Ireland altogether.

Until a few years ago Ireland had a population close to 5 million. It is now 70 million and rising. By the turn of the century Ireland may well rival China as the most populous nation on Earth. The acquisition of this vast population was achieved not by conquest or breeding, but by using different words. In creating an inclusive definition of Irishness, the 'Irish diaspora' seemed to acquire a reality of its own.

The supposed existence of an Irish diaspora is based on the historic fact of Irish emigration. In passing, it is worth noting that historically, Irish governments were ashamed of emigration since it reminded everyone of the failure to build a dynamic economy in which people wanted to stay and work. As with almost everything else Irish these days, the country has done a complete U-turn and is now almost bursting with pride at the diaspora.

The most important figure in the creation of the Irish diaspora is Ireland's President Mary Robinson. Shortly after her election, in an act characteristic of her mawkish and hollow sentimentality, Robinson lit a permanent candle in the window of her residence in Dublin's Phoenix Park to remind her subjects of the millions of diasporic Irish. Emigration, she says, was a form of exclusion. In order to create the inclusive definition of Irishness which everybody wants, all those who ever left the country must be re-included. Not only that, but the diasporic Irish must be recognised as just another variety of Irish, neither more nor less Irish than those back home (though as you can imagine, where home might be in this mess nobody can tell). It does not take too much to work out Robinson's interest in the diaspora. All of a sudden instead of being president of a small island of five million people, she commands this great empire of the mind. What a burden of responsibility she must feel as she surveys her vast and ever-expanding dominions from the lonely grandeur of the Phoenix Park!

The effect of the diaspora is to expand the meaning of what it is to be Irish and at the same time to turn Ireland into a figment of the imagination. The estimate of 70m diasporic Irish can only be the wildest surmise. Who in Britain, the USA, or indeed anywhere can honestly say that they have no Irish ancestors? And if there are a reputed 44m Irish in America alone, then is Ireland not in America as much

## HENRY KELLY, TV PERSONALITY AND RADIO PRESENTER



'Irishness has definitely become more popular recently, its the flavour of the month. I think the real icing on the cake has been *Riverdance*, a show put on with the utmost dignity, pride and professionalism. It wasn't just a bunch of old fellas with sawdust in their ears and safety pins in their flies saying "ah by Jaysus, lads". *Riverdance* singlehandedly exploded the myth that the Irish are unprofessional.

'It's virtually impossible to find anyone who doesn't like the Irish these days. But I don't think its patronising like it was in the past. People don't look at the Irish anymore and say, "Ah, aren't they harmless and good fun". We've demonstrated a new-found confidence and professionalism at every level. And as the Irish have become more confident, the English have become cowardly, curmudgeonly, round-shouldered and miserable; you only have to look at their football team to see that. I think one of the main reasons that the Irish have hit it off in Britain is because of Britain's lack of confidence about itself.

'I, for one, am dead chuffed to be Irish. I think we're a noble race. We've contributed to literature and culture and to what would be called the general uplifting of the human spirit in ways which are far disproportionate to our population on this planet.'

President Clinton  
declared he was  
'FEELING MORE  
IRISH EVERY DAY'

as it is in Ireland? The diaspora turns Ireland from a clearly defined physical entity into a state of mind which as it turns out is not even restricted to those of Irish descent. More and more, all that it takes to acquire an Irish identity is a leap of the imagination, rather like the sort of leap a lunatic makes when he imagines himself to be Napoleon or Alexander the Great. Some believe that you can acquire an Irish identity by spending a few hours in a fake Irish pub. What started with the Irishing of Jack Charlton and his football team has now reached the point where anybody can do it if only they wish hard enough.

During the 1995 St Patrick's Day celebrations in Washington DC, President Clinton, getting quite carried away with himself, punched the air and declared that he was 'feeling more Irish every day'. It was a strange thing for a President of the USA to say. If Clinton had emerged from a Tokyo state banquet to declare triumphantly that he was now feeling more Japanese, questions would be asked as to his mental health

and fitness to conduct negotiations. With Ireland, however, no such doubts could arise, because becoming Irish is an entirely harmless and universally recognised osmotic process. Many Hollywood stars are planning to become Irish. Marlon Brando and Sharon Stone are just two of the names mentioned. Daniel Day Lewis became Irish by acting in films with an Irish theme. Many more may be expected to follow in the years to come.

The diaspora and the desire of prominent Americans to become Irish is symptomatic of a general dissolving of Ireland into America. The closer you look at anything Irish the more difficult it is to tell whether it is Irish or American. At times the two are quite separate but exist in a relation of mutual flattery. Bill Clinton quotes Seamus Heaney, while Heaney supplies poetic adornment for Clinton's vapid prose. At other times what purports to be Irish is straightforwardly American. The so-called Irish peace process is an American peace process. As Gerry Adams keeps telling us, only the 'international community' (aka Bill Clinton) can 'move the process forward'. Irish nationalism, a political tradition created and recreated by generations of Irish, has now come under the joint ownership of the White House and Hollywood. Even the Ulster Unionists, once so hostile to US involvement in Northern Ireland, are following John Hume and Dick Spring to Washington. Sometimes it becomes a little too obvious that Ireland is a front for America. Clinton's clumsy attempt to install Mary Robinson as Secretary General of the UN (even though she had not finished her term as Irish President) backfired, as other members of the Security Council insisted that protocol should be maintained and Africa given a second term in the post.

Ireland's political vocabulary has gone completely American. Listening to Irish politicians speak I wonder if they are talking about Dublin or Downtown LA. Whether you care to look at Ireland in ethnic, religious or cultural terms, it is still one of the most homogeneous countries in the world. Yet its politicians never stop talking about its incredible diversity of traditions and cultures. If that's diversity, I would hate to see sameness.

Ireland's factory of grievance is also being stocked in America. It is most unlikely that the world at large would have heard much in the last few years of the Irish famine of 1846-50 were it not for the fact that American politicians

TOM PAULIN, POET AND CRITIC ON BBC2'S  
LATE REVIEW



'I haven't particularly noticed that Irish people are more popular today. But one thing which I've been wondering about is these Irish theme pubs which are springing up all over the place. I went to one in Oxford the other day, called Molly O'Sheas' or something, and it was ludicrous; it wasn't genuinely Irish at all. It was extremely melodramatic, you could see that it was kind of based on something out of a nineteenth-century drama, trying too hard to be Irish. I've always thought that real Irish pubs are quite basic and unkempt, but these new ones seem quite ungenueine.

'I think one of the reasons that Irish people might be more *visible* today is that, traditionally, English culture tries to draw in and assimilate different cultures. We live in a kind of cultural commonwealth, with Indian restaurants and Irish pubs. Perhaps that explains what's going on today. It could also be that the kind of new acceptance of Irishness is a product of the hope that there will be a peace settlement in Northern Ireland, which is looking less likely anyway. Maybe today's celebration of Irishness is analogous to what's going on in the North, with the relaxation of the war there and the beginning of what can loosely be described as peace.'

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◆ and academics are so eager to talk about it. St Patrick's Day parades in New York used to be mild and anaemic occasions which gave New Yorkers the opportunity otherwise denied them of dyeing everything green. This year the theme of the parade has the rather punchy title of 'British genocide', referring of course to the death of over a million Irish in the Famine. Teaching of the Famine is now obligatory in New York state schools as part of their human rights curriculum.

Why does everybody love this fraudulent thing called Ireland? It is not enough that Ireland's leaders are desperate to sell their emasculated product. If there were no buyers, Ireland would be getting as much attention from the world as Morocco does. What has happened is that 'Irishness', as an ephemeral set of values, encapsulates so much of what is thought of these days as virtuous.

Some of these values I have already alluded to. One is the suffering of the Irish at the hands of the British, symbolised for many by the Famine. However what in the past would have been considered a dreadful experience, and a rightful cause of anger, is today charged with an altogether different significance. Suffering now seems the most profound experience any nation or individual can have, one which gives the sufferer access to a special wisdom and authority denied those who can only lay claim to mere achievement. What gives the Irish an added authority where the famine is concerned is that they are no longer 'in denial' over their suffering and instead want to talk about it all the time, just as the adult who was abused as a child, but who now wants to 'speak out' about it, is treated as a voice for the millions of nameless abused. The singer Sinead O'Connor, in a particularly unpleasant piece of self-publicity, has made explicit this connection between Irish history and her own abuse. In the same way, Ireland's experience of Famine apparently qualifies it to speak for every country which has experienced starvation. Robinson, ever on the alert for signs of suffering, has used the Famine of 150 years ago to promote herself in Africa as the voice of the starving.

The Irish are also an indigenous people. Like the Australian aborigines or the Amazonian indians, the Irish are seen as a native people disturbed from their blissful and harmonious place in nature by colonialism. Indigenous people are terribly popular these days, championed by everybody from the Body Shop to the motor industry. Hostility to the tremendous achievements of modern society finds expression in the worship of those held to be its victims (though Amazonians and others always show a healthy desire to catch up with everyone else). Even though the Irish bear no resemblance to either aborigines or Amazonians, they still have the put-upon image projected onto indigenous peoples. I wonder when Anita Roddick will start using the Irish to advertise her wares. Perhaps an Orangeman in full regalia would make a nice change from the usual spectres of unfathomable wisdom which peer out from her window displays.

**ARTHUR MATHEWS, WRITER,  
 FATHER TED, CHANNEL 4**



'I think it would be impossible not to notice that Irish people are certainly more willingly accepted today, and perhaps more popular. I came over here from Ireland a number of years ago and lived in Kilburn for a while, so at first I didn't really notice it, because Kilburn is full of Irish people anyway. But now that I have at last moved away from Kilburn, thank God, it was such a complete dump, I have definitely noticed that it's kind of trendy to be Irish. You can make a lot of friends.'

'I think the Irish element of *Father Ted* is important in the way it has been successful, but I wouldn't say it was crucial. *Father Ted* is not only going down a storm in Britain, but it's also hugely popular in Ireland. The Christmas special pulled in an audience of 900 000 in Ireland, which, for a country of 4 million, is pretty amazing. And I don't really think *Father Ted* would be that successful in Ireland just because of its Irish connection. I think Irish people have more than enough Irish stuff as it is.'

'But I can see how the Irish humour might make *Father Ted* more successful here in Britain. Myself and the other writers are working on the next series at the moment, so it's keeping us in work at least. I think what really makes *Father Ted* a success is not so much its Irish connection, but simply that it's an extremely funny show. But then I would say that.'



However the Irish have something which other indigenes lack—they are a global tribe, and better still, one that anybody can join. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to become an Indian or an aborigine. Many people feel a terrible sense of inferiority, believing that the spiritual wealth possessed by such people will be denied them. But as we have seen, anybody can become Irish. As a result, with the minimum of effort, the man or woman in search of an identity has one ready to hand, thus making possible the simple leap out of rootless cosmopolitanism into a state of natural being.

In common with most indigenous peoples, the Irish are reputed to be exceptionally creative. Creative, that is, in the sense in which it is meant now, of creating images. People who create things are no longer deemed creative. Asians, who make most of the world's products are not creative, whereas the Irish who now make very little, but who produce plenty of images, are extremely creative. Nowadays if you are Irish it is almost assumed that you must be in the middle of writing a novel, making a movie, or forming a band. Needless to say, many an Irish chancer has exploited this reputation to the full.

The fact that the Irish have turned their self-obsession into the country's main industry fits in well with the perverse priorities of the global New Age. People who are concerned with making things are judged to be overly materialistic, while those who devote their lives to the study of themselves are seen as deeply spiritual and superior beings. That the Irish now profess such indifference to the issue of borders, territory and national unity serves to heighten their reputation as a people dwelling on a higher and more rarefied plane of the imagination.

It may not be too surprising that the Irish now view themselves as a nation far superior to their old masters, the British. While the British once sneered at the Irish for their lack of sophistication, their poverty and general backwardness, the Irish now sneer at Britain for much the same reasons. Not surprisingly, since the rest of the world appears to be backing the Irish in this beauty contest, the British occasionally get very upset about it.

Garret Fitzgerald is a former Irish Prime Minister who negotiated the Anglo-Irish Agreement with Margaret

Thatcher back in 1985. In an article in *Prospect* magazine in October last year Fitzgerald suggested that Ireland was perfectly suited to cure Britain of its national identity crisis over Europe and so help the old power come to terms with its diminished standing in the world. This is a favourite theme of the self-flattering classes in Dublin. It is Ireland which has a British problem, they cleverly suggest, not the other way around. This problem is not related in any way to the fact that Britain continues to occupy the north-eastern part of the island, an occupation which most of them are happy to support, but refers, instead, to the difficulty of living next door to a country which has some vestigial attachment to the idea of national sovereignty, and which tends, therefore, to obstruct Ireland's triumphal and lucrative march into the heart of Europe.

All this reminds me of the old surrealist map of the world in which everything is reversed, so that Mexico is a great bulbous backside which narrows into an anorexic United States, while Britain is no more than a tiny speck next to the great landmass of Ireland. We are now living in a surreal world in which self-emasculating, unburdening yourself of any awkward aspirations and principles, and making of yourself whatever others want you to be is considered one of the highest and most noble of aspirations. Ireland, which is nothing more than a set of desirable images produced for the rest of the world, somehow lords it over the neighbouring state which still holds a part of Ireland. To suggest that Ireland be the model for the treatment of crises of national identity is to take insanity as the standard of the normal.

Which brings me back to my Parisian beggar. Only the most complete emasculation could so empty somebody of all dignity that not only would they no longer feel any sense of shame in prostrating themselves before the public, but they would proclaim their identity at the same time, as if the act of begging was all part of the country's historic destiny. The poor man was probably so accustomed to people telling him how wonderful he was because he was Irish that when he fell on hard times, he thought he could make a few quid out of it. And the tragedy of it all is, he was probably right. ●

## BERNADETTE MCALISKEY, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST



'I've certainly noticed that Irish culture has become more acceptable in Britain and America recently. The Irish have become more confident, and are therefore expressing their Irishness in a much more diverse way, much more openly. The Irish used to be seen as entertainers, in a very insulting stage Irishman kind of way. Of course that was only a stereotype and beneath that there was a large diversity of Irish culture, but because of the stereotypes Irish people were not particularly confident. Now everyone talks about *Riverdance* and the new-found confidence, but don't forget that the Hairy Marys [Irish feminist dance group] predated *Riverdance* by many years.

'What really explains the new confidence in Irish people is that they have been able to break from the shackles of British culture. I think in Northern Ireland Britain still has much political influence which is central to everything, but at a cultural level in Ireland as an island, Britain is becoming more irrelevant.

'Pride is not a word in my vocabulary, Irish is simply what I am, but that doesn't make me any better than someone who isn't Irish. But I am confident in what I am, the centre of my own gravity is very solid, so I do not have any problem with other people's cultural identity. As someone who is Irish, I have a very clear position from which I relate to their culture.

'Now, with this new confident cultural identity it is easier for Irish people to be visible in Britain, and to express their culture. Just as you will never again see white people blackening their faces and singing Yankee Doodle Dandee, so you will never see someone presenting the Irish as funny little leprechauns. In fact, we are now entering a stage where if it's Irish you are not allowed to say it's crap. But there is a fair bit of crap around. We are as culturally capable of creating low-quality crap as anyone else.'

**C**regarious, handsome in a craggy way and as keen as the rest of us to sup some Cambridge-supplied wine, Bird regales us with endless descriptions of himself: 'London Irish—the blacks of our day'; 'Professional Londoner'; 'I am the *untermenschen*—a true representative of my class'; boasting of having been thrown out of the Workers Revolutionary Party 11 years ago for 'attacking the class, they called it', meaning that he threw some youths out of a WRP disco.

John Bird MBE—'I only took it because my mother thought I should be an OBE'—is the epitome of self-help and caring capitalism, and the great and the good love him for it. The *Big Issue* was started with help from the Body Shop, on the model of an American equivalent. Bird, no longer the editor, but still the owner, sells copies to homeless people at 35 pence, and they sell it for 80. 'No' he jokes 'you shouldn't give them a pound. I have got to keep them working hard'.

The magazine is an 'imitation of a capitalist enterprise'. Turnover is £12m, though profits are small as most money is ploughed back into the community, instead of 'being consumed by the capitalist'. Putting the money back into the community means putting it into the *Big Issue* trust, chairman J Bird. 'I wrote the articles of governance myself', he says proudly. The trust aims to house people and train them to get jobs. Bird is proud of his entrepreneurial skills. When he bought the *Big Issue's* premises for £1.2m people thought he would bankrupt the paper. Now the offices are worth £3.7m 'but I'm not selling until it reaches £4.7m'.

### Blair trap

Bird has made headlines more than once. He raged at the *Sun* for printing a story about *Big Issue* vendors making £1000 a week on the back of one man's idle boasting—'If you sold it from 6am to 6pm at the rate of one paper every 39 seconds!'. And he caught out Tony Blair with an interview that exposed Blair's neurotic hatred of beggars. 'After we ran that one Blair and Alastair Campbell [Labour's press secretary] turned on me, so I said "do you want a copy of the tape?" He hadn't done his homework.'

*Courtesy of the Cambridge Forum debating society, James Heartfield met John Bird, founder of the Big Issue*

## 'I AM THE UNTERMENSCHEN'

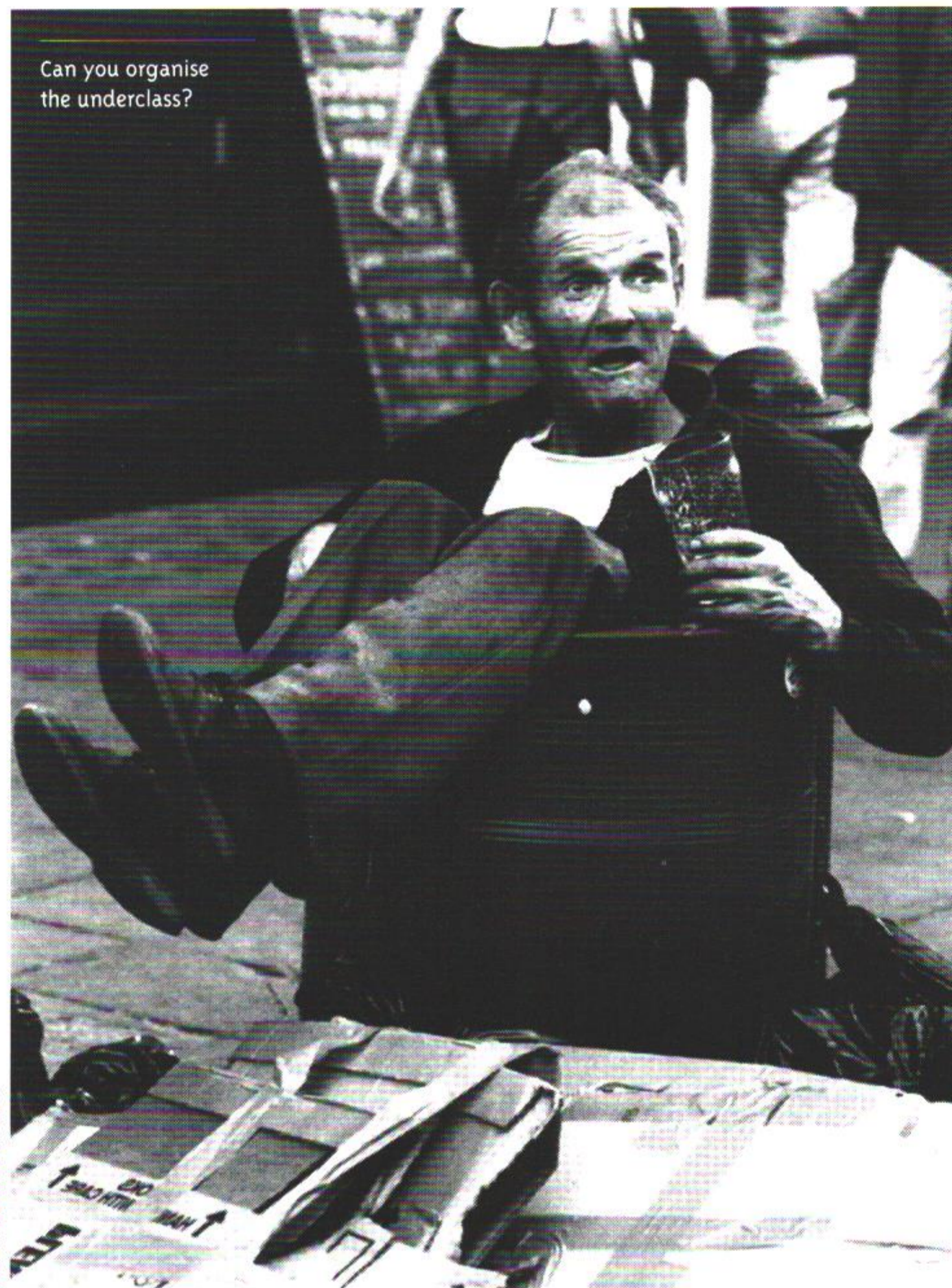


PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

In fact, Bird is not that different from another guest at the Cambridge forum's pre-debate dinner, Peter Barclay, chair of the Rowntree Trust. Like Rowntree, the *Big Issue* is a model of capitalist philanthropy. Bird takes on Barclay saying that you have to involve people, it is no good giving out favours from above. But Barclay is already there, citing the Edwardian housing developments in Somers Town as the model of urban regeneration that works with the recipients—'my Aunt did it'.

Barclay neglects to mention that the unfortunate slum-dwellers had all their clothes and furniture burnt and their bodies de-loused, in a public ceremony no less, before being moved into their new flats.

Bird soon charms the elderly, urbane toff with his salt-of-the-earth patter and they discover a common bond in dreaming up housing schemes and regeneration plans. The two of them pore over the history of Cadbury's, Port Sunlight and other philanthropic enterprises, eager to work out the

lessons of how to organise charity without fostering dependency. Snippets of working class history, Gerrard Winstanley's Diggers and real recollections about fighting slum landlord Peter Rachman in the sixties all merge together in Bird's fevered chat. It is easy to forget whether we are listening to a real memory or some nugget of nineteenth century struggle.

To me, Bird is scathing about his experiences on the left—especially being in the same revolutionary party as Vanessa Redgrave. 'Fifteen years I was in the movement' and then she got on the central committee in the space of a few minutes, he complains. They were all middle class, not like him.

### Tree people

Class is the big issue for Bird, the issue that never gets raised. It irritates him that he gets flattered by the powers-that-be for his charitable work, but at the same time the poor are only ever seen as an object of sympathy. He sees himself as organising an army of the *untermenschen*—the underclass. 'I am the only one talking about the underclass from their point of view—all the rest are racists', he tells me. He wants to take the word underclass back from people like Charles Murray, author of *The Bell Curve*, and turn it from a badge of shame into a source of pride.

There are 8000 *Big Issue* vendors registered, 2000 in London, though due to their precarious lifestyles they are not all working at the same time. Bird promises he could put together a regiment of ex-servicemen, abandoned to the street after their sterling work at Goose Green ('Not that I believe in all that post-traumatic stress bollocks'). But it is hard to believe that Bird really is organising the vanguard of the underclass anywhere other than in his own imagination.

Every class has its underclass, its *déclassé*, he says. The working class and the middle class. It is an idea that blurs the difference between Bird's itinerant vendors and the middle class tree-people that identify with his project: they are all the *untermenschen* to him. I guess what he means is that his vendors and his own rude charm give the project its street cred, but the real target audience is all the greeny slackers who buy the thing. In return he gives their lacklustre DIY politics a dash of proletarian colour.



DR MICHAEL FITZPATRICK

# Doctoring the family



Though the main focus of the current vogue for promoting 'good parenting' is on teachers and social workers, doctors too are expected to play their part.

The bold 'proposals for public policy' which emerge from the report 'Men and their children', published by the New Labour-ish Institute for Public Policy Research, include a directive to doctors in antenatal clinics, which these days are often conducted in GPs surgeries:

'During pregnancy, birth and early parenthood, fathers exhibit intense interest in parenting, and involving parents at this stage can greatly increase sustained participation...Fathers' response to pregnancy should be directly assessed early on and at frequent intervals as a routine

part of antenatal care...Fathers should be actively encouraged to attend antenatal examinations and parent training.'

Though there is no suggestion that the wearing of simulated pregnancy padding by expectant fathers should be made compulsory, the drift is clear.

Doctors are also expected to participate in the machinery of surveillance and intervention that has developed under the rubric of 'child protection'. This means maintaining constant vigilance for signs of abuse or neglect and keeping in close contact with local agencies, including social services and the police. Because, according to Labour front-benchers Jack Straw and Janet Anderson, as people accept that in extreme cases it is justified to intervene to remove children from their families, then it should also be acceptable to intervene at an earlier stage with a preventive strategy ('Parenting: a discussion paper', November 1996). For New

Labour, preventing what it considers is an automatic transition from poor parenting, to juvenile delinquency, to a life of crime, justifies interference in every family in the country.

Even when it is not explicitly welcomed, the widening scope of medical intervention in family life generally passes without much comment. Yet it marks a dramatic reversal of past trends.

In an essay first published in 1950 the famous child psychotherapist Donald Winnicott insisted that 'we must never interfere with a home that is a going concern, not even for its own good' (*The Family and Individual Development*, 1965). He warned that 'doctors are especially liable to get in the way between mothers and infants, or parents and children, always with the best intentions, for the preven-

tion of disease and the promotion of health'. Winnicott, famed for his sensitivity to children's mental states, was acutely aware that intruding between children and their parents, who are the most reliable guarantor of their interests, could have a destabilising effect.

In a later essay, entitled 'Advising parents', Winnicott amplified his views. 'All my professional life', he began, 'I have avoided giving advice', indicating that he would discourage other doctors from doing so. He carefully distinguished the legitimate sphere of medical intervention—the treatment of disease—from giving 'advice about life', which was beyond their competence: 'Doctors and nurses [should] understand that they do not have to settle problems of *living* for their clients, men and women who are often more mature persons than the doctor or nurse who is advising.' According to Winnicott, a man with a radical democratic outlook, for a doctor to advise people

about such problems was not only impertinent, but implicitly authoritarian.

I was recently struck by the wisdom of Winnicott's approach when a patient asked my advice about how to manage her rather difficult adolescent daughter. A single parent on a low income, she has raised her daughter successfully on a neglected estate poorly provided with amenities. It is an achievement far beyond my experience—and, I suspect that of most of the members of the IPPR and the New Labour front bench. And yet, perhaps influenced by the current climate of opinion that values professional expertise in such matters, she seeks my advice.

It is clear that any advice from me would be worse than useless. Based neither on theory nor experience, such advice would be likely to be either banal or wrong, or both. The very act of giving advice could only reinforce the feelings of inadequacy that led her to ask for it in the first place and undermine her confidence still further. As Winnicott concludes, you can be helpful in this sort of situation only if you 'can stop giving advice'.

The intrusion of an external source of authority into the family undermines not only confidence, but accountability. This is the effect of help lines such as Child-Line and Parentline—and New Labour proposes to develop a more accessible national telephone service. Originally motivated by a concern to expose child abuse, such agencies find themselves dealing with a wide range of day to day family conflicts, in which they act as a sort of conciliation and arbitration service. As a result, children are indulged, adults degraded and parental authority weakened.

The contrast between Winnicott's approach and that of today's promoters of parenting is striking. Whereas he recognised the limitations of legitimate medical practice, today's practitioners are inclined to expand the boundaries of medicine to include wide areas of the life of society, and to extend their own intervention into formerly private spheres of individual and family life.

What would Winnicott have made of the IPPR? 'Childcare professionals', says their report, 'should be trained to assess and work with fathers...obstetric staff should be trained to optimise fathers' usefulness and understand their needs'. I think he would have suggested that childcare professionals should be better trained to care for children and leave the fathers to look after themselves. I am sure that any woman facing the prospect of childbirth would prefer that obstetric staff concentrated their energies on delivering babies rather than wasting their time trying to 'optimise fathers' usefulness', a forlorn project if ever there was one.

## In this case any advice from me would be worse than useless

# FUTURES

Norman Foster's bold plan for a 385-metre Millennium Tower in London is in danger of being demolished by the weight of criticism. Penny Lewis, who likes them tall and modern, looks at the case for erecting the biggest building in Europe

## CARRY ON STORMIN', NORMAN

City of London planners are soon to come to a decision on Norman Foster's design for a Millennium Tower. Foster's tower would be built on the site of the bomb-damaged Baltic Exchange, and there are many who, it seems, would like to do an IRA job on his designs. English Heritage, the Royal Commission of Fine Art, the London Planning Advisory Committee, Civic Trust, the London Chamber of Commerce and the Civil Aviation Authority plus a posse of architectural critics have all condemned the idea. Their chief complaints are that the building would be unsustainable as well as being out of keeping with the spirit of London. Little has been heard from supporters of the project.

The first thing to be said in its favour is that the Millennium Tower would represent a remarkable engineering achievement.

One of the most important things with a high rise building is to get the lift strategy right. 'Our system uses lift efficiency and what we call sky-lobbies', says project architect Andrew Miller. 'You can take a high speed lift to the 27th floor. You step out of the lift into a double height sky-lobby. From the sky-lobby you transfer to local double-deck lifts. I know they don't exist anywhere in this country. We have 10 of these which are high speed—nine metres a second. The fastest lifts are in the Landmark Tower in Yokohama—12.5 metres a second—but they are not double-decker.'

The building will also incorporate novel mechanisms to minimise movement in the wind. 'Our culture in Britain is not about high rise buildings so we have to ensure people are not unnerved', says Miller. 'The movement itself is not an issue, it is the comfort of the people inside that matters. You can stop the movement by putting a large

mass at the top of the building on top of a viscous pad. When the building moves, the pad moves an equal distance in the opposite direction and slows the building down. The systems are called TMDs (tuned mass dampers). Of course in Japan they are used to detect earthquakes as well as wind.'

Miller is keen for people to learn more about how complex buildings actually work. Events like the Kobe earthquake in Japan or the bomb at the World Trade Centre in America generate anxiety about high-rise towers. In Philip Kerr's *Gridiron* (1995), a 'smart' tower tries to kill its architect by activating its TMD after a computer virus creeps into the control system. The novel reflects a widely held sentiment that complex and sophisticated buildings are likely to go wrong. But in fact very tall buildings can be safer than smaller ones. The Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco has survived numerous quakes, and after Kobe, designers discovered that buildings above 30 or 40 storeys had survived where smaller buildings had collapsed. The Millennium Tower has been designed to absorb the impact of an explosion.

### Bio-climatic

Unlike the dark blocks of the 1930s or the anonymous glass towers of the post-war period, the Millennium Tower is also a building designed for living and working in. The unusual design, with its free-form plan, is nothing like a conventional skyscraper. The tower will be divided into three parts with double-height sky-lobbies on the 27th and 28th floors and on the 58th and 59th. At ground and lower-ground level retail and public space is planned, above that financial trading floors and then offices. To take advantage of the view, residential units will dominate at the top.

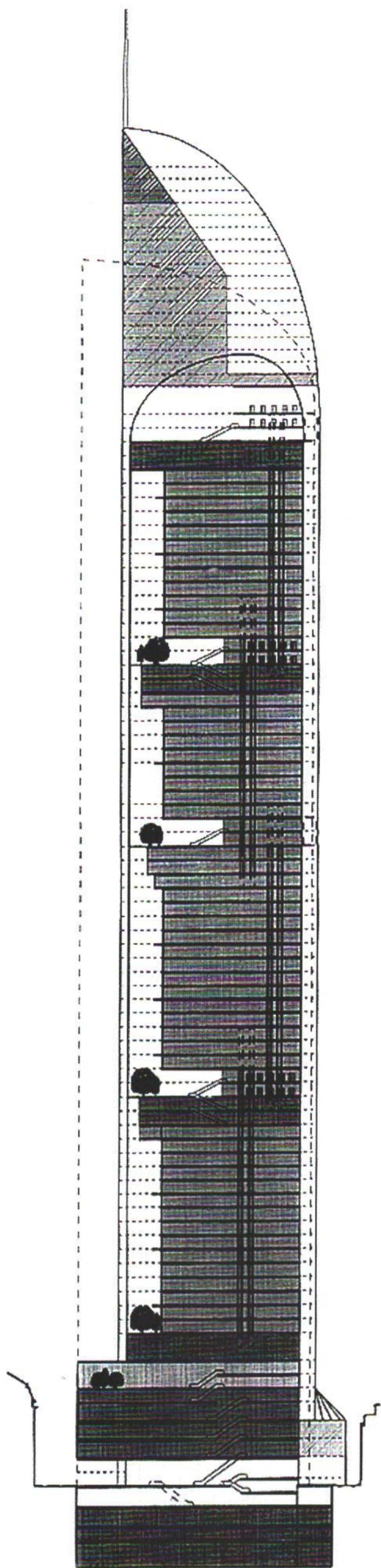
Foster and Partners' buildings tend to make a virtue out of transparency. The Millennium Tower is no exception. Miller explained the problems and possibilities involved in designing an all glass tower: 'With the glass we take maximum advantage of the view and natural daylight. Lighting can be a very expensive part of maintaining a building. But then you have things like plant rooms. Rather than going from an office which is glazed to a plant room which is stone clad, we will continue to take the glass surface round and instead of having a back wall we will have an insulated panel. In the offices we will use blinds and back-up panels and in other areas we will use glass extrusions.'

'As the daily conditions of the sky change and the position of the sun changes, so the appearance of the building also changes. It takes on a life. The sun is reflected off it; from the insulated panels you get a green appearance. There are also proposals to have photovoltaic panels' (solar panels that make electricity directly).

Herbert Girardet, author of *The Gaia Atlas of Cities* (1992), argues that skyscrapers depend upon 'access to virtually unlimited amounts of energy'. This charge, that they are 'unsustainable', misses the point. The towers designed by architects like Foster and the Malaysian Ken Yeang have been described as 'bio-climatic'. They include sky-parks, terraces to provide shade for the building, cooling systems supplemented by natural ventilation and blinds that can be controlled at a local level. Architects like Foster and Yeang are using technology and natural conditions to provide the highest quality space for the user. As Miller points out, the London project will use a 'ventilated wall' in which the outer skin of the building is kept at the right temperature

London may not actually need a  
**92-STOREY**  
**SKYSCRAPER,**  
 but it would be a major  
 source of  
**INSPIRATION**

SECTION: FOSTER AND PARTNERS



PHOTOMONTAGE: TOM MILLER

The view from St Paul's Cathedral as it could be

# If the tower really is inappropriate it can only be because London is being left behind



by a simple natural ventilation system. The project may also rely on cold water from an aquifer (underground reservoir) 65 metres beneath London to cool its heating system. But this is not a problem—indeed, it may help London combat its falling water table.

London may not actually need a 92-storey skyscraper, but it would be a major source of inspiration to British designers. We would not have to travel half way around the world to see the latest developments in human achievement. Besides, if investors are prepared to risk the capital on this project when most investors are over-cautious, who are the critics to say that it is not on?

The London Planning Advisory Committee, an all-London body set up in 1986, opposes the project because it does not meet the criteria laid down in the LPAC's own vision for London: 'a strong economy, a good quality of life, opportunities for all and a sustainable future.'

'It was an attractive proposal in the wrong place at the wrong time', says Robin Clement, deputy chief at the LPAC. Asked when the right time would be, Clement suggested the height of the eighties boom. 'We are more concerned about sustainability in the nineties. We see this tower as the last of the dinosaurs. For Foster it's the first of a whole new crop. For us it's the final flicker. With a building like this you have to ask: will it help to keep London flexible and respond to change or will it be an immovable monolith? Will it be like another Canary Wharf? The last thing we need is another one of them.'

## Unsustainable?

Clement expresses a serious anxiety about the future of the City. 'The good thing about a low-rise block is that if you run out of money you can stop building it two thirds of the way. If you are building a tower block you look a bit of a nana if you stop two thirds of the way. Chicago has been left with a big hole in the ground where a project collapsed and look at Canary Wharf.' He also thinks that it just won't work: 'To stack up in a great heap 10 000 plus jobs, you have got to have some expensive lift system and a major air-conditioning one. The building will cast a major shadow. Norman Foster thinks that if you put some plants half-way up a tower it makes it sustainable—but you have to put a lot into keeping plants growing at that height. We mean sustainability in its widest sense. Accepting the premise that you should get more

out than you put in, not the other way round.'

Andrew Miller has already answered these objections. But to little avail. Attacks on the skyscraper spring from an attitude rather than reasoned arguments. So far, Trafalgar House, the project's developers, do not seem to be in the mood to give in. Spokesman Paul Emberley insists that only his company can judge the viability of his project. If they did not think it could happen they would not still be working on it. 'Why shouldn't London be a city like Hong Kong, Chicago or New York? If London is not to die as a financial centre, as a forward-thinking centre of commerce, we must allow things to develop. We are a major financial centre. If we want to remain one, I think it is important that we have some symbols of that excellence.'

Skyscrapers, as Emberley makes clear, are of course symbols of monetary might as much as they are expressions of human ingenuity. All major building innovation is powered by a combination of the market and ambition. So what? Most of the buildings we love were built to improve the status of business or God. The Chrysler building's silver profile is a favourite throughout the world. Its art deco top was designed to resemble the chromed bonnet of a Chrysler motor car—a permanent advert in the sky. Why should not today's buildings be an expression of wealth and achievement?

Norman Foster is a world-acclaimed architect, his projects in Frankfurt and Hong Kong a source of national pride. So why is a prestigious project at home receiving such a hostile reaction? When the project was launched Foster said it would be 'a statement of confidence in the city for the next century'. As we approach the new millennium, confidence in the capital city seems to be at an all time low.

Organisations such as English Heritage express a widely held fear that London has no future, only a past from which we can scrape a living for a while as long as everything remains the same. Tower of London good, towers in London bad. The heritage industry is an important part of the British economy, but people need a future based on something more than the sale of the capital city's past to visitors. The objections to the Millennium Tower belie a profound conservatism and pessimism. Foster and Partners' proposal is a major leap in scale and imagination. It will stand out not just because it is tall, but because it is innovative.

If the Tower really is inappropriate it

can only be because London, despite its claims to be the world fashion capital, is being left behind by other world-class cities. At the same time as Foster and Partners have been designing the Tower in London they are working on a scheme for a conical tower to be built in Japan or China. It looks like a rocket or a radio telescope. It is 840 meters tall, twice the height of the London project, and 50 000 could live, work and play within it. It has a helical external structure and is divided into seven parts. The top two parts are designated as viewing platforms, restaurants, and collectors for wind and solar energy. The rest of the building divides into five units of equal height. In each section there will be a sky-centre. In this one building Foster is creating a small town.

## East to West

The London Planning Advisory Committee claim the London Tower is 'backward looking and derivative'. If it is derivative of anything, it is of the best practice being developed in the East where a rapid process of urbanisation is taking place. While the Tower's critics seem barely awake to developments in Asia, Foster and Partners have a sophisticated grasp of the benefits and the limitations of tall buildings. As Foster says, 'most of the equipment that you take for granted in terms of lifestyle in the West has come from the East. That is where all the boundaries are being pushed. It is inevitable that Asia will come out of that experience a more dynamic, energetic and optimistic society'. By contrast, Britain is in danger of becoming a backwater.

The *Building Design* magazine runs a cartoon that sometimes includes the characters Storming Norman and his old partner Lord Rogers of New Danger. Richard Rogers, architect of London's Lloyd's building and the Pompidou Centre in Paris, is said to be close to Blair. Foster is less political but has always been seen as a bit of an eighties boy—the friend of commercial capital. Rogers is decidedly communitarian; his ideas are often touched by that miserable puritanism that seems to inform many of New Labour's reactions to events. Foster is more pragmatic and more optimistic. If Labour get in it is easy to imagine them rejecting the planning appeal that is sure to follow a rejection of the design. Never mind a new Royal Yacht, perhaps as one parting gesture the Tory party might try to see to it that Foster gets his Tower. That way backward-looking Britain would at last manage to catch a bit of forward-thinking architecture. ●

'Masturbation has come of age!' rejoices sex expert Betty Dodson.  
Jennie Bristow will not be wishing it happy birthday

## JERKING OFF

**W**hen I was at high school six years ago, masturbation was one of the last sexual taboos. Boys did it and never talked about it; girls talked about everything else, but would never admit to touching their own genitals. Although I missed the generation when it was supposed to make you go blind, the term 'wanker' was still an insult.

Now, masturbation is everywhere. Open a women's magazine at the feature on 'how to get an orgasm', and you are likely to be told that 'self-help' is the thing. The supplement to February's *Cosmopolitan* approvingly quotes research showing the popularity of masturbation among thirty-somethings—particularly career women. The new edition of *The Joy of Sex* has 13 entries on masturbation for both sexes (Alex Comfort MB DSc, 1996).

Even for kids, masturbation is no longer supposed to be such a guilty secret. 'Growing up' guides for young people always include a section on masturbation, stressing that it is normal and that everybody does it: as *Just Seventeen's* agony aunt Anita Naik writes in one of her 'answers to all the questions you're too embarrassed to ask': 'Masturbation is actually a perfectly normal and natural way to learn about your body.' (*Am I Normal?*, 1995, p89).

No doubt the new-found openness about masturbation is reassuring for those who still believe the myths. But there is a fine line between a pragmatic acceptance of masturbation as something that everybody does sometime, and a celebration of wanking as a positive activity in and of itself. The new celebration of masturbation is the biggest turn-off of all.

Last year Crown Trade Paperbacks reprinted *Sex for One: The Joy of Self-loving*, by American 'sex expert' Betty Dodson PhD. Dodson originally published it herself in the mid-seventies under the title *Liberating Masturbation*. She says that, with this reprint, her 'commitment of liberating masturbation has been accomplished'. 'Masturbation has come of age', she writes, and 'the list of famous masturbators will be growing by leaps and bounds and it will continue right into the next millennium'.

Dodson's argument is that the taboos surrounding masturbation have led to a psycho-social repression that goes way beyond sex. Sex, for Dodson, is fundamentally about understanding your own body. She sees the ability to become sexually self-sufficient, in a world where vibrators and sex toys have a larger role to play than mere mortal partners, as a blow against all the conventions surrounding sex and relationships.



Dodson is well aware that she is teaching people far more than the ins and outs of jerking off. She is re-defining the sexual act as something which has nothing to do with love, intimacy, fun or any kind of attraction between two people. At which point anybody who has ever had real sex might ask, why swap it for DIY versions? Masturbation might be something to do when there is no alternative, but it is hardly an adequate substitute.

Dodson's descriptions of masturbation make it look even more boring than it is. By pitching herself against romantic love and the convention of 'sex for two', Dodson reduces sex to a mere sensation, comparable to the sensation following 'a massive evacuation of the entire large colon'. She sneers at all those who dispute her orgasm-first ideology:

'I can hear the Romantic Feminist Matriarchy screaming, "That's disgusting! She thinks an orgasm is like taking a dump". And I'd answer, "A lot of orgasms aren't nearly so satisfying".' (p101)

In Dodson's world, sensation is everything while meaningful relationships are a myth. For her, spending hours playing with yourself is not

only a good use of your time: it is the most fulfilling night's sex you are likely to get. But there is more to life—and more to sex—than having a decent crap.

If the only point of sex is to produce some kind of physical sensation, then masturbation is a quick and easy way to get it. But so what? Whatever else you say about sex, it is at least interactive; and whatever you say about masturbation, it is anti-social. To make out that there is something liberating about masturbation is no more convincing than the idea that celibacy is a political statement. Even to take the term 'sex for one' seriously means being obsessed with your own body, scared of relationships, and scared of sex. Dodson is nothing more than an excuse-maker for sad wankers who have too much spare time, too little imagination and too few partners.

Reading Dodson, and hearing rumours of 'masturbation education' among school children in America, makes me glad that in Britain we seem a bit more repressed. Although masturbation is openly discussed, it is usually presented either as 'a form of quick sexual relief' (*Cosmopolitan*), or as part of a preparation for normal, two-person sex: 'finding out' what turns you on so you can show your partner.

While teenage magazines emphasize the normality of the practice, they are careful not to condemn people who feel slightly more cagey about it. In response to a letter from a girl describing how her mum had seen her masturbating, 'Dear Russell' of *Sugar* magazine explains that 'almost no one' admits to masturbating, and that 'to be fair, your mum was probably so embarrassed that she doesn't feel able to talk to you about it' (*Real Life Special*). But still, you might ask why anybody would want to engage their mum in a conversation about masturbation.

Unfortunately, in a world where safe sex rules, Dodson's ideas stand to gain ground. But don't panic: there are two possible antidotes. The uninitiated could do worse than to read the 'essential' growing up guide for boys by Nick Fisher, *Just Seventeen's* agony uncle. Pointing out that, despite its 'selfish side', masturbation has its uses, he gives this advice to horny lads:

'To be excessive or over-zealous about giving yourself repeated pleasure is too self-absorbing. Practised in moderation, masturbation is a wholesome exciting release. Too much is just an indulgence.' (*Boys about Boys: The Facts, Fears and Fantasies*, 1993, p61)

As for the rest of you, how about a shag? ●

# It cuts ure .comedy

## Signs of the times

While the Queen may balk at the prospect of corporate logos on the royal yacht, the police have no such qualms, with about £70m now being raised by sponsorship. Police cars, vans and horses now sport livery ranging from Harrods to Threshers.

*'She hardly has any teeth—what damage could she do? She didn't draw blood, but now the group are trying to say her behaviour is a health hazard'*

Sharon Mansfield, whose 20-month-old daughter Olivia has been 'excluded' from mothers and toddlers sessions at Austrey, Warks, until she gets over her 'biting phase'

# MANNING THE BARRICADES

*Bernard Manning—fat racist bastard, funniest man in Britain, or a bit of both? Ed Barrett (C of E, recovering) spoke to two Jews, comic novelist Howard Jacobson and Manning's biographer Jonathan Margolis, about Big Bernard and offensive comedy*

Two elderly men, both suffering from serious medical problems, have recently been embroiled in legal proceedings and branded racists. One, an alleged former SS officer accused of murder, has been shown a certain sympathy by the media for his ordeal. The other—comedian Bernard Manning—has been crucified. While Waterstones bookshops happily stock books about Hitler, they are not prepared to give shelf room to a biography of Manning—even one written by Jonathan Margolis, a Jewish broadsheet journalist who previously wrote a biography of black comedian Lenny Henry.



Comedy is naturally drawn to contentious areas and taboos. Indeed, Margolis believes that 'any comedian who is not offensive in some way lacking'. He recalled 'receiving a perfectly sensible letter from a woman in Coventry saying that she disagreed. She gave Jackie Mason as an example, and she said "although I'm not Jewish I think his humour is wonderful, completely gentle. He's an ex-rabbi, you know". I must write to tell her that he is the Bernard Manning of America'.

Talking about the furore over Frank Skinner's Ikea-parody 'chuck out the chimps', Margolis insists that all comedy will offend somebody. 'I was listening to the car radio and two young comedians were making end-less jokes about old people and Alzheimer's. If I was po-faced, I could say Alzheimer's is the most desperate state to be in, and I if I had an aged parent suffering from it, I could have got offended. The point is, if you don't like it, turn it off.'

It has long been generally accepted that jokes can be tasteless without anybody outside the Mary Whitehouse lobby feeling the need to be outraged. Every past disaster prompted its own spate of sick jokes. Making comedy out of tragedy was part of everyday life. Social backgrounds were equally fair game. Nowadays these are no laughing matter. Margolis recounts how a lecturer recently told a student that Harry Enfield should be banned for 'classism'. And if Manning cracks one about concentration camps ('My father died at Auschwitz...he fell out of a machine-gun tower'), the intake of indignation is as sharp as if he had denied the very existence of the Holocaust. The response to Dunblane was so overwhelmingly pious that nobody dared tell a joke about it.

Jacobson wants no truck with this stifling atmosphere. 'Humour usually raises questions',

than most of his generation. Manning himself always says that it is an act ('that's why they call 'em "acts"'). Certainly there are plenty of tales of his charitable works for Indian kiddies, and of good relations with his ethnic neighbours. On the other hand, there are his occasional off-stage pronouncements in support of Hitler and Enoch Powell. But Margolis is adamant that Manning is no racist role model: 'He's fat and ugly. If he was like Tom Cruise, or a polite Eric Morecambe type, he might be dangerous.'

Jacobson holds that Manning's personal views are irrelevant. 'There is a fashion', he points out, 'for judging artists by their attitude to women or whatever, like the recent Degas exhibition. Art is transfiguring, that's the whole point of it. If we didn't have difficult feelings and ugly emotions, where would art come from? Fuck what Degas was like as a person—what does his art do? I don't give a shit what Manning is like'

Bernard Manning always seems to have been a bit too much for some. In the seventies, he was 'too blue' for the telly. In the eighties, when blue was the colour, he was too racist, sexist, homophobic, and what he would call 'all that carry on'. In the nineties, with an anti-PC backlash in comedy, you would think his time had finally come. Surely a student union somewhere has changed its Mandela bar to a Manning bar. Surely the alternative comedians-turned-chat show hosts are queuing up to invite Bernard on. But no. To all but his own loyal audience, he is known only as a caricature racist.

To the chattering classes Manning is a bigot who tells mother-in-law jokes (although, as Jonathan Margolis points out, he has never told a single mother-in-law joke—he finds them offensive). The only time Manning is discussed in polite circles is following one of his rare TV appearances (which inevitably provoke 'outrage'), or when his stage show gets



PHOTO: ILLIAN EDELSTEIN

The first anniversary of the Dunblane Massacre will be marked by a toy weapons amnesty at Wraybury Combined School, where pupils aged between five and 11 will be asked to hand in plastic knives, swords and guns. Meanwhile Scout leaders are considering dropping the shooting proficiency badge. Paintball competitions have already been banned by the Scout Association.

'I think that within two years you will find that quite a good percentage of schools have gone over to having some sort of staff uniform' John Kirk, head teacher of Old Leake Primary School in Lincolnshire, which has issued staff with navy blue school uniforms to 'distinguish them from strangers who might be a threat to the children'

banned by local councils or 'exposed' as racist by investigative journalists.

You might expect a 65-year-old comic whose act has remained much the same for three decades to be little more than a period piece. But Manning attracts a young audience and has them eating out of his hand. The tiredest of jokes gets a laugh when he tells it. This is because his on-stage persona is seamless and total. Not just a regular guy with sordid prejudices, Manning comes across as the ultimate misanthrope, without a good word for anybody.

In Manning's act, black people get it worse than most, so it is disingenuous of him to say that he treats everybody the same. Yet his viewpoint is so unremittingly cynical and scathing that he has no qualms about telling jokes about police beating up black people—and telling them at a police function. Even if Manning really did relish the prospect of such a beating, whether you end up laughing at the police or at the blacks depends on your own point of view. 'A joke does not have to have a single meaning' observes Howard Jacobson, comic novelist and author/presenter of a new book and television series about comedy, *Seriously Funny*. 'They often rebound and bite their own tail.'

Likewise the joke Manning used to tell about a man in court for throwing a Pakistani off Blackpool Tower. 'I take this very seriously', says the judge. 'Do you realise you could have killed someone? Whether the punchline is anti-Paki or anti-judge, or both, depends on where you are coming from.

Is Manning a bigot? Does it matter? In his informative biography of Manning (Jo Brand should read it—she might learn how to tell a joke), Jonathan Margolis recalls the black comedian Charlie Williams using the phrase 'Jew boy' on the prime-time TV show *The Comedians* in the early seventies, and maintains that Manning is no more prejudiced

But surely his personality impinges on his act? Without the stigma and the myth, would Manning be so convincing as a performer? 'If we knew him to be nice it would stand in our way' admits Jacobson. 'Thomas Mann talks about clowns and says you cannot think of their biographies, of them going home to their wives and children. It would kill the whole thing. They are demoniacal, belonging to another world. Someone complained about my championing Chubby Brown, who beat his wife up—I don't want to know if he's got a wife.'

'Manning's greatest crime in the eyes of the puritan left', argues Margolis, 'is to be an unpleasant reminder that the working class isn't what the left wants it to be. His stage persona is a caricature of working class reality—not many working class people are that racist or sexist—but this constitutes the received wisdom of the middle classes. The right too: I expect Paul Johnson loathes him.'

Margolis does not want Manning on prime time either, but for different reasons. 'It is absurd to say that Manning's act is an incitement to racial hatred. But I would hate that kind of humour not to be underground. I would hate Bernard Manning to be on mainstream TV, because of the fact of it being naughty.'

Jacobson is equally impatient with those who talk down to Manning's audience: 'They think the working classes are lost to liberal fair-mindedness. People say to me "Oh you're not telling me they understand it, they can work it out". Well, they don't have to "work it out", we do it all the time.'

Jacobson does not accept the term 'racist' in comedy: 'It is not the same as developing an extermination policy. Races and cultures are necessarily offensive to one another and we need to control it, just as we need to control our indispensable passions like sex. Comedy allows us to both enjoy and control it.'

'The wonderful thing about jokes is that they allow you to have the pleasure and also know that the pleasure is wrong. It was hypocritical of people—including Johnny Speight—to say that *Till Death Us Do Part* was meant to be a parody of racism and complain that people were enjoying it. Of course we enjoy it, because we recognise it and there's a pleasure in recognition.' Yet our capacity to entertain two conflicting ideas, to be simultaneously amused and repulsed, seems beyond the ken of those who would try to control humour.

he notes. 'I can't believe that something is too awful to make jokes about.'

**Bernard Manning** by Jonathan Margolis, is published by Orion, £17.99 hbk

**Seriously Funny** by Howard Jacobson, is published by Viking in conjunction with the Channel 4 series, £20 hbk



PHOTO: HOWARD JACOBSON (SERIOUSLY FUNNY) CHANNEL 4

## SCRIPT-WRITER JOHNNY SPEIGHT IS AGAINST BANS ON COMEDY:

'*Till Death Us Do Part* was attacking racism. You cannot attack racism without showing it. If people say that the series should not be broadcast, you could say then that you must not broadcast anything that deals with reality. That is the reality. We are racist in this country.

'Should there be bans on comedy? Not at all. How do you start to ban it? Do you say to comic writers "you can only be funny about certain subjects"; "make fun of this but you must not make fun of that"? What kind of a society is that?

'If you laugh at a thing you do not believe in it so devoutly. If you laugh at politicians you do not rush to the polling booths afterwards. Jonathan Swift, Voltaire, George Bernard Shaw, Sean O'Casey, Lenny Bruce—they continually poked fun at things which the powers that be did not want poked at.'

Johnny Speight was talking to TV journalist **Tessa Mayes**

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## YOU CAN'T TOP A

### Signs of the times

Membership of Culford Scout troop is now down to one — 12 year-old Robert Carmichael—the same membership as Bristol Young Conservatives

Sega is hoping to sponsor football's red and yellow cards (to remind players that 'it's only a game'). Refs awarding the most cards will be awarded cash prizes and free holidays. That is a reward for the stress of dealing with tense situations, of course, and should not be confused with an incentive to go card-crazy.

**Animal welfare** activists are planning to stand candidates under deliberately confusing names, like 'conservative' in the hope of picking up votes. However, the experience of Wykeham Conservative Club suggests they should be cautious: since dropping the 'Conservative' bit

# GROSZ

ORGY, 1919, RA



For the first time since 1962, there is to be a major exhibition in Britain of drawings and paintings by George Grosz. A soldier in the German army during the First World War, Grosz was court-martialled for insubordination. Throughout his life he showed contempt for authority: he was fined for producing drawings which insulted the military, for 'an offence against morality', and for blasphemy. In Berlin after the war, Grosz was one of the founders of Dada, but in the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) exhibition of 1925 he moved to a reconsideration of figurative art. He went on to produce some brilliantly biting satire which makes contemporary British humorists look like Mary Poppins. ●

**The Berlin of George Grosz**, Royal Academy of Arts, London (20 March to 8 June)

**Alka Singh**

which it is named: a 'spectrum of experience and effect' which can be 'either a beauty aid, a sleeping potion, an hallucinogenic drug or a deadly poison.' Dead boring, more like.

Most of the pieces are so obsessively private that they are almost impenetrable. At most they function as one-liners or knowingly adolescent musings, such as Jean-Michel Alberola's *Rien*, a neon skull which also spells the word 'rien' (nothing). The best items are by Paul Noble and Carsten Holler, who redeem

## HARMLESS POISON

Billed as 'an international group show for the *fin de siècle*', Belladonna is meant to be 'excessive, decadent, irrational and intoxicating'. The curators compare their compilation from the work of 29 artists to the plant from

THE BILLIARD TABLE, 1945, RA



## POETRY IN MOTION

Braque: The *Late Works* comprises 45 paintings by Georges Braque, co-inventor of cubism, dating from the early 1940s to the artist's death in 1963. It fills only four rooms at the Royal Academy, but in these four rooms there is a whole world of aesthetic experience.

The exhibition demonstrates both the continued impact of cubism and the great distance travelled by Braque from the heady days before the First World War when he and Picasso changed the course of art history.

These works are remarkable for their sensuous beauty and contemplative inwardness. Yet this is a different kind of contemplation from that elicited by a Renaissance masterpiece. Braque formulated the distinction in terms of the 'eternal' as against the 'perpetual'. The *Mona Lisa* is 'eternal' in that it raises contingent human beauty onto a superior but ultimately static plane. The 'perpetual' Braque strove for is the expression of a process of becoming.

The 'metamorphic' quality of Braque's later work builds on the cubist method of apprehending an object through the multiplicity of its facets. But it goes beyond cubism in recognising that the concreteness of objects is fully rendered only when their propensity to change and merge into something else is also taken into account. 'The first time the impor-

alt.culture.tech

## OBSSESSION WITH COMPRESSION

Gemma Forest believes that the IT world is small-minded

In Korea, Lucky Goldstar (LG) has just spent £10m developing a helmet. You put it on, stare at a 0.7 inch liquid crystal display, and eyeball 180 000 pixels (picture elements). It feels like being in front of an eight-foot screen. LG's foray into virtual reality is based on digital versatile discs (DVDs) which hold five gigabytes, about seven times the mere 650 megabytes on a normal CD.

LG's rival Samsung has rolled a telephone, colour printer and document scanner into one, then added a fax machine which remembers 24 A4 pages, and a photocopier which does runs of 99 copies. Same small box, five different functions.

Products are getting smaller as electronics are getting smaller. The laser in a CD player

operates at a wavelength of 0.78 microns (millionths of a metre); that in a DVD player, at 0.65 microns. Chip designers



now etch at 0.35 microns. By 1998 the Taiwanese may be shipping DVD-equipped laptops able to play complete movies.

Miniature marvels also emanate from Japan. Already the Nintendo 64 games machine has a 64-bit processor in it—a chip once found only





KAREN KILMNIK, THE BLACK PLAGUE, 2001

from its name, the club has experienced a 60 per cent rise in till takings.

**'We must ensure that in our desire to do the right thing, by taking away alcohol from under-age drinkers, we do not take away the self-respect of small people at the same time.'**

Right-wing Tory MP Michael Stern (5'5" or 5'4", depending on whether you accept his own or his daughter's figures), who has warned of the dangers of discriminating against short people, particularly by police officers.

**Rabbits reared at a residential home for the mentally handicapped are being sold to the Royal Marines base at Lympstone, Devon, where recruits are taught how to break their necks, gut them and eat them. Chris Deacon, of Animal Concern Today, said you learn nothing by breaking the necks of tame animals. True, but today's soldiers, who get beaten up by girls in Seven-Eleven shops, probably couldn't handle a ferocious wild rabbit.**

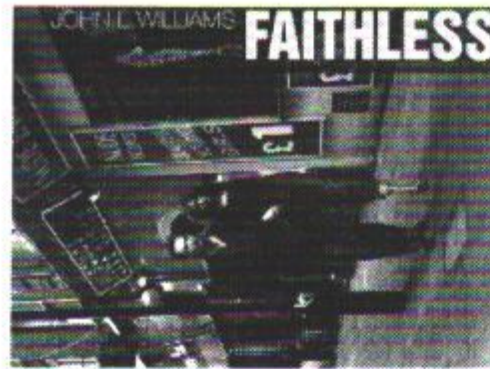
**'What would you sooner do—have a beer in the pub or be counselled?'—Tony Bullimore, arriving in Australia, land of beer and therapy, after being rescued from his ordeal at sea**

themselves with wicked humour. Noble's D.d.Dolphin (1994-5) depicts a seaman lying in agony on the beach, his leg chomped to the bone by a dolphin. Holler's Jenny (1992) is a spoof video guide for child murderers and sadists. Entries include placing swings on rooftops and pricking armbands in swimming pools. Inevitably, the show also includes quotations of other artists. Mariele Neudeker's fish-tank quote of a Casper David Friedrich painting only makes you wish that the real thing was on view.

In Belladonna, the curators insist, 'things are not quite what they seem'. Beneath the deliberately banal surfaces we are supposed to read menace, torment and anxiety. But the exhibits are too insipid to be truly poisonous.

**Belladonna**, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (until 12 April)  
**John Croke**

# a l t . c u l t u r e . p u l p



As a journalist John L. Williams has written extensively about other people's pulp fiction. The publication of *Faithless* this month marks his debut as a crime novelist in his own right.

'Even though I have read far too many crime novels over the last few years, it is a bit like listening to a lot of pop records and still not knowing how to play the guitar parts. If you have to sit down and choreograph a chase, it is not artistically demanding, but there is a craft which just reading does not teach you. Those were the bits which I found hardest. It has given me a lot more respect for the craft of writing. And less respect for the kind of writing which is all about showing how clever you are. Which is quite easy to do.'

'Writing *Faithless* started a couple of years ago when I was sitting in the Burger King in Camden High Street. I was struck by how

tance of this phenomenon struck me', Braque recalled, 'was in the trenches during the First World War, when my batman turned a bucket into a brazier by poking a few holes in it with his bayonet and filling it with coke. For me this commonplace incident had a poetic significance...Everything changes according to circumstances: that is what I mean by metamorphosis'.

Braque wrote that 'one must arrive at a certain temperature which renders things malleable'. Gallery 2 begins to demonstrate these possibilities, but it is in the imposing space of Gallery 3 that we reach the culmination of this process. It is hard to imagine any room in the world at this moment with such a breathtaking array of paintings.

**Braque: The Late Works**, Royal Academy of Arts, London (until 6 April)  
**Louis Ryan**

a pub is still bearable to drink in, all of a sudden it is discovered by zillions of fashionable young people who are no doubt in bands I have never heard of. But there was a time when everyone I knew was in bands playing around Camden Town, and I am sure we must have pissed people off when we went into pubs.

'*Faithless* is about people scuffling around in the early eighties. But I object to the we-all-had-skinny-ties-once nostalgia for a rock 'n roll past that never was. I am interested in the loss of faith and the loss of politics in my generation. In 1981-2 all the bands I knew were deconstructing the record business, making records on DIY labels. And then almost overnight, some of us had given up because we were crap, and others were making records in New York that cost \$2m. I fixed on 1983, when Thatcher was re-elected, as the point at which it all changed. My protagonist is trying to investigate what the hell happened.'

**Faithless** is published by Serpent's Tail, £8.99 pbk  
John L. Williams was talking to **Andrew Calcutt**

in \$25 000 workstations. Nintendo graphics now look three dimensional. Then again, Sharp's digital cameras not only squirt snaps down the Internet, but also record speech and recognise text. Meanwhile the Japanese government will spend, over the next five years, nearly £150m on tiny machines—complete with motors, cogs, wheels, limbs and tools—which can get inside a pipe, a vein, a nuclear reactor, or a chip itself.

American labs are on to similar stuff. After Apple's unhappy experience with the Newton, US computer manufacturers have renamed the personal digital assistant the Handheld PC, equipped it with Microsoft's Windows CE software, and arranged for us all to browse the Net with the help of titchy electronic pens. If advances like this allow the US electronics industry to maintain its current rate of growth, within a decade it could account for not four but 15 per cent of economic output. But the striking thing about the American IT world is how pessimistic it has become. In 1994, the US Semiconductor Industry Association declared that by 2010 Moore's Law—named after Gordon Moore, co-founder of the original chipmakers, Intel—would no longer apply. The processing power of chips, it said, would no longer double every 18-24 months. Others agree, and set doomsday as early as 2001.

Etching below 0.1 microns will certainly demand extreme ultraviolet light, beams of electrons, or something else. But there are those who contend that, if physical limits were not enough, we should in any case make do with the level of miniaturisation we have got. Bell Labs, for one, has dropped some of its research into this area.

In this increasingly unenterprising climate, I feel bound to uphold miniaturisation, East-ern-style. Yet ever since Ernest Schumacher's outpourings in the sixties, I have never been sure that small is really beautiful. Ingenuity down there with the microns means that we can manipulate information more skilfully. By enabling us to display images and sounds, it will help us to plan and control things to a greater degree. But if information will assist in designing better bridges, it cannot move people over them. Nor can it feed, clothe or house people.

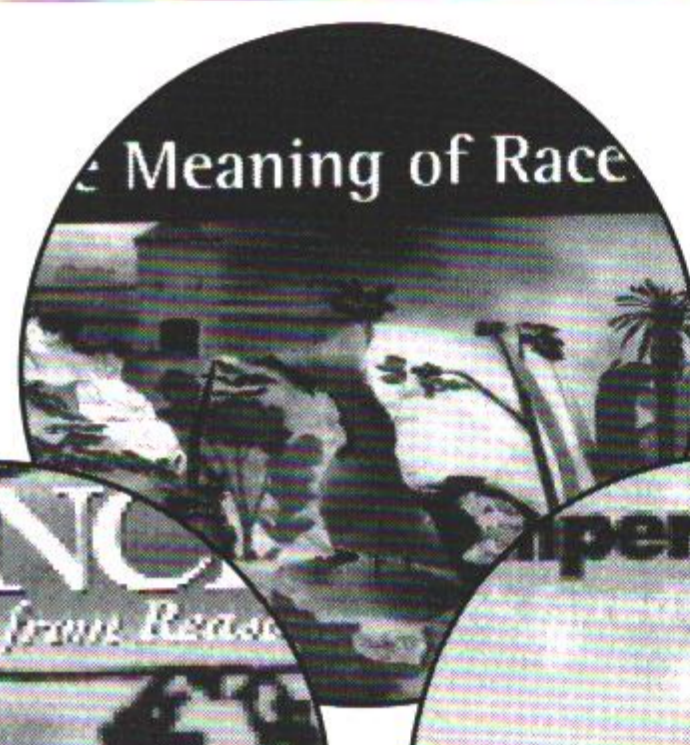
So, land of Lilliputian IT, roll on. But let us also see some Man-sized, city-scale innovations.



**MARXISM, MYSTICISM AND MODERN THEORY**  
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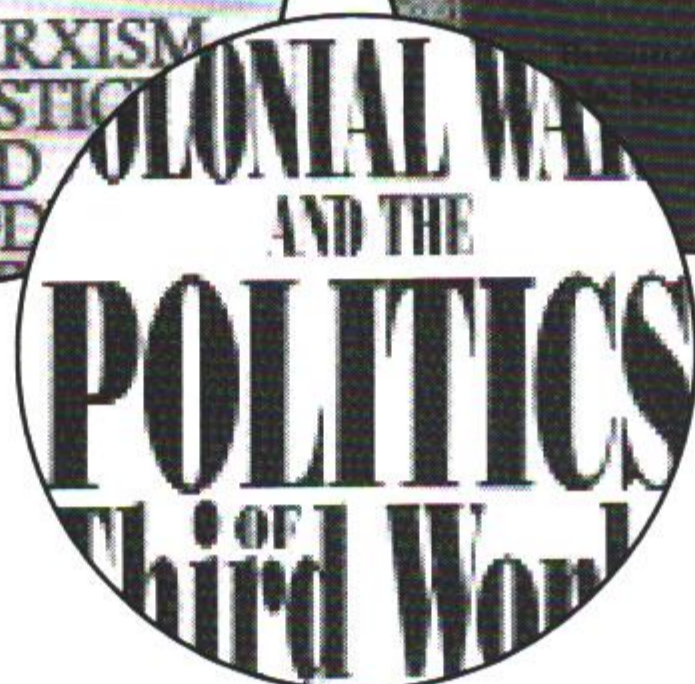
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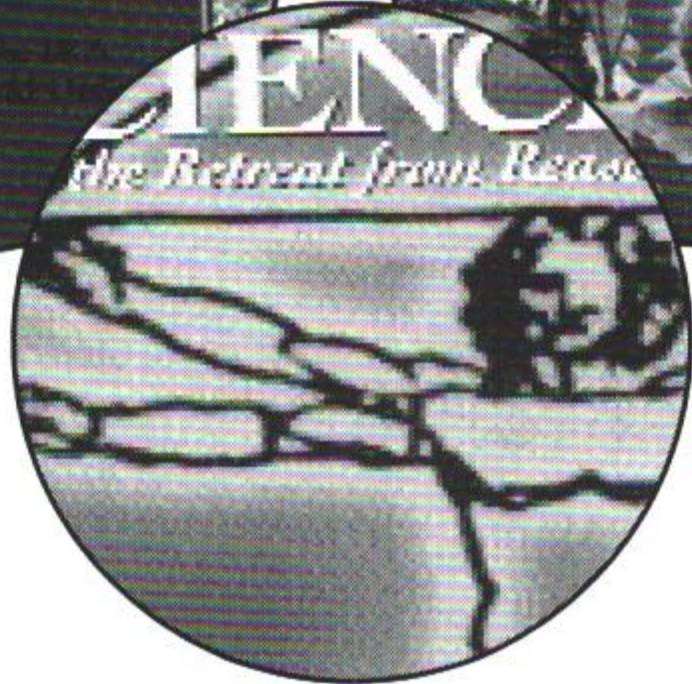
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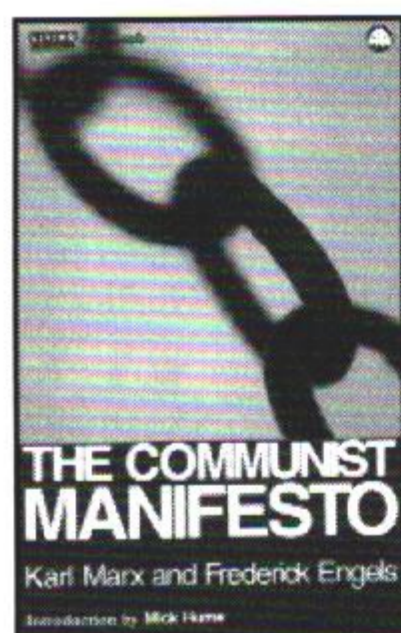


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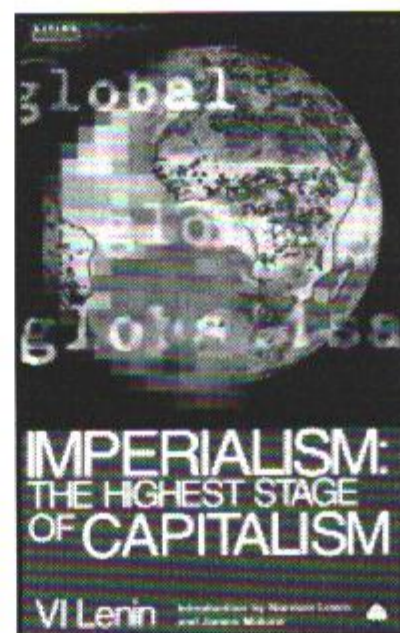


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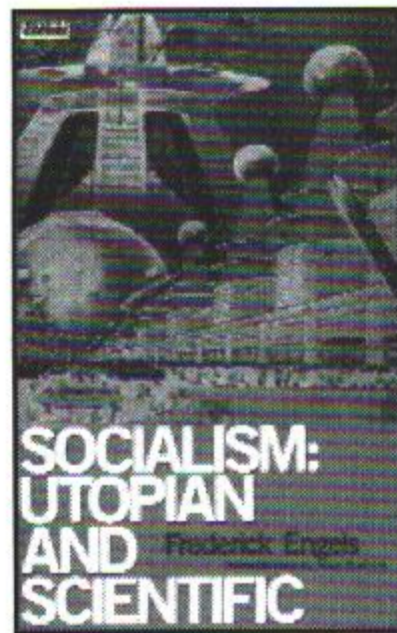
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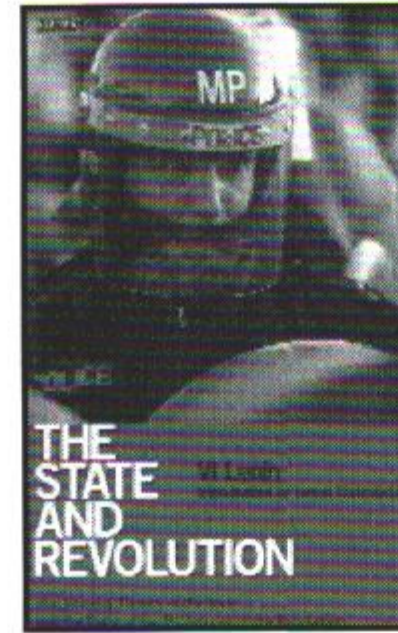
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# READING

## BETWEEN THE LINES

Why should the West decide what's best for the peoples of the Balkans, asks DAVE CHANDLER

## YOU WILL BE DEMOCRATISED

**UNFINISHED PEACE: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE BALKANS**  
Carnegie Endowment for Peace and Aspen Institute, £11.95 pbk

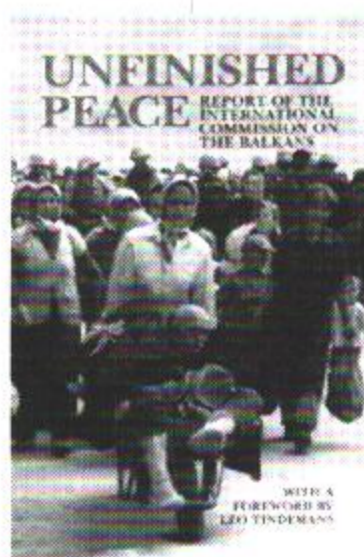
**AID AND ACCOUNTABILITY: DAYTON IMPLEMENTATION,**  
International Crisis Group, £6.37 bound

**ETHNIC NATIONALISM: THE TRAGIC DEATH OF YUGOSLAVIA (REVISED EDITION)**  
Bogdan Denitch, University of Minnesota Press, £13.95 pbk

**BALKAN TRAGEDY: CHAOS AND DISSOLUTION AFTER THE COLD WAR**  
Susan L Woodward, Brookings Institution, £33.50 hbk, £14.75 pbk

Bosnia Herzegovina today is under international occupation. Government policy agendas are written in advance by the UN's High Representative, Carl Bildt, who has the power to overrule elected representatives. Economic policy is dictated by the IMF, which has appointed a non-citizen governor of the Central Bank, and by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, responsible for privatisation and public utilities. Every annex of the Dayton Accord gives international institutions, unaccountable to the Bosnian electorate, determining powers over central aspects of how the state is governed. The international community's original civilian and military mandates have now been extended for up to two years. And this is what is called 'building genuine democracy'.

The four books under review, concerned with issues of 'democratisation' in Bosnia Herzegovina, are all written by influential figures. *Unfinished Peace: Report of the International Commission on the Balkans*, is published by policy institutes based in Washington and Berlin.



*Aid and Accountability* is a report by the influential, privately funded, International Crisis Group (ICG), based in Washington. Susan Woodward, author of *Balkan Tragedy*, is a senior fellow at the Washington Brookings Institution and in 1994 was a senior advisor to Yasushi Akashi, the top UN official in former Yugoslavia. Bogdan Denitch, author of *Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia*, is a US sociology professor active in Croatian opposition politics. Despite their differences concerning past policies, all of them argue that democracy will not be possible in the region without extensive intervention by the international community.

Today there is a growing consensus that 'majoritarian democracy' in a multi-ethnic state is problematic. Western observers warn that introducing the institutions of parliamentary democracy into the ethnically diverse Balkans can only lead to xenophobic nationalist dictatorships as majority/minority group tensions are exacerbated. The assumption is that Balkan states are different to Western ones because they lack its

## PERVERSELY, THE EXPERTS EVEN CLAIM THAT DEMOCRACY IS UNDER THREAT FROM THE VIEWS OF THE BOSNIAN ELECTORATE

'civil society'. In *Unfinished Peace*, the International Commission on the Balkans insists that liberal democracy is ill-suited to the region:

'This element of "ethnoparanoia" means that...what might well work in liberal democracies is less likely to function in the Balkans, where minorities tend to consider the civic concept of the state granting equal rights to all citizens to be a cover for supremacy by the dominant national group.' (p158)

The experts believe that a solution can only come about as a result of greater international regulation to ensure harmonious relations between ethnic groups. Western policy interventions in Bosnia over the last year are seen as a new way forward.

The reality of the Dayton dictatorship rarely impinges on these accounts of the region. For the ICG, Denitch and the International Commission, the international community has not gone far enough, because elected politicians still have too much power. Denitch suggests a 'temporary UN protectorate' (p228). The ICG and the International Commission want more powers to make the Bosnian authorities accountable to the West with stricter penalties for non-compliance with international diktat.

How has the democratic say-so of the people who live in Bosnia been overturned so easily? These authors assert that the threat to democracy comes from the nationalist politicians in the region. They add that the West has given too much credence to those nationalist leaders, entrenching their authority, and that only international regulation can safeguard democracy. In reality, what these authors call 'democratisation' means undermining the right of demos—the people—to decide their own future. Perversely, the experts even claim that democracy is under threat from the views of the Bosnian electorate.

As these authors see it, the Balkans never enjoyed the transition to democracy that Central Europe did, due to the slow emergence of a democratic opposition to communist rule. The lack of a civil society is held to have created a vacuum, since filled by the politics of ethnic nationalism. The old Communist elites were able to dress up in nationalist clothes, use the state-run media to manipulate their populations and whip up the ethnic antagonisms that fed the conflict. The general consensus is that the Serbs under Slobodan Milosevic were the first to take this path, which then stirred other nationalisms in reaction to a fear of Serbian oppression.

Susan Woodward stands out against this interpretation of the conflict in Yugoslavia. In her convincing study, she locates the dynamic for separation in Slovenia and Croatia's drive to enhance their chances of joining Europe by ditching the rest of the Yugoslav Federation.

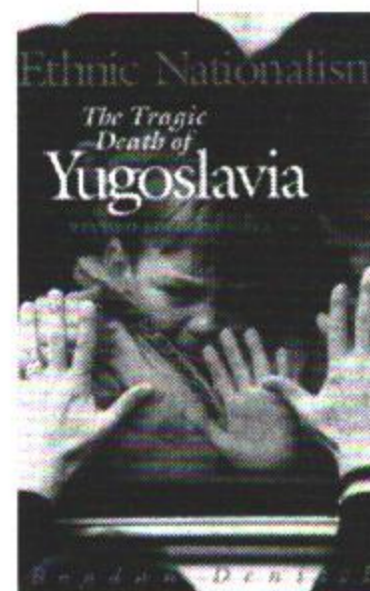
Yugoslavia had been a beneficiary of the Cold War, playing off the West and the Soviets for subsidies and aid. This allowed the richer republics of Croatia and Slovenia closer links with the West. From the late eighties, the elites within these republics gave their growing economic independence a nationalist political voice. With the backing of Austria and Germany they called for Western recognition. For Woodward, it was European recognition of these republics that fatally undermined the legitimacy of the Yugoslav federal government—supported by 79 per cent of the population in the spring of 1990 (p129)—and created the drive to establish separate 'national' territories that reached its apogee in Bosnia. The promise of Western recognition did not only destroy the possibility of new federal arrangements between the republics in the Yugoslav federation. It also gave the Croatian government of Franjo Tudjman freedom to take tough action against Serbs in the Croatian territory of Krajina, so setting in motion the process that led to civil war.

From the first, international intervention actually undermined the democratic process in Yugoslavia, by shifting the locus of decision-making away from central institutions which were potentially accountable to the people of the region, and giving Western institutions the power to shape the political agenda.

The collapse of the Yugoslav state left Bosnia itself open to division, given that Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats made up around 35 per cent and 15 per cent respectively of the population. There was little 'Bosnian' identity outside of the major urban areas. In the elections of November 1990 nationalist parties representing the Muslim, Croatian and Serbian communities polled over 70 per cent of the votes. In December 1991 Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic warned of the dangers of war if Croatia were recognised, and requested international peacekeepers.

At the end of 1991 the Bosnian parliament, with tactical Croatian support, proclaimed its sovereignty. Despite Serbian opposition, Bosnian independence was recognised by the international community, under US pressure, in April 1992. Where international intervention had contributed to the break-up of the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia, it now sought to shore up the even less viable multi-ethnic republic of Bosnia, against the wishes of the majority of the population.

Woodward pushes her excellent analysis of the break up of Yugoslavia too far when she suggests that there was strong support for the preservation of a unitary Bosnia. The people of Bosnia's support for maintaining a multi-ethnic Yugoslavia is used by Woodward to argue that there must also have been support for a unitary Bosnian state. In fact the election results demonstrated that the vast majority of Bosnian voters supported separate Muslim, Serbian or Croatian parties.



**THE AWKWARD TRUTH WAS THAT WITHOUT YUGOSLAVIA, THE CANTONISATION OF BOSNIA WAS INEVITABLE. THAT WAS RECOGNISED BY THE BOSNIAN LEADERSHIP AND MANY INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATORS**

But Woodward dismisses this as a result of media manipulation of the voters. She says that the nationalist politicians were not 'legitimate interlocutors' (p280) and not representative of broader Bosnian opinion.

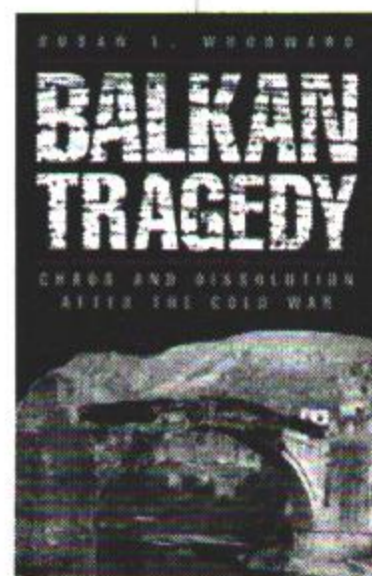
Denitch, too, argues that Balkan election results cannot be taken too seriously because voting was about 'expressive politics and had nothing to do with political responsibility and legitimacy' (p153). So much for democratic choice.

Once the nationalist politicians have been branded illegitimate, then it becomes legitimate for international institutions to intervene and override them. For Denitch, the elected politicians were so unrepresentative that 'the meddling Western "outsiders"...are far better representatives of the genuine interests of the Croatian, Serbian, and Bosnian peoples and states than their patriotic leaders' (p210). Similar justifications were once used for white rule in South Africa and the British Raj.

The International Commission report argues that the central error of intervention in Bosnia was giving too much respect to the Balkan politicians. They stress the need to use the threat of force to achieve a settlement, and the dangers of Western neutrality. Woodward and Denitch agree, but balk at the one-sided anti-Serbian bias of US intervention in 1994 and 1995 with its arming of the Muslim-Croat Federation, backing for the cleansing of the Serb Krajina, and Nato air-strikes against Serbian positions. However, their support for international action as the solution gives credence to the International Commission's whitewashing of the West's involvement in the conflict. For the International Commission the only problem was that armed Western intervention came too late to prevent the ethnic carve up of the state.

The awkward truth was that without Yugoslavia, the cantonisation of Bosnia was inevitable. That was recognised by the Bosnian leadership and many international negotiators such as Lord Carrington and Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, at the time when Germany was forcing through international recognition of Croatia. Tragically, the division of Bosnia became more prolonged and barbaric as the US and European governments fought over how it should be organised.

European attempts at mediation, starting with the Lisbon talks in early 1992, were undermined by US opposition and encouragement for the Muslim government. The conflict between the USA and Europe was only resolved when Washington gained the upper hand by forging a Muslim-Croat alliance, in exchange for giving Croatia diplomatic and military support. The European powers and the UN were pushed into the background as NATO bombed the Bosnian Serbs into submission and US negotiators, with Croatia and the Bosnian government already on-side, offered Milosevic's Yugoslavia relief from sanctions if he negotiated for the Bosnian Serbs at Dayton.



The Dayton Agreement was a product of US military and diplomatic control over the region. It established Bosnia Herzegovina as an independent state made up of two distinct entities, the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Serbian dominated Republika Srpska. Blaming Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian politicians for the war and the failure of peace negotiations misses the point that, in truth, they had little ability to influence events. At the same time, blaming the nationalist politicians helps to cover up the destructive influence of the USA and the international community.

The fact that most of the nationalist politicians are still nominally in power today reinforces the illusion that they are really in charge. But for these authors it is not enough that the West dictates the terms behind the scenes. They want to see the nationalist leaders publicly humbled by the West:

'A really happy ending to the Dayton talks would have required sending all three signatories, or at the very least Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic, on a one-way flight to The Hague Tribunal for war crimes and crimes against humanity.' (*Ethnic Nationalism*, p215)

The Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian politicians are accused not just of waging war, but also, particularly in the Serbian case, of reviving the worst horrors of the Nazi experience in the Second World War: 'ethnic cleansing', concentration camps, rape camps and attempted genocide. The implication is clear. It is not just the politicians that stand condemned, it is also the people who elected and, in most cases, continue to elect them. Denitch suggests the need for 'something resembling the de-Nazification processes in Germany and Italy after the Second World War' (p8) and the ICG feel that 'The respect shown Karadzic [the former Bosnian Serb leader] by the people and leaders of Republika Srpska...is the tangible expression of their complete denial of responsibility for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes'. By this assessment, the Bosnian Serbs do not deserve a democratic choice because they are living in denial of their own guilt.

Once Balkan people and their political representatives are seen as the problem, democracy and elected governments come under question. The less legitimacy the elected Balkan politicians are allowed, the more it seems that only the international community can be truly representative of Balkan interests. The International Commission clearly feels emboldened by the new possibilities for the region opened up by the Dayton settlement.

They argue that Europe and America, using the threat of force and economic sanctions, should act now to carry out the 57 far-reaching policy recommendations contained in their report. These include submitting the status of Kosovo to legally binding arbitration; ▀

maintaining a UN presence in Macedonia and encouraging a high degree of decentralisation; and, in the region as a whole, the reform of election systems to guarantee the political representation of minorities and encourage regional and municipal autonomy, a recipe for the politicisation of ethnic divisions.

Fifteen months after Dayton the Bosnian state is more divided than ever, less because of nationalist politicians than because of the differential treatment of the communities by the international overseers, who have granted less than three per cent of Bosnian reconstruction aid to the Serbian entity. In the elections proposed for Bosnia over the next two years it seems probable that any questioning of Dayton will be illegal. Apart from demanding restrictions on who can stand as candidates, the ICG insist that 'the media should not be allowed to broadcast statements...which are contrary to the Dayton Peace Agreement'. Stalin himself would have been envious of such election rules. ●

Dave Chandler teaches Post-War East European Development at the University of Northumbria

READON READ ON READONREADON READ ON READON

#### LIFE AFTER POLITICS: NEW THINKING FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY,

Geoff Mulgan (ed), Fontana, £7.99 pbk

One-time advisor to Gordon Brown MP, Geoff Mulgan oversaw the final transformation of the Communist Party of Great Britain's theoretical journal, *Marxism Today*, into a yuppie think-tank, *Demos*. *Marxism Today* had been working to efface its connections with the Soviet Union, and had been singing the praises of Thatcherism since the eighties. With the launch of the *Demos Quarterly*, where most of the articles in this collection were first published, and a series of well-received reports (*No Turning Back*, *Freedom's Children*) all signs of *Demos*' origins were hidden.

Mulgan's method has been to make *Demos* an umbrella for people who are outside of the mainstream, regardless of their political affiliations. Right winger Roger Scruton's religious argument against animal rights is reproduced alongside communitarian Amitai Etzioni's case for 'parenting' and radical urban studies writers Liz Greenhalgh and Ken Worpole's reflections on the convivial city. The result is a mix of the most up-to-date prejudices of the radical middle classes, from a contempt for 'majoritarian' democracy to a celebration of the end of a job for life as liberation from work. In particular Mulgan's introduction gives a positive gloss to all the themes that *LM* has been aiming to criticise.

Will Deighton

#### WRITING IN THE DARK,

Seamus Deane, Jonathan Cape, £13.99 hbk

The man who the *cognoscenti* thought ought to have won the Booker prize for this first novel is a poet and a big player in Northern Ireland's cultural scene. Deane grew up with the civil rights movement and the troubles, and unlike many intellectuals there he disdained the project of expunging nationalism from Irish history. His cultural nationalism means that he can draw on the emotional cache of the North's extraordinary history and avoid the usual clichés of wicked terrorists, love across the religious divide, school children untouched by ancient hatreds and so on. Deane's tightly written, gripping tale of a young man growing up, discovering gradually the events that have shaped his family, rings true of the life of a generation of Northern nationalists in a way that few works do. At the same time, Deane's preoccupation with the inheritance of the past relegates the conflict to a bygone age, when he could be asking what it is in the present that makes these old grudges resonate.

Danny Flannegan

#### VALUES MATTER MOST

Ben J Wattenberg, Regenery, \$14.95

#### AMERICA: WHO STOLE THE DREAM?

Donald Barlett and James B Steel, Andrews and McMeel, \$9.95

Rival assessments of the American malaise, *Who stole the Dream* emphasises economic division and deindustrialisation, while *Values Matter Most* has as its slogan 'It's not the economy, stupid'. Journalists Barlett and Steele take the decline of industrial production as an indicator of absolute decline, pointing out that jobs gained in services are generally lower paid, leading to a growing disparity between rich and poor—with some excellent graphics and figures to illustrate it. On top of deindustrialisation they point to increased immigration—more than a million people between 1990 and 1995—and a political system that favours the rich as the culprits.

Wattenberg rejects their case, pointing to greater consumption overall despite relatively lower incomes for working Americans. He thinks American capitalism is doing well, if only people would stop moaning. The real problem lies in the growth of a 'something-for-nothing' society. Wattenberg has a point when he says that people have an exaggerated sense of America's economic decline, but then he exaggerates the moral decay, in an otherwise well-supported argument. Though he thinks of himself as a social conservative, Wattenberg shares all the liberal prejudices against dead-beat dads. This was the book that Bill Clinton based his re-election campaign on.

Brian Carmichael

# EVERYBODY NOW SEEMS TO AGREE THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE. THIS IS IT.

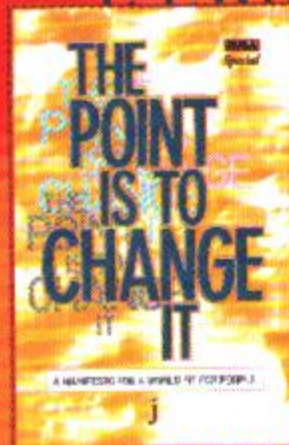
As the general election campaign begins, *LM* magazine has launched *A Manifesto for a World Fit for People*. Our aim is to set a new agenda for now, by putting aside the politics of the past and tackling the biggest barrier to changing society today—what the *Manifesto* describes as 'the culture of limits'.

Today there is no great clash of competing visions of the future for humanity. Instead, the culture of limits and low expectations frames the outlook of left and right alike. Whether the discussion is about the economy, the environment, science or social policy, there is a common assumption that there are strict limits to what we can or should do; that we are no longer capable of making much progress, of improving the human condition.

There is a constant inflation of the dangers and problems which people face today, coupled with a diminished sense of humanity having the ability to develop society and tackle difficulties. People are now more likely to be viewed as problems than as potential problem-solvers. When we are not being patronised as fragile victims in need of protection from life, we are being warned of 'the beast within us all' that needs to be caged and repressed.

The diminished sense of the human potential for changing the world and improving life has become the most important issue of our age. Yet in a sense it is not at issue at all, since nobody is contesting it. Putting that to rights, is the precondition for tackling any social problem. That is why we have made the culture of limits the central focus of *The Point is to Change It*, the *Living Marxism* manifesto for our times.

**'Our reply to all of the pleas for caution and restraint is that until now humanity has only learned to crawl. We still live in a world that is not fit for people. Our problem is not that we are too ambitious, but that we continually hesitate about experimenting with new solutions. We need a revolution in outlook, so that we can continue to advance and give new scope to human creativity.'**



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## A MANIFESTO FOR A WORLD FIT FOR PEOPLE

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In a sense,  
it's almost  
the power  
of the  
image  
going  
two steps  
ahead of  
the proof  
that went  
with them

IAN WILLIAMS,  
ITN JOURNALIST

LM

