

LIVING MARXISM



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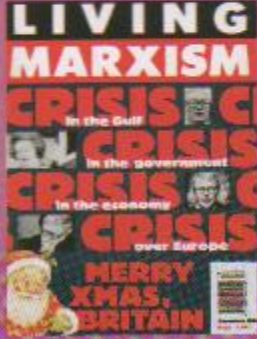
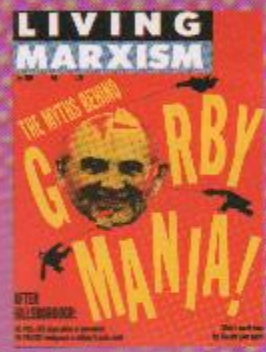
Does immigration cause racism? • Ireland: the myth of 'tit-for-tat' killings
Why capitalism will miss the Communist Party
Plus: Rap against the American Dream, the mediocre *Modern Review*
Tottenham Three, Terry Waite, talking to cats and much more



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IN 1992, WE PREDICT

- That world politics will become an increasingly unpredictable affair
- That anybody who doesn't read *Living Marxism* will not have a clue as to what is really going on
- That the pressure of costs will force the cover price of *Living Marxism* up to £2 from this issue
- That an annual subscription to *Living Marxism* will therefore become better value than ever (see opposite).

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editorial

The Communist Party
and *Marxism Today*

Gone, but not forgiven

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and its house journal, *Marxism Today*, both folded at the end of 1991, lying and rewriting history to the last.

As the Communist Party, at its November congress, dissolved itself into something called the Democratic Left, attention focused on the 'revelation' that the Soviet Union had continued making secret payments to the British party right into the 1980s. This, everybody now said, explained everything that was wrong with the CPGB.

'If only we had known about the Moscow gold', said editor Martin Jacques in the final

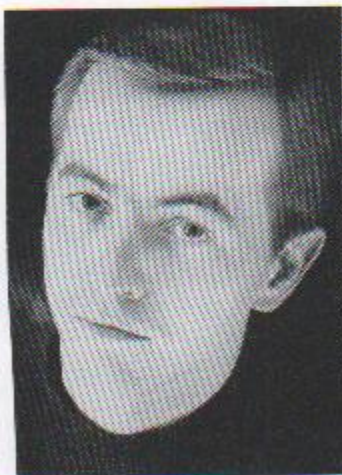
edition of *Marxism Today*. Other leading members, and leading ex-members like Sarah Benton in the *Guardian*, agreed that they would never have got involved had they known the shocking truth.

This is a cover-up. All the fuss about 'the rumbled rouble trauma' has distracted attention from what was truly wrong with the Communist Party of Great Britain. We do not know which Communist Party members knew what about how much money. We don't much care. The problem with the CPGB was not the backhanders that it received from over there. The problem was the corrupt politics which the CPGB produced over here.

Talk of what was wrong with Communist Party policy traditionally centres on the old guard, the 'hardliners' who supported Stalin's tanks which crushed the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. The subsequent generation of CPGB leaders, the 'Euro-communists' like Jacques and Benton, tend to get off the hook. As in the recent row about Moscow gold, they are allowed to depict themselves as hapless victims of the Stalinist past. Yet in terms of their destructive effect on the cause of left-wing politics in Britain, the policies put forward by these people were at least as bad as those of the old 'tankies'.

Just about every policy formulated by the Communist Party over the past 20 years has been a disaster. Take, for example, a high point of the CPGB's modern influence: the Alternative Economic Strategy, developed in the early seventies as a scheme to help the state to plan the capitalist economy. When the CPGB strategy was put into practice by the last Labour government, it was revealed as a way of 'planning' income controls which imposed the biggest cuts in working class living standards since the Second World War.

The public disenchantment with Labour which followed this implementation of CPGB policy helped to get Margaret Thatcher's Tories elected in 1979. The Communist Party and *Marxism Today* were



editor
mick hume

always proud to point out that they had been the first to identify the phenomenon of 'Thatcherism'; they were rather more reticent about discussing the modest role of their own ideas in assisting the politics of Thatcherism to triumph in the first place.

Nor did the CPGB's problems stop at specific party policies. The broad political principles which the Eurocommunists imported into the British left from their academic discussion circles have done great harm. They have taught that militant working class action is unacceptably 'macho'; that struggles against various forms of capitalist oppression are 'autonomous' from one another; that the 'diversity' of individual experience is more important than the common experience of class exploitation. In an era when the state became increasingly aggressive and centralised in its attacks upon the working class and oppressed groups, these middle class prejudices put about by the soft left have helped only to disorient and divide the resistance.

The Communist Party of Great Britain has proved quite capable of discrediting communism in Britain and undermining its own credibility without any help from the fixers in the Kremlin. When the party wound itself up in November, membership had sunk to an all-time low and the majority of those who remained were aged between 50 and 70. This suggests that, far from dragging a strong ship down, the old-timers were the only ones who kept the leaky hulk afloat for so long.

The obituary writers' discussion of the CPGB has also reinforced another objectionable myth. Everybody seems to agree that, while the party had been held back by the past, in the eighties its magazine *Marxism Today* produced something fresh and dynamic, and created new interest in left-wing ideas. In fact, *Marxism Today* did as much as any Stalinist hack to discredit Marxism. It did nothing to create a new alternative to capitalism. Indeed, it attracted the interest of the mainstream media by doing just the opposite: endorsing entirely conventional ideas under a masthead of Marxism.

Introducing the final issue of *Marxism Today*, Martin Jacques writes with typical modesty of the magazine being 'so open, so unpredictable, so exciting, so dangerous'. So what were some of the exciting and dangerous ideas promoted by *Marxism Today*?

Back in 1981, it pioneered the policy of giving sympathetic interviews to the spokesmen for sectarian Loyalist murder gangs from Northern Ireland. More recently,

in 1991, it took the revolutionary step of endorsing the Tories' market-oriented reform of the NHS. In between times, it came up with such exciting ideas as voting for the SDP-Liberal Alliance, and championing the cause of the individual citizen—an idea so dangerous that it can be found in the manifesto of unpredictable, exciting John Major.

Jacques' 'open...dangerous' journal proved

The Communist Party proved quite capable of discrediting communism in Britain without any help from the Kremlin

itself open to taking on just about any old intellectual rubbish from the right, and dangerous to just about everybody except the capitalist class. No wonder its final edition could feature such warm tributes from various Tory politicians and other members of the British establishment.

When right-wing politicians and newspapers praised *Marxism Today* for being 'innovative' in the eighties, what they meant was that the magazine was making the Tories look good. Conservatives became fond of pointing out that 'even *Marxism Today*' had recognised the importance of some aspect of government philosophy, or had treated a Tory MP as a serious interview subject. Such endorsements from the 'thinking left' helped the Tories to present their crude capitalist policies as creative thinking, and to pass off somebody like Edwina Currie as a significant figure with deep things to say.

The leading lights of the Communist Party of Great Britain and *Marxism Today* have spent their political lives exposing Marxism to ridicule and stamping on revolutionary politics. Now their final act is to declare that Marxism has become ridiculous and revolution impossible, as if none of this ever had anything to do with them. Stalinism may be dead; but the Stalinist school of falsification appears set to live on in the rump Democratic Left.

The right-wing media had a bit of fun with the end of the CPGB, scoffing about the death of communism and 'Marxism Yesterday'. But the spokesmen of British capitalism will come to miss the Communist

Party. It has done them sterling service, as part of a domesticated left that could be relied upon to discredit anti-capitalism and endorse moderation.

The collapse of Stalinism internationally has already confronted the rulers of the Western world with more new problems than solutions. And even though Stalinism was always relatively weak here, the British establishment has lost a force for stability in

the CPGB. For that same reason, we do not mourn the passing of the Communist Party and its publications.

The CPGB should certainly be buried as a corpse that belongs to the past. But Marxism is a living force for the present. Whatever these people may claim, our Marxism has never had anything to do with repeating dry dogma from the nineteenth century. It is the most modern of theories, since it seeks to create a better future for humanity, free from the restrictions of capitalist society. It is the theory of social revolution.

'Who will now take up the baton of *Marxism Today*?', some media commentators have asked. We can promise them one thing: it will not be *Living Marxism*. Our magazine exists to provide a sorely-needed critique of contemporary capitalism, not to rehash the tired ideas of the right. Our aim is not merely to interpret the world, but to change it.

Those seeking a simple illustration of the difference between us and them need look no further than the last page of the last issue of *Marxism Today*, where they will find a celebrity questionnaire of the sort now carried by various newspapers. This time the questions have been answered by 'Karl Marx', a philosopher, as the editors imagine he would be today (ie, a wally like them).

Asked 'Who do you most respect?', this imaginary Marx answers 'Martin Jacques', whom he apparently admires for interviewing Tory politicians. The real Karl Marx, a revolutionary rather than a philosopher, was once given a similar questionnaire by his daughters. It asked him who his hero was. Marx replied that it was Spartacus, whom he admired for leading a revolt of slaves against the Roman empire.

Letters

The Aids debate

In 'The truth about the Aids panic' (December) Tessa Myers could have gone even further in attacking the myth that HIV/Aids is spreading like wildfire among heterosexuals in the UK. For example, in 1990 in Scotland, a survey of 99 per cent of newborn babies produced some stunning results; in Glasgow, 16 000 were tested and none were found to be HIV positive. So much for the idea that women are contracting HIV through heterosexual intercourse and passing it on to their children.

The article could also have confronted the widespread but fraudulent confusion of Aids figures from the UK and the third world. There is undeniably an Aids epidemic of tragic proportions among heterosexuals in Africa. But what can that tell us about the likely spread in Britain, where conditions are completely different? After all, diarrhoea is one of the most major causes of death in the third world. That does not mean that stomach bugs are about to kill thousands in the UK.

The important thing now is to couple more exposures of the Aids panic with a resolute campaign for gay rights. Don't let the *Sun* monopolise the case against the scaremongers!

Graham Lewis Surrey

'The truth about the Aids panic' crawls from misleading statements to lies. It is irresponsible to lead people to believe that Aids is not a serious threat to anyone, whatever their sexuality. The World Health Organisation, a body independent of the UK Conservative government, predicts that up to 40m people worldwide will be HIV positive by the end of this decade. That number will continue to grow and people will continue dying, unless a cure is found. It is cruel to score a cheap political point to say otherwise.

Nobody has used the Aids tragedy to promote a return to traditional family values. At least five years before the government launched its first Aids awareness campaign, support groups throughout the country were organising their own. Aids support groups are not agents of the Conservative Party: they have a genuine aim to save lives. There is no moralising about marriage, monogamy or a return to a traditional lifestyle.

Nor has the Conservative government manipulated free-minded journalists, advertising agencies and Aids charities into a

moral crusade. A cynical conspiracy does not exist. It may be true that some Conservative ministers long for a return to traditional lifestyles, but that is not their main aim. They appreciate the danger Aids poses to all of us, including readers of *Living Marxism*. Don't die of ignorance.

Daniel Johnson London

Pavarotti, Presley and karaoke

In his article on Luciano Pavarotti ('Don't blame Big Lucy', November), Mark Reilly makes a number of erroneous assertions about the decline of opera and the operatic singing tradition.

Firstly, it was the coming of rock 'n' roll in the 1950s, not (as Mr Reilly claims) 'the homogenising effect of the market', which has contributed most to the declining number of great opera singers since that time. For any teenager born after 1940 who was spunky enough to want to perform music in front of an audience, Elvis Presley and his innumerable followers were much more potent role models than any operatic singer could ever be.

Secondly, even in 'boring old England' young people sing today as much as they did in the past. The current popularity of karaoke bars is evidence enough! (Mr Reilly presumably doesn't frequent such places. Has he never stood on the terraces at a football match? Or seen a live band in a pub?) In an age when any bunch of teenagers with a few hundred quid and a few months' practice can put a garage band together and get gigs, the years of hard effort to develop a 'proper' singing voice must seem like so much time down the drain.

Thirdly, Mr Reilly's assertion that Britain has produced 'next to nothing' in opera is absolute garbage. It really is embarrassing to see such a display of blasé ignorance in a serious Marxist journal. For the record, the operas of Benjamin Britten, Michael Tippett and Harrison Birtwistle are recognised as masterpieces—modern masterpieces too, not just sterile reincarnations of the nineteenth century Italian tradition whose passing Mr Reilly mourns. The works of these and other postwar/contemporary composers are testimony to the continued vitality of opera composition as a modern art form.

Jimmy Miller London

Bernard Manning: no laughing matter

So Bernard Manning can tell a joke! (Toby Banks, 'True Blue', December). He's been a comic for 30 years. I should think he would be able to.

He may not be the author, but he is the mouthpiece for the most backward ideological trends amongst the white working class. Trends which, if they had been examined, would have made an interesting article. You chose instead to present him in his own terms, such is your high-minded contempt for popular culture as a battleground for ideas.

Lenin said 'ideas become a material force when taken up by the masses'. Even reactionary ideas, as Toby Banks would have discovered to his painful cost, if he had stood outside Manning's club and tried to sell the magazine to his audience after Manning had spent an hour inflaming their bigotry.

Toby Banks' attitude to Manning's racism, homophobia and sexism is deplorable. I am shocked that a magazine like *Living Marxism* chose to print this rubbish. It is an attitude that sits uneasily with *Living Marxism's* links with Workers Against Racism and their recently-published anti-racist charter, that I have agreed to circulate amongst alternative comedians.

Can I suggest someone forces Toby Banks to read the WAR charter? Then ask him if he still finds Bernard Manning funny.

Bob Boyton North London

What is the point of Toby Banks? This is a question I have been asking myself each time I read one of his rambling, subjective and apologetic contributions. Then your December issue goes and gives me a double dose. His advocacy of Bernard Manning is like the reprise of the infantile leftist posturing of the late, unlamented 'Personal Column', which argued the case for such 'working class' cultural icons as the *Sun* and boxing.

If this type of posturing is supposed to demonstrate how reckless of convention these comrades are, how 'hard' they are, and how muscular their communism—then it fails miserably. I'm surprised that the more mature elements in the party haven't pulled up these young twerps for their stupid inverse snobbery. It's only another form of workerism after all.

V Leslie Todmorden

On the box

Frank Cottrell-Boyce's article 'Cash and Chaos' (December) purports to demystify the ITV franchise auction. I think he does the opposite. First, he says the TV companies were bidding for the 'freedom' to make the programmes they want without having to sell their ideas to someone else. Second, he says the motivation behind the government's broadcasting legislation was: 'I hate those bastards.... Unleash the market forces', and points to documentaries like *Death on the Rock*, which angered the government.

For the makers of TV programmes, the issue is not freedom but, in the words of Lord Thomson, 'a licence to print money'. The programmes are little more than a means to make a profit, primarily by selling audiences to advertisers.

For the government, the deregulation of broadcasting is part of the wider attempt to make a political virtue of unleashing the market forces on anything from water supplies to prisons. The farcical character of the franchise auction is testimony to the government's problems in making such exercises look like a credible economic strategy.

Frank Cottrell-Boyce is correct to point to the 'blanding' effect that intensified commercial pressures are likely to have on programmes. However, perhaps more significant is the way that recent broadcasting legislation has tightened up control over programme material—witness the 'due impartiality' clause, and new watchdogs like ITC and BSC.

Harsher market imperatives and tighter legal constraints contribute to the general climate of censorship and conformity. Obviously things are more difficult for journalists wanting to make critical and investigative programmes. But I remain dubious about Cottrell-Boyce's suggestion that we should call for a debate on the 'kind of TV we want'. This argument smacks of the cultural politics of some on the left who look to Channel 4 to change the world, rather than taking the responsibility on themselves.

Phil Hammond London

War—what is it good for?

Gemma Forrest's article on the reshaping of the US war machine was a sobering explanation of what was behind the rhetoric of the 'peace dividend' ('Behind Bush's missile

cuts', November). I am, however, still perplexed about the reasons for the restructuring of Uncle Sam's offence/defence systems. Can it really be, as Forrest suggests, that the economic slump in the US is the driving force behind it? During the recession of the early eighties, the US increased its defence spending.

From Forrest's economic analysis it could be argued that fiscal problems result in reductions in defence spending. In fact, the reverse has recently been the case. Take the Gulf War, where the US elevated the Iraq/Kuwait territorial dispute into a war of international dimensions. This could have been expensive for the US, though the Gulf states, Japan and Germany eventually footed the bill. But regardless of the cost, the war was successful in temporarily bolstering America's ability to play a hegemonic role in the post-Stalinist world order.

Alan Denehy London

A nose job?

Can I just give a bit of advice to poor Carrie Bloom (Sex, morality and videotape, December)? So Dr Stanway's video wasn't 'radical' enough for you, Carrie. It 'unfortunately' wasn't based on loveless copulation. And yet you were 'intrigued' when you heard that if you put your finger high enough into a vagina, 'you'll feel something that feels like the tip of your nose'—the cervix.

Carrie, love, can I ask you to do something for me? Will you watch the video again and try this one out for yourself? It won't take long.

You know, it's all very well wanting to be a bit 'radical' in your sex life. Perhaps you even see yourself as a bit of a 'swinger', I don't know. But Carrie love, you have to learn to walk before you can run. So will you do that for me darling, will you?

C Rainer London

Viva diddly-dee!

I write about an article pertaining to 'Irish music' (Hugh Carter, 'I-I-Irish bands', December). The author (and I use the term loosely) seems to credit the current wave of interest to the *New Musical Express*. I also smiled at his comments on Irish bands with one or no Irish members. Does he have the same cynicism about Cajun bands with no Cajuns, blues bands with no blacks or

electronic bands with no Germans?

The claim that the Irish have no interest in their music is utter nonsense. There may be people whose lives are geared to financial reward and whose idea of relaxing after a hard day at the office is to listen to 'music' composed entirely on keyboards like the ones they use at work—metronomic and ordered like their daily lives. But there are plenty more interested in the music that is their culture.

I'd rather have 'diddley-dee' than the endless thumping of a synthesised bass drum, the very thought of which gives me a headache. Viva Irish music! And long may it reign.

Andrew Kelly Nottingham

Sanctions: a disastrous strategy

According to Deepak Shah (letters, November), the sports boycott was not designed to bring down apartheid, but only to register moral outrage at the South African state. Moses Dube's article: 'Don't get caught out' (September) expressly stated that there was no such intention. Shah missed the point of the article. Dube showed that the strategy of calling for sports boycotts or economic sanctions is not only ludicrous but dangerous as well.

The boycott strategy is ludicrous because it demands that Western capitalism removes apartheid from capitalist South Africa—does Shah really think that the West has anything progressive to offer South Africa's black working class? And the strategy is dangerous because it confirms the moral authority of the West and justifies its influence over a future South African settlement between the state and the black working class.

The formal legal face of apartheid has gone. But the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Shah and I all know that the position of the black working class has changed for the worse. Nonetheless, the West is now able to talk about a 'post-apartheid' society and are rewarding De Klerk's efforts by dismantling sanctions.

The point, therefore, is that sanctions and boycotts have done nothing to advance the case of black workers, while they have given the West a role in the future of South Africa. Meanwhile, the job of fighting apartheid and the South African state has gone largely untouched.

Geraldine Harris Bristol

We welcome readers' views and criticisms.
Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or fax them on (071) 377 0346

With the media once more full of stories about sectarian revenge killings in Ireland, Vicky Rowan exposes the old lie that the conflict there is a sectarian feud—and points to some new dangers facing the Irish republican movement

As the body count rose during 1991, reaching 86 by the end of November, the portrayal of the Irish War as a cycle of 'tit-for-tat' murders became ever more frequent in the British media. In particular, two consecutive nights of violence—on 13 and 14 November—were presented as evidence of a new round of sectarian reprisals. The British government subsequently used these events as the justification for sending in 300 more soldiers, recruiting another 440 officers to the paramilitary Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and calling up Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) part-timers for the first time since 1988.

Openly sectarian

On the night of Thursday 14 November, the Loyalist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) claimed responsibility for killing three men: Fergus Magee, Dessie Rogers and John Lavery, ambushed and shot dead on their way home from work in Lurgan, County Armagh. In an open admission of its sectarianism, the UVF announced that Magee and Rogers had been deliberately targeted as Catholics, but that it regretted mistakenly killing the third man who was a Protestant.

These blatantly sectarian attacks were reprisals for a series of assassinations carried out the previous night by the IRA. In an incident in South Belfast, which the media gloated over because a baby

was injured, William Kingsberry and Samuel Mehaffey were shot dead. One hour later, across town in the Ballgillan area of North Belfast, the IRA killed two other men, coal merchants Stephen Lynn and his brother Kenneth.

Although these killings were widely publicised as the random murders of Protestants, the four men who died were in fact members and associates of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), responsible for the deaths of Catholic civilians. The military-style funerals that followed, customary for members of Loyalist paramilitary groups, proved that these were not the victims of random anti-Protestant attacks. Yet both nights of violence were described by the British media in the same way—as motivated by irrational religious hatred and the desire for revenge.

No Protestant-haters

Look beyond the headlines and it becomes clear that the IRA are no sectarian gang of Protestant-haters. The IRA targets the British security forces as a colonial army of occupation in Northern Ireland. Loyalist groups such as the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF)—a name used by the legal Ulster Defence Association to claim responsibility for murders—support the British presence and seek to terrorise the Catholic, nationalist community from which the IRA draws its support. The IRA have therefore declared that they regard such Loyalists as

legitimate targets; but that their priority remains attacking British military personnel and installations.

A full review of IRA operations in that same month of November would demonstrate that the republican movement tries to practise what it preaches. IRA attacks included the bombing of a military hospital in Belfast, the attempted bombing of a British military band in St Albans, and a mortar attack on a two-car RUC patrol in Fermanagh. The pattern of IRA attacks against such military targets contrasts with the upsurge in anti-Catholic violence by Loyalist paramilitaries, and contradicts the view that the Irish War is an endless round of 'tit-for-tat' sectarian killings.

Divisive union

While the republican movement frequently stresses that its struggle is non-religious and directed at the British state, the issue of religion remains central to Loyalist ideology. The anti-Catholic outpourings of Unionist politicians such as Ian Paisley, and the 'Kill all Taigs' (Catholics) graffiti found in the Protestant Shankill Road area of Belfast, suggest that Loyalism is defined by its hatred towards all Catholics. However, this outlook is not simply the result of warped minds. It is the instinctive response of Loyalists to those who threaten the union between Britain and Northern Ireland—and with it, the privileged status of the Protestants of 'Ulster'.

Through partition in 1921, the British government divided the Irish nation by carving out six north-eastern counties as a province of the 'United Kingdom'. The borders of Northern Ireland were gerrymandered to ensure that Protestants predominated—thereby turning Ireland's religious minority into an artificial majority community within the six counties. And to ensure that this majority remained loyal to the Crown, the British authorities oversaw the creation of a system of social, economic and political privileges for Protestants in

The myth of

Northern Ireland.

The privileged relationship between the British state and the Protestants has been the real basis of the communal divide in Northern Ireland ever since. Loyalist sectarianism is a product not of religious fervour but of the sectarian system over which Britain presides.

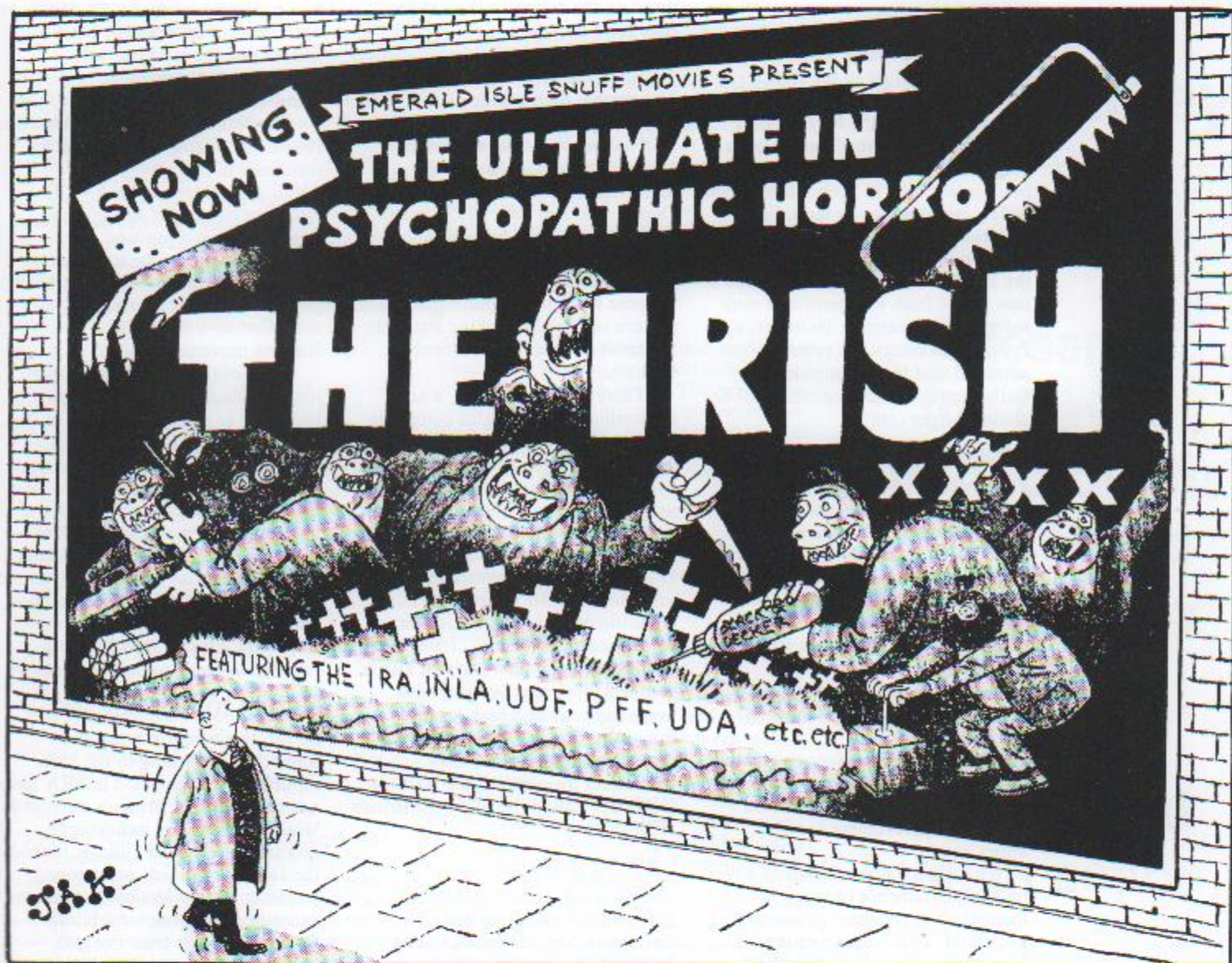
Although the form of the marginal advantages which the Protestants enjoy has changed down

the years, the fact remains that Catholics are treated as second class citizens. Both state and private employers discriminate against Catholics. Unemployment in some Catholic areas stands at 70 per cent—twice that of the poorest Protestant communities. British commentators point to the higher proportion of Catholics employed in the public sector these days as proof that discrimination is a thing of the past.

But closer inspection confirms that the Catholics are concentrated in the lowest-grade, worst-paid positions.

The consequence of this sectarian system is that any perceived threat to the union with Britain becomes a threat to the status and very identity of the Protestant community. Because of their links with the wider Irish nation, all of the half million Catholics within Northern Ireland are viewed as such a threat by Loyalists. ▶

The classic British view of the Irish War, from London's *Evening Standard*



'tit-for-tat'

This gives Loyalism its bitterly anti-Catholic focus, and explains the longstanding tendency for Protestant paramilitaries to carry out random sectarian killings.

The modern IRA emerged after 1969 as the defender of the Catholic nationalist ghettos, against Loyalist terror and the British armed forces. The IRA's struggle is inherently anti-sectarian, since it is directed against the sectarian state of Northern Ireland. Certainly, the majority of IRA victims are Protestants. But that is because the local security forces are almost exclusively staffed by Protestants—a strong indication of the partisan nature of the state.

One in 10 Protestant males is a member of either the Royal Ulster Constabulary or the Ulster Defence Regiment. The UDR, like its predecessor, the 'B' Specials, has been widely criticised for its record of sectarianism. Much has been made of the plan to merge the regiment with the Royal Irish Rangers, and create a new Royal Irish Regiment as a non-sectarian replacement. However, a British spokesman has recently admitted that the proportion of Catholics in the new regiment will be about one per cent.

Propaganda theme

The myth of 'tit-for-tat' killings in Northern Ireland, the idea that Loyalists and republicans are engaged in a religious feud, has been a constant theme of British propaganda for more than 20 years. Its aim is to distract from the fact that the British presence in Ireland is responsible for the war, and to present the British authorities as a neutral barrier between the warring factions.

The prominence given to the 'tit-for-tat' explanation of the Irish War today reflects the extent to which the British government has the upper hand.

The British authorities now have renewed confidence to promote themselves as reluctant peace-makers in Ireland. This confidence results from their success in putting both political and physical pressure on the republican movement. The British authorities have raised the political stakes and underlined the isolation of the republican movement by promoting 'normal' politics through the Brooke talks, which excluded Sinn Fein on the basis of their support for the IRA. Meanwhile the British forces have relentlessly exerted physical pressure by targeting known republicans for harassment and shoot-to-kill operations, designed to deter other nationalists from joining the struggle.

Britain has pursued this dual

containment strategy to great effect since signing the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. The consequence has been to push the republican movement back to the margins of Irish politics, relying on their core support in the nationalist areas of Belfast and Derry and along the Border. The recent upsurge in Loyalist murders, and the pressure that places on the IRA to respond, must be seen in the context of Britain's containment strategy which has left the republican movement more on the defensive than at any time for a decade.

Target Sinn Fein

The current high profile of Loyalist groups such as the UFF and UVF comes at a time when many Unionists have lost faith in the mainstream politicians of the Democratic and Official Unionist parties, as they too have been marginalised by the Anglo-Irish talks process. Their present campaign of violence fits into the traditional pattern of Loyalists taking out their frustrations on any convenient Catholic.

There is also, however, a new dimension to the Loyalist campaign: the targeted assassination of activists in the republican movement. In 1991, Loyalist paramilitaries singled out and murdered four members of Sinn Fein, including two councillors—Eddie Fullerton and Bernard O'Hagan. Such uncharacteristic accuracy suggests more than simple collusion between the British security forces and the Loyalists. These kind of operations involve Loyalist killers venturing into hostile nationalist areas and require a high level of military skill; all of which suggests that, if the assassins are not themselves members of the RUC or UDR, they are directed by the British security forces.

Laying a trap

The targeted attacks against Sinn Feiners fit in well with Britain's strategy to contain the IRA. The British authorities are also happy to sponsor an upsurge in random terror which can deflect the republican movement from attacking Crown installations and personnel.

These developments present new problems for the republican movement. They raise the possibility that the IRA will be forced to concentrate more effort on responding to Loyalist violence rather than initiating attacks against the British state. In a situation where the IRA is already on the defensive, such a response would give the British government more scope to present its role as that of a neutral

arbiter in a communal feud.

Whitehall's current strategy amounts to laying a trap for the republican movement. The potential dangers facing the republican movement can be gauged by looking at the success of a similar strategy pursued by the governing National Party in South Africa.

Around the world president FW De Klerk's reforms have been welcomed as a progressive step away from apartheid. 'Black-on-black' violence and tribalism are seen as the new problems facing South Africa, as open conflict between the black masses and the state has been transformed into inter-communal strife.

The National Party has pursued a twin-track strategy to defuse black resistance in this way: putting political pressure on the ANC to renounce the armed struggle and negotiate from a position of weakness, while at the same time fomenting divisions within the black population by sponsoring chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha movement.

The South African government has now succeeded in selling itself to the world as a force for peace in the 'black-on-black' violence which it encouraged—even Nelson Mandela has appealed to De Klerk to intervene in the civil war. With the anti-apartheid movement on the defensive, feuding between Inkatha and the ANC has assumed a dynamic of its own. As a result, the liberation movement has been disoriented and the South African state has been restored to respectable nation status.

Britain to blame

So far, this scenario remains no more than a warning to the Irish republican movement. The IRA have not responded to Britain's attempt at 'divide and rule' by indulging in retaliatory sectarian killings. Indeed, the IRA has publicly condemned sectarian attacks against Protestants carried out by fringe republican elements like the Irish People's Liberation Organisation.

Nevertheless, dangers remain. The British state's success in containing the republican struggle gives greater scope for the myth of 'tit-for-tat' to become accepted as common sense in Ireland, and especially in Britain. The consequence will be to reinforce the British state's image as peace-keeper in Ireland, and to legitimise further measures of militarisation like the sending of extra troops at the end of 1991. These developments make it all the more important for opponents of the Irish War to demonstrate that the British authorities are responsible for the bloodshed. ●

Animal crackers

Books on animals often tell you more about the people who write and buy them than about the animals themselves. Jack Richter's much-plugged *Your Talking Cat* certainly does.

You can't have missed it. Throughout December the 'book no cat owner can afford to be without' was advertised twice a week in almost every national daily paper. At first I thought the ad was a joke. 'Your cat is talking to you', it reads. 'Listen!—your cat is telling you how much she loves you. Watch!—the special friend who shares your life has so much to say to you about his feelings and needs... if only you knew what to look for.'

Cats, according to the author, are complex creatures with 'a sophisticated command of communication'. He claims that there are 19 different ways cats say 'meow', plus 'intricate body language'. *Your Talking Cat* gives answers to such 'fascinating mysteries of feline behaviour' as these:

• Why your cat rubs you to show affection... and how best to show her yours.

• Why your cat circles in your lap before settling down.

• Why your cat always seems to come over when you're reading or doing paperwork.

• Why your cat doesn't like to be stared at.'

Jack even provides a 'Cat Talk' illustrated chart of feline facial expressions and tail positions.

The book, 84 pages of shoddily produced, semi-literate nonsense, tells you that Jack Richter is either a total loon or a very shrewd businessman. The distributor claims it's selling faster than they can restock. I believe them—I had to wait three weeks for my copy—and at £9.99 a throw it's making somebody a lot of money.

You might imagine that the kind of people who buy this rubbish are lonely souls, who, having nobody to care about or love, devote their attention to their little Tabitha, Tibs, or Felix. You can understand why it happens. If you've been neglected by people, animals seem pretty dependable. Providing you keep them well-fed and comfortable they'll stick around. They don't nag, criticise or challenge you. But neither do they love you. A cat sits on your lap because your lap's warm and soft. It nuzzles against your legs because when it does that you provide a pleasing response—a rub behind the ears, or a plate of Whiskas. Animals are driven by instinct. There are no loving, nor scheming or manipulating thoughts in their heads—just learned responses.

Cats cannot show love or affection because they cannot feel love or affection. Emotions are particular to humanity. They are a quality of feeling that our species has developed at a particular stage of its biological evolution and cultural development. It's a curious phenomenon that, having developed the human capacity for sentiment, some of us feel the need to project it on to other parts of the world in which we live. We interpret the actions of animals, and project 'human motivation' on to them.

If it were just the friendless and lonely who looked at animals in this way I could understand it, but everybody seems to be at it. 'Has anyone ever constructed a study to determine whether animals call each other by name?', asks one of those people who write to the *Guardian's* 'Question and Answer' column. 'It seems reasonable to suppose that they, no less than ourselves, need to be able to get one another's attention on an individual basis.' But if you think about it, why is this a reasonable supposition? Do animals want to discuss philosophy with each other, sort out their domestic arrangements for the weekend, perhaps make an arrangement to meet for a drink under the oak tree on Friday night?

On primetime TV, David Attenborough recently remained perfectly straightfaced as he described how sealions 'rape', how some birds remain 'married for life' and how chimpanzees are 'proud parents'.

I may not be fashionable, but I admit I'm a 'speciesist'. I believe that humans are different and better than the rest of the 'animal kingdom'. I believe that even when our thoughts and emotions are at their basest, they are more developed than those of mere beasts. I resent the David Attenboroughs of this world because I think they devalue human emotion and human action. Even the most debased and brutal rapist is a hundred times more sophisticated than the hormone driven instinct of a bull sealion.

When people project human characteristics on to animals, they are doing what children do at play. Children attribute human qualities to all kinds of inanimate objects. A doll or teddy bear becomes a confidante who understands them better than their mum or dad. To a child, the most unlikely objects assume personalities.

A friend's daughter refuses to throw away her old chipped egg-cup, in case she hurts its feelings. A neighbour's son once wrapped the dead, discarded Christmas tree in a blanket to save it from freezing on a January night. When I was three, I used to cry when I saw broken windows; I thought the houses had been injured. I grew out of it.

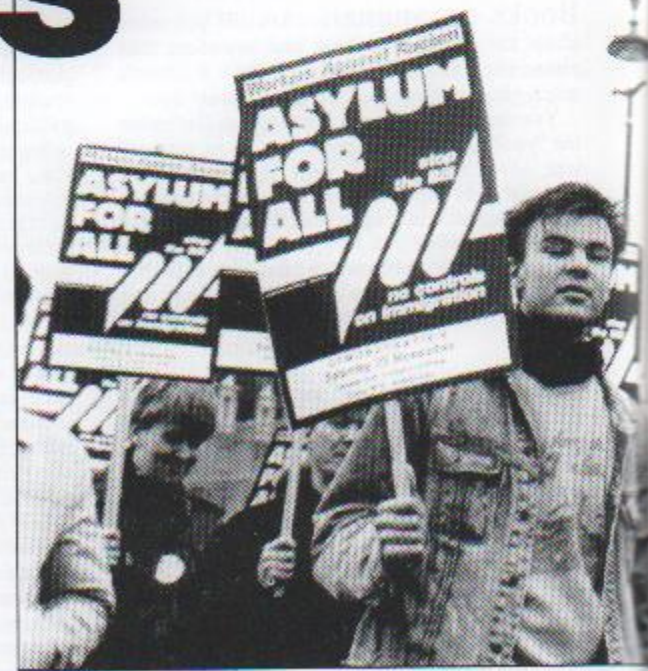


Ann Bradley

I resent the David Attenboroughs of this world because they devalue human emotion and human action

I'm sorry, Jack. Trying to establish a meaningful conversation with your cat is about as sensible as trying to communicate with your spiderplant or your table. People are people, beasts are beasts. It worries me that so many people seem to find it hard to see the difference.

Immigration controls cause racism



The government's Asylum Bill is the cutting edge of the new racism in Britain. Ironically, it is being presented as a measure that will prevent racism—by keeping immigrants out. Kirsten Cale exposes the racist logic behind the Tory legislation

More than 1500 marched past Downing Street, the houses of parliament and the home office demanding an end to all immigration controls, on a demonstration organised by Workers Against Racism in November



PHOTO: Michael Kramer

This is not in any way racist', said home secretary Kenneth Baker, introducing the thoroughly racist Asylum Bill to parliament. The government's bill includes draconian new measures to weed out 'bogus' economic migrants from 'genuine' asylum-seekers. It proposes fast-track deportation of refused applicants, compulsory fingerprinting, the abolition of legal aid, and higher fines on airlines carrying unsuccessful asylum-seekers. In short, the Asylum Bill is a new legislative assault on the rights of refugees to settle in this country.

Churchmen, refugee groups and Labour politicians have all condemned the bill as racist. Yet their criticisms do not go far enough. Every prominent opponent of the bill accepts the Tories' distinction between 'genuine' and 'bogus' asylum-seekers because they believe that immigration controls are necessary and important. Their main concern about the Asylum Bill is that it is excessively repressive: legal aid

should be provided, asylum-seekers need wider rights of appeal, 'fast-track' processing is too fast.

These critics of the Asylum Bill are appealing for fair, non-racist immigration controls. But racism cannot be fought in this way. All immigration laws are fundamentally racist. They exist to restrict the access of third world people—whether Kurds, Kenyans or Cambodians—to Britain. Anyone who has travelled through Heathrow airport cannot fail to be struck by the different treatment meted out to whites and blacks. While white Europeans sail through immigration, Africans and Asians are stopped and questioned. Some are deported on the spot.

The Asylum Bill, like other immigration laws, does not make explicit reference to blacks. 'Our policy is colour-blind', claims home secretary Baker (*Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 1991). But everybody knows where the majority of refugees come from—not Norway or America, but the third world. Pose the question 'Whose entry do

immigration controls deny?' and the inherently racist character of the laws becomes clear. Last year's refugee figures for Britain reinforce the point: almost all European asylum-seekers were allowed to settle in this country, but 90 per cent of black African refugees were turned away.

Immigration controls are not only racist because they restrict access to third world people. They are also used to police black communities within Britain, and play a central role in the creation of a racist climate at home.

The immigration laws provide the legal framework for racial oppression in this country. They brand black people as second class citizens before they have even set foot on British soil. The circumstances in which third world people are brought into the country are a constant reminder that immigrants are here on sufferance, not as a matter of right. That blacks are repeatedly forced to prove their 'legality' in hospitals, police cells and dole offices further reinforces the view that they have a different status than whites in British society.

The conventional view is that immigrants cause racism in Britain. For example, Baker argued that the Asylum Bill was necessary because an unrestricted flow of refugees would promote the growth of fascism. By this mendacious argument, the authorities absolve themselves from responsibility for racism, while presenting an apparently sympathetic and humanitarian case for tighter restrictions on immigration. But immigrants don't create racism. Rather, immigration *controls* institutionalise racism within British society.

'British is best'

Immigrants cannot carry racial prejudice into Britain, like duty-free cigarettes. The hostility to foreigners must already be here, ready to be activated by each renewed focus on immigration. The notion that 'British is best' and that foreigners are inferior exercises a pervasive influence over politics and society in this country. And immigration controls play an important part in codifying this day-to-day chauvinism by stamping blacks as second class. These underlying chauvinist sentiments are brought to the surface every time immigration is turned into a major political issue.

The close connection between immigration controls and racism in Britain has been clearly established over the past 30 years. On several occasions since the fifties, the Conservative Party has orchestrated immigration scares and imposed tighter restrictions in an attempt to ►

galvanise a racist constituency and to create a more reactionary political climate. On each occasion, the Labour Party has sought to match the Tories and to prove that it is not soft on immigration. The result has been to strengthen the consensus which believes that immigration is a major problem, and give encouragement to the racists (see box on p15).

The debate surrounding the introduction of the new Asylum Bill has much in common with previous immigration scares. There is nothing new about politicians seeking to evade responsibility for social and economic problems by shifting the blame on to immigrants. There is, however, a new dimension to the

Another Conservative MP, Tim Janman, has gone further still, accusing 'bogus refugees' of 'bleeding Britain of £100m through benefit fraud...[they] think it's hilarious how this country hands out so much money' (*Independent*, 14 November 1991).

Tories like Lawrence and Janman are not isolated bigots. Their arguments only draw out what is implicit in the Asylum Bill. The proposed legislation would enforce a distinction between a minority of *political* refugees who can be allowed in as legitimate asylum-seekers, and a majority of *economic* refugees who must be kept out as bogus applicants. The label 'economic refugee' is just a code word for immigrant scrounger.

combating racism makes a fatal concession to the right.

Those who play the numbers game are not arguing against the principle of tighter controls on immigration. They are objecting that such a crackdown is unnecessary in current circumstances. But as soon as the right asks 'what if there is an increase in immigration?', the left's numerical argument falls apart. By failing to challenge directly the idea that immigration and social problems could be connected, the left has handed the initiative to those who argue that Britain cannot afford immigrants.

No connection

In reality, the view that immigrants cause job shortages, housing shortages, or any other shortages only stands up if looked at from a racist perspective. What connection could there be between the arrival of African refugees at Heathrow and the imposition of mass redundancies in Britain's banks, shops or building sites? Hundreds and thousands of miners, steelworkers and dockers have been pitched on to dole queues since the Second World War. Were their jobs taken by immigrants? Does Britain now have booming ports staffed by black stevedores, or a thriving coal industry manned by black miners?

Right-wing politicians find it expedient to blame Africans or Indians for the job losses that occur every time the economy contracts. The real culprits are the employers who have cut jobs and closed down entire industries because they are not making enough profit out of their workers' labour.

There are no shortages of resources in Britain—just an irrational economic system that won't put those resources to use unless it makes profit for the privileged few. In the markets of the City of London, billions of pounds change hands every day between the speculators and the finance houses. But the resources to create the things we need—hospitals, houses, schools and jobs—stand idle because no speculator will invest without a profit in sight.

A billion bricks

There are a billion bricks stockpiled in Britain today. Two million people live in shoddy beds and breakfasts, temporary housing, and on the streets. Hundreds of thousands of building workers have been laid off. But the bricks stay unused and the workers unemployed, while the homeless stay homeless and their homes unbuilt—because we live in a society that can't organise its

There are no shortages of resources in Britain—just an irrational economic system that won't put those resources to use unless it makes a profit

discussion. The right now feels more emboldened in putting the issue of race on the political agenda. The retreat of the left and of liberalism creates more scope for right-wing MPs and pundits to present their racist views on immigration as legitimate and respectable.

One spokesman for the right has recently put the case against immigration in stark terms, arguing that Britain could not open 'the floodgates' to refugees. If you accept every 'James Frederick Bonga Bonga', he said, you would have '100 000 people settling in Burton so that you double the number of families in bed and breakfast...[and] if you don't pre-empt jobs, you've another 100 000 on social security' (*Scotsman*, 14 November 1991).

This argument could have been lifted straight out of a National Front rag. Yet it comes, instead, from the mouth of Ivan Lawrence, influential chairman of the Tory backbench home affairs committee and MP for Burton. Nor is Lawrence alone among top Tories in expressing such forthright anti-immigrant views.

A lot of people might condemn the racist language of Lawrence and Janman. But many more would accept the government's basic distinction between 'legitimate' and 'bogus' asylum-seekers, and endorse the argument behind the Asylum Bill that immigration puts unacceptable pressure on jobs, benefits and social services in Britain. It is these apparently commonsense arguments which need to be challenged, since they give racism an air of respectability that allows the right to dominate the debate.

The left's standard counter to the 'our country is being swamped' argument is to quote statistics which show that immigrants make up a very small proportion of the British population. In response to the Asylum Bill, radical anti-racists have again trotted out the arguments that new immigrants are not a problem because large numbers of people are also leaving Britain at present, or that immigrants only represent a tiny portion of current claims on housing and benefits. The trouble is that this 'numbers game' approach to

resources to fulfil our most basic needs. The scapegoating of immigrants is a crude attempt to disguise the responsibility of the economic system for the problems of society.

Race and nation

The debate around the Asylum Bill indicates that such racist arguments are now assuming a new prominence in British politics. Back in 1978, Margaret Thatcher made her infamous 'swamp' speech to mobilise the racist vote. In 1991, her successor is using the issue of asylum in a bid to activate support in the run-up to the general election. The Conservatives are unlikely to run a campaign with the slogan 'If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour', as their candidate did in Smethwick in 1964. But the signs all point towards a more active promotion of the politics of race and nation in the months ahead.

'There is nobody in British politics who detests racism more than John Major', claimed a senior Tory Minister when the Asylum Bill went to parliament (*Sunday Times*, 10 November 1991). But Major's government has launched a racist bill designed to criminalise refugees and create an increasingly chauvinist climate within Britain. Party leaders like Major and Baker can use nudge-nudge code words like 'bogus asylum-seekers' and 'economic refugees' to pursue their race war, safe in the knowledge that backbenchers like Ivan Lawrence will make things clear.

'Scroungers and cheats'

During the parliamentary debate in which Baker claimed that the Asylum Bill was 'in no way racist', Tory MP David Evans made an open appeal to anti-immigrant sentiment: 'Why should this country be the world's dumping ground for asylum-seekers?' (*Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 1991) While the frontbench racists promote their Asylum Bill as a sensible and 'colour-blind' piece of legislation, the backbench bigots will spell out the bill's message that asylum-seekers are scroungers and cheats.

The Asylum Bill looks like being the initial focus for a new racist offensive. The first victims of the more openly chauvinist climate will be immigrants and black communities within Britain. But the rise of reactionary ideas about race to the top of the political agenda must be a matter of pressing concern to us all. Campaigning against the Asylum Bill is a first step in challenging the newly respectable racism of the nineties. ●

Swamp politics

The debate about 'bogus asylum-seekers' is the latest of many attempts to talk up immigration scares for political purposes within Britain. Each time, the result has been even tighter restrictions on the rights of foreign immigrants—and a more racist climate at home.

Immigration was first turned into a major political issue in the fifties. As early as 1954, Lord Swinton, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, intimated that future immigration controls would necessarily be racist.

'I appreciate the force of the contention that, if we are to legislate for restrictions on the entry of British subjects and their employment here, the legislation should be non-discriminatory in form. This will not, however, conceal the fact that the problem with which we are in fact concerned is that of coloured immigrants from colonial territories.' (*Cabinet Minutes*, 1954)

The 1957 slowdown in the British economy and the 1958 race riots in Notting Hill focused the authorities' concern to restrict the influx of labour from the colonies and to police immigrant communities in Britain. Equally important, however, was the way that Harold Macmillan's Conservative government used immigration to serve its cynical domestic purposes.

The Tories realised that an immigration clampdown could have considerable electoral appeal and distract from their poor performance in government. Although still tentative about launching a racist barrage against the black citizens of the British Commonwealth, they used the immigration issue in an attempt to consolidate support. The result was the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which made the state directly responsible for enforcing racial oppression.

The next major immigration scare came in 1968 with the expulsion of Asians from Kenya. But the hysteria was motivated far more by the domestic political battles between Harold Wilson's foundering Labour government and the Conservative opposition, than by the 27 000 Asian refugees who eventually settled in Britain.

The arrival of the first Kenyan Asians provoked a storm of abuse from Conservative backbenchers. Labour attempted to upstage the opposition by pushing the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act through parliament in a record three days. The then Tory MP Enoch Powell responded in kind with his notorious 'rivers of blood' speech. Powell's campaign was designed to stir racist sentiments and win votes away from Labour. Dockers and Smithfield meat

porters demonstrated in support of his calls for further restrictions, while a poll showed 74 per cent backing his views.

Powell was subsequently sacked from the shadow Conservative cabinet; his racism was considered too public for a frontbencher in 1968. But he had only drawn out the logic of what every parliamentary party in Britain said about immigration during the Kenyan Asian scare and in the approach to the 1970 general election.

A decade later, the Conservative opposition orchestrated a new scare in the run-up to the 1979 general election. Margaret Thatcher's infamous 'swamp' speech of 1978 appealed directly to the most backward sections of British society:

'The British character has done much for democracy, for law, and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped, people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in... if you want good race relations you have got to allay people's fear on numbers.'

That this speech was made when primary immigration had been reduced to a trickle shows how Thatcher trumped up an immigration scare for electoral purposes.

Thatcher's message to voters was that the Conservatives were the true party of race and nation. She succeeded in outflanking the equally racist Labour government (which had introduced virginity tests on Asian brides, carried out in makeshift cubicles at Heathrow), and in undermining support for the National Front, which had polled 120 000 votes in the 1977 London council elections. Thatcher's cynical promotion of an immigration scare to bolster her party's electoral support had devastating consequences for the immigrant community. Racist murders peaked in 1979, the year the Tories won the general election.

In 1986, as Thatcher's last general election approached, the Tories launched a new immigration scare. The government announced new restrictions for visa applications from Asia, deliberately creating bottlenecks at Heathrow as immigrants rushed to beat the deadline, and then used the chaos as 'evidence' that Britain was threatened by a new wave of immigration. The result was a new wave of racist attacks. A *Sun* banner headline screamed '3000 Asians flood Britain'. The same night, local racists daubed '3000 Moor' and 'Packie Patel' across an Asian newsagent in East London. The spelling might have left something to be desired, but the message was clear enough. ●

Nazis are not the problem

Anti-racists in Britain are warning of the threat of resurgent Nazism in Germany. Angela Hughes thinks that the focus on German fascism is a dangerous diversion from confronting home-grown British racism

All of a sudden our television screens are full of images of goose-stepping, sieg-heiling, swastika-wearing neo-Nazis. In the wake of a spate of attacks on immigrants and refugees in Germany, in Britain the idea is gaining ground that fascism is once again on the rise in the former Third Reich.

Both right and left in British politics emphasise the threat of the new Nazism. Top Tories such as Norman Tebbit and Nigel Lawson have warned of the growth of European fascism, especially in Germany. Left-wing and anti-racist groups have denounced the activities of the German far right and organised pickets of the German embassy in London.

In ascribing the resurgence of racism in Germany to the activities of Nazis, British anti-racists are focusing on the wrong problem. It is true that neo-Nazi groups have organised firebombings of immigrant asylum homes and physical assaults on foreigners. But the size of the far right and its role in creating a racist

climate in Germany have been seriously overestimated.

Some estimates claim that there are 40 000 followers of the fascist parties in Germany. But they were conspicuous by their absence on 9 November 1991, when the neo-Nazis held marches to mark the dual anniversary of the 1938 *Kristallnacht* (Night of Shattering Glass) pogrom against the Jews and the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall. A mass show of strength was predicted; only a few hundred fascists turned up on the day.

German neo-Nazi leaders had bragged of unleashing violence on the scale of *Kristallnacht*, when mobs of fascists destroyed Jewish shops and synagogues and murdered or deported 20 000 Jews. In the event, even the shattered fragments of the German left managed to mobilise far larger numbers for their counter-demonstrations against racism.

The influence of the fascist parties has also been grossly exaggerated. Despite their involvement in attacks on foreigners, they are not responsible for creating the racist

atmosphere which has encouraged ordinary people to regard immigrants as a threat to the German way of life.

The racist backlash in Germany is the result of a systematic campaign by the government which targets immigrants as a problem. For sometime, the authorities have been complaining loudly about refugees flooding into Germany at the rate of 30 000 a month. There has been a heated debate about the need to tighten up Germany's liberal asylum laws in order to make it harder for foreigners to enter the country.

Until recently, the debate centred on the liberal post-Nazi constitution, which stipulates that those seeking asylum should be granted refuge in Germany. Chancellor Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democrats (CDU) demanded that the constitution be changed in order to limit the number of asylum-seekers. In November, however, the CDU suddenly dropped its demand for constitutional change, suggesting that the number of asylum applicants could be reduced under existing laws and new EC provisions.

Respectable racists

This sudden switch by the CDU suggested that its vigorous campaign for constitutional change had been little more than a political device for creating an anti-immigrant climate. Its success in doing so rendered a change in the constitution superfluous. In addition, the government has also been successful in creating a greater sense of German national identity through a discussion about who is and who isn't a German.



The British left picket the German embassy: a diversion from fighting racism here

The government began a debate about how to impose a stricter definition of who is a German in order to disqualify the many thousands of potential refugees from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union who are claiming German ancestry to gain entry to the country. The impact of these discussions has been to create a greater sense of German nationalism in a country whose Nazi past has long acted as a barrier to cohering an aggressive national identity.

The narrow focus in Britain on the violence of a minority of German fascists obscures the far more important influence of the respectable racists in the German establishment. Immigration is being used as a political football by mainstream parties for their own cynical purposes. A new racist consensus which legitimises attacks on foreigners is the result.

They're all at it

In this sense, Germany has a lot in common with Britain. Here too the government party is manipulating the immigration issue for its own political advantage. The Tories are currently pushing through parliament the Asylum Bill, which will make it well nigh impossible for refugees to enter the country.

The opposition parties might disagree about the details of the Tory legislation. But they all agree that there should be strict limits on the numbers of immigrants allowed into the country. The idea that foreigners are a drain on scarce resources and a source of competition for jobs,

housing and other amenities is upheld by all political parties.

As in Germany, the political focus on immigration in Britain is creating a climate of hostility towards foreigners and encouraging attacks on immigrants. There is nothing exceptional about the politicisation of the race issue in Germany. In fact, this trend is common to all European countries, where immigration is now at the top of the political agenda.

British is best?

The British focus on the revival of fascism in Germany is a serious problem. It diverts attention from the racist consensus among political parties in this country, and obscures the need to challenge racism at home. It also strengthens the idea that Britain is more civilised than its Continental neighbours by suggesting that racism and fascism are foreign diseases.

These sort of 'British is best' sentiments are extremely dangerous. They help to strengthen further the nationalist consensus which dominates British society. Such popular nationalism cannot be used to promote anti-racism. Far from it; the notion of British superiority provides the political basis for chauvinist hostility towards foreigners in this country.

Anti-racists in Britain who focus on the threat of fascism in Germany are not only avoiding the issue at home. By endorsing a pro-British and anti-German perspective, they are also conceding crucial ground to the nationalist right over here. As recent statements from Tories like Lawson

and Tebbit show, there is no contradiction between protesting against German fascism and supporting the government's anti-immigrant measures in Britain.

Anti-German chauvinism has a long pedigree as a key component of British nationalism. British popular culture survives on a diet of anti-German humour. A week does not pass without the media taking a swipe at the Germans and what they did in the war. The British left has often been happy to endorse the anti-German prejudices promoted by the establishment around the Second World War. It has failed to see that such narrow anti-fascism is really just a radical version of British chauvinism.

Perverse

The left's natural inclination to take sides with Britain against Germany now manifests itself in a campaign against fascism in Europe. At a time when the British government is launching a new crackdown on refugees and immigrants through its Asylum Bill, the left's anti-German initiatives are perverse.

Anti-racists in Britain who have demonstrated outside the German embassy would be far better employed building a campaign against the new anti-immigrant legislation over here, and organising pickets of the home office. It is time the British left woke up to the fact that British racism is just as pernicious as the German variety—and began to do something about it.

• Thanks to Natalia Heym.

'Anyone on Broadwater Farm is guilty'

The convictions of the three men jailed for killing PC Keith Blakelock on Broadwater Farm have finally been quashed. But, says Kenan Malik, the authorities which set up the Tottenham Three in the first place have been able to turn the debate about the case around and put black people in the frame once more

'Who was responsible for framing the Tottenham Three?'

That was the question you might have expected to top the agenda after their convictions were thrown out of court. Instead, the question to which the police, the press and politicians demanded an answer was 'Who did kill PC Blakelock?'. And the answer they came up with was that the entire black community on the Broadwater Farm estate was guilty, one way or another.

Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Enghin Raghip spent six years in prison after being

convicted of murdering PC Keith Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm riot of October 1985. In November, the police were finally forced to admit that they had made up the evidence against the three men. The clearing of the Tottenham Three is long overdue (though it should be remembered that, while Braithwaite and Raghip are now free, Silcott is still in prison as a result of another disputed murder conviction).

The exposure of the Tottenham Three frame-up has further undermined public confidence in the police. Following the collapse of the cases against the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and the Maguire Seven, and the disbanding of the West Midlands serious crimes squad, this latest exposure of police corruption has strengthened the view that the police force is an incompetent bunch of liars and thugs. The undermining of the myth of police integrity creates potentially explosive problems for the authorities. 'It will be a catastrophe for the country', noted *Daily Telegraph* deputy editor Charles Moore, 'if people come to see the police as a very powerful, unfriendly vested interest and it will undercut the Tory standing on law and order' (29 November 1991).

Yet while the litany of police wrong-doing has certainly entrenched public cynicism about the force, it has so far had no practical repercussions. In the absence of any active opposition movement mounting a wider challenge to the authorities, police corruption has simply come to be accepted as an unpleasant fact of life. In this passive political climate, the press and politicians have enjoyed considerable scope to turn the arguments about the Tottenham Three around, and to focus attention back on to their favourite law and order scare: black criminality.

The debate which followed the admission that the three had been framed was less about the

responsibility of the authorities for the frame-up than about the supposed 'conspiracy of silence' on Broadwater Farm which was said to have protected the real killers. When PC Blakelock's widow declared, after the case collapsed, that everybody who was present on the estate when her husband died was guilty, she set the tone for the media coverage. Once more, the aim has been to scapegoat Broadwater Farm.

'PC Keith Blakelock was butchered by a mob', argued an editorial in the *Daily Telegraph*. 'If Silcott did not lead that murderous gang, who did?' It concluded that 'justice hasn't been done' with the release of the Tottenham Three: 'It won't be until the guilty have been punished.' (26 November 1991) The *Independent* demanded that 'The people who have been so vociferous in their defence of Mr Silcott and those found guilty alongside him...should now devote similar efforts in aiding the authorities in seeking the killers' (28 November 1991).

'You should be grateful that we have let you out', was the message from the press to the Tottenham Three. 'But people like you are guilty and we demand that you help us stick some more behind bars.'

Even prominent supporters of the campaign to release the Tottenham Three lent substance to such arguments. On the day that Silcott's conviction was quashed, Labour's Tottenham MP, Bernie Grant, appeared on television and spent far more time appealing to Broadwater Farm residents to shop the killers than he did criticising the police. Such defensiveness among anti-racists helped the authorities to wriggle off the hook, and to blame the residents of Broadwater Farm for both the violence on the Farm and for the incarceration of the Tottenham Three.

The real blame for both the violence on the night of the riot and for the framing of the Tottenham



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

after the tottenham three

The case has collapsed but the criminalisation of a community continues

Three lies with the police, the courts and the media who conspired to criminalise a whole generation of black youth.

The Broadwater Farm riot of October 1985 followed the death of Cynthia Jarrett, a black mother of six, during a police raid on her flat. It was the last straw for a community which had suffered sustained police harassment. When riot police invaded the estate to pre-empt a response to her death, Broadwater Farm exploded in anger and Britain witnessed the fiercest night of street fighting in recent times. In the course of the fighting, PC Blakelock was killed (for more details on the events leading to the riot see K Tompson, *Under Siege*, 1988).

Occupying army

The riot unleashed a torrent of racist fury directed at Broadwater Farm. The police organised an onslaught against the estate to exact revenge for Blakelock's death. An independent inquiry later discovered that in the two months following the riot there was never an occasion when there was less than a thousand police on the Farm. In the week following the riot there were 9165 police officers on the estate, including armed teams and surveillance helicopters. It is no exaggeration to say that the police occupied Broadwater Farm like an invading army. Then they set out to put the black community in the frame.

In the six months following the riot, police raided 271 flats—one third of all those on the estate. Not three, but 369 people were arrested—one in 10 of all residents on the Farm. Three-quarters of these were black. Virtually every black male between the ages of 15 and 25 was picked up. Most of those arrested were held in isolation and denied access to solicitors. Many were bullied, beaten and threatened until they 'confessed'.

White youths were arrested, then told they could go free if they would cooperate with the police in getting 'the niggers'. Jason Hill, a white 13-year old at the time, was pressurised into confessing to murder and naming Silcott as another killer. 'I would have confessed to anything', said Hill recently, recounting the experience of being interrogated. 'I would even have confessed to being the Yorkshire Ripper.' An Old Bailey judge called his confession 'fantastical' and 'make-believe' and dismissed the case against him.

In recent weeks, the authorities have tried to blame one police officer for the harassment of Farm residents and fabrication of evidence—Chief Superintendent Graham Melvin, who

was in charge of the Blakelock investigation. In fact, the conspiracy against Broadwater Farm involved the whole of the Metropolitan Police and went to the very top. 'There is a psychological hang-up in this country about the use of force by the police', said the then Metropolitan Police commissioner, Kenneth Newman, about police tactics on Broadwater Farm at that time. 'I have fewer hang-ups than most.'

26 words

The courts too played a central part in the frame-up. The prosecution could not produce a shred of evidence against Silcott. No witness testified against him. There was no photographic or forensic evidence. The authorities could not even prove that he was in Tottenham on the night of the violence. Silcott confessed to nothing.

The police evidence rested on a single statement they claimed that Silcott had made when he was first accused of murder: 'You ain't got enough evidence. Those kids won't give evidence in court. No one else will talk to you. You can't keep me away from them.' Silcott never signed the police notes of these supposed remarks. On the strength of these 26 uncorroborated, unconfirmed, unconvincing words, and these words alone, Silcott was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment.

No evidence

Now even these few words have been shown to have been fabricated. As a result, crown prosecutor Roy Amlot told the appeal court in November, the integrity of Chief Superintendent Melvin had been impugned and the convictions could no longer be safely upheld. Yet the fact that those words were made up is of little moment. The evidence against Silcott has not been disproved—because there never was any evidence against him in the first place. Nor was there any evidence against the other two, apart from more uncorroborated confessions made under duress.

Trial by tabloid

The problem goes much further than the actions of a bent copper tampering with notes. The entire system of British justice criminalised Broadwater Farm, convicted Silcott and Braithwaite of being black, and threw in Raghup, of Turkish-Cypriot descent, for good measure.

And finally among the list of guilty parties we come to the media. Today the papers behave as if they knew the Tottenham Three were innocent all along. Five years ago, however, at the time of the trial, the

press orchestrated a huge campaign of vilification and racist abuse, targeting Broadwater Farm—and Winston Silcott in particular. Bloodthirsty reports of the violence were printed alongside statements such as Jason Hill's fantasy about how rioters planned to put Blakelock's head on a pole.

Silcott was paraded across the pages of the tabloid press like a caged animal: he was 'The face of evil', the 'machete monster', the 'fiend', the 'beast', the 'Godfather', the 'Tyrant' or simply the 'savage'. The *Star* even printed a photograph of the riot supposedly showing 'The Beasts of Broadwater Farm moving in for the kill...led by an animal called Winston Silcott'. Long before Silcott faced the Old Bailey jury, he had been tried and convicted by the press. As William Silcott said, 'They have crucified my son.'

Still guilty

The framing of the Tottenham Three did not result from a breakdown in the British legal system. Rather, the fit-up was an accurate reflection of what British justice means for the black community in a place like Broadwater Farm: police violence, arbitrary arrest, trial by tabloid and convictions without evidence. Yet, after the overturning of the Blakelock verdict, the issue of institutionalised racism has hardly been mentioned. The case has collapsed but the criminalisation of a community has continued. The message of the debate surrounding the Tottenham Three has been that the guilty ones were the people of Broadwater Farm. As Blakelock's widow put it, 'anyone on Broadwater Farm who turned out that night is guilty'.

New clampdown

This is the attitude that put the Tottenham Three behind bars in the first place. As far as the authorities were concerned, 'anyone on Broadwater Farm who turned out that night was guilty'. And anyone who was black and lived in the area was liable to have turned out that night and hence fitted the frame. The logic of this argument is that trials should be dispensed with altogether and the entire black community should be interned, since 'anyone is guilty'.

The police have already begun knocking on doors on the Farm again. Six years after the Broadwater Farm riot revealed the extent of institutionalised racism, the exposure of the conspiracy to criminalise an entire community has been twisted into the excuse for a new clampdown on the estate. ●

Waite for God



Toby Banks

At 16, he joined the Grenadier Guards but resigned because he was allergic to the uniform

Upon Terry Waite's release it was revealed that a select handful of British journalists had been allowed access to his cell during his captivity. Thanks to their instant dispatches, we were familiar with the details of Terry's ordeal even before his famous size 14s stepped out at RAF Lyneham. We knew that his Bible never left him and that he drew inspiration from the Book of Common Prayer, which he had memorised by the age of 16. We knew that at night he heard the clicking of gun breeches and 'the frantic scuttling of all kinds of nocturnal creatures that he never saw but only heard and felt'. We knew that he had been 'forced to eat spaghetti' and had wailed 'Oh no, oh no'.

Any gaps in the picture could be filled with what was already known about him. He was the son of a policeman, and at the age of four demanded to be taken to church. At 16, he joined the Grenadier Guards but resigned because he was allergic to the uniform. He joined the Church Army instead. When he went to Uganda he wore a bullet proof vest and carried a copy of *Rupert Bear's Birthday Book*. Friends remembered his schoolboy humour and spoke affectionately of how he 'always laughed at his own feeble jokes'. Once these pieces are put together, we have a pretty good idea of the kind of man this gentle giant really was.

My own investigations support this picture of a typically British hero. For I too was in Beirut, where I spoke to one of the 'innocent' hostages—an American whose future, as I write, remains uncertain. For obvious reasons I cannot reveal his identity. In the course of our conversation, 'Mr X' told me of how he had been kept in a small cell for almost a year, while various other hostages came and went. When alone he would take encouragement from a plaque inscribed with a motivational verse entitled 'Don't Quit', sent by an anonymous well-wisher in the Pentagon.

The days crawled by. Then one day, the door opened and into the cramped room stumbled a huge bearded man, clutching a Bible. 'Terry Waite', he beamed, offering his hand and banging his head on the ceiling. 'Let's have a prayer meeting!'

From that moment, the cell reverberated with the sound of hymns, Bible reading and the roar of Terry laughing. When X suggested that they listen to the radio, Terry grabbed it excitedly and insisted they listen to the BBC World Service. 'It was hell', recalled X. 'After 14 hours of singing, praying, and the *Focus on Faith* programme, we would finally get our meal. Terry would go into a tantrum when they couldn't get the Alphabetti Spaghetti he was used to. Eventually we would have to force him to eat it. Next he would demand a Rupert Bear story—the guards said he wouldn't sleep until he got one. Then he'd always want "just one more". Eventually he'd drift off and I'd sit in the corner

while he spread out across the floor. I'd stare at the John Bunyan postcard he'd stuck over my *Starbird* calendar, and say to myself: "My word Bunyan, you're a lucky fellow. You've got a window and a table, and you've never heard of Terry Waite".'

I quote these bitter words in full not out of any wish to give them the dignity of print but to illustrate the difference between British and other hostages. It is a theme widely discussed, but the *Mirror* put it best, as it so often does, on its front page: 'My God—You can tell he's British.'

The free-born Briton finds any form of incarceration abhorrent. Yet, like the noble lion, he retains a powerful dignity, refusing to kowtow to his captors. He may stubbornly refuse to cooperate. Then again, he may endure their abuse with a quiet stoicism. Or again, he may baffle his tormentors by laughing at his troubles. John McCarthy stood with quiet dignity when meeting the press on his release. Jackie Mann joked brilliantly about leaving his wife for the air hostess. Terry Waite, as the *Mirror* said, 'came home in triumph like a grand old British bulldog', and thrilled the nation with the greatest oratory since Churchill.

Had 'the world's most famous Christian' been debased by his ordeal? Not a bit of it. One glance was all Paul Johnson needed to give the all-clear: 'What strikes one most about Waite, what is in its way most amazing, is that he has emerged so singularly free of the moral slime of captivity... incarceration degrades and demeans the captive, turns good men into bad, the wicked into beasts.' Still, Johnson was right to be concerned. After all, as the *Sun*'s Richard Littlejohn reminded us, 'No one could have blamed him if his immediate reaction on setting foot on British soil had been to buy a gun and start shooting at anything in a tea towel.'

So, as Waite's barrel chest filled with his first breath of sweet English air, we waited for signs of bestiality. We witnessed instead a display of animal grace. Out of strength came sweetness, as the Bible says. The *Star*'s man watched as he 'threw his great lion's head back and roared'. His lion-heart sent a thousand years of Anglo-Saxon blood coursing through his veins. The National Grid faced the greatest power surge since the Royal Wedding, as thousands of small businesses faxed their good wishes (on headed notepaper) to the *Sun*.

Then came the moment that we will tell our grandchildren about; the kind of impetuous brilliance that sets us apart from other races. Britain's Soldier of God drew himself up to his full six foot seven inches. Joy Brodier, who sent the John Bunyan card, 'went all squidgy inside'. Farmers laid down their ploughs. Factories

emptied. Schoolchildren filed silently into playgrounds. And as if by some magical flick of the switch, the country ground to a halt. Fifty million mouths joined with Terry as he broke into a chorus of 'My Old Dutch' which echoed down the centuries. The slumbering lion of England awoke and the world took note.

What next for Britain's Tower of Strength? For now he will be shadowed by RAF psychiatrist Wing Commander Gordon Turnbull, who will sleep in the next room, decide what he watches on TV, and who he sees. This will help Terry adjust to life in 1990s Britain. The doc will dress in the same clothes, mimic his movements and speak in the same pitch of voice, 'to make him feel more at ease'.

In the longer term, a career in showbiz beckons. By the time you read this, the Hostage Aid single 'My Old Dutch' will be number one; and, according to London agent Michael Lindon, there is also a film on the cards, with retired police chief and messenger of God Sir James Anderton a front-runner for the title role. Surely the day cannot be far off when, in the words of the *Star*, 'Brits around the globe will be able to pay this proud compliment to any deserving compatriot: "He's as British as Terry Waite"'. Or *Sir Terry*, perhaps.

Not bad for a humble CIA man from Blackheath.

Let's not have a party

At a Special Congress in London in November, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) renamed itself 'Democratic Left'. A copy of one delegate's report-back came Andrew Calcutt's way

Comrades, or should I say, members of the asymmetric, federalist, open culture of common purpose through a celebration of diversity which is the Democratic Left, we did it! We grasped the nettle, we transformed ourselves in readiness for New Times. Our new name prefigures our broad-based, empowering and enabling project of reaching out with humility and confidence towards facilitative, participative subsidiarity. We are newly equipped to meet the crisis of representative space. Our message is clear.

First, let me inform you that the executive committee (EC) was shocked by recent revelations concerning the transfer of so-called Moscow Gold from the Soviet Union to the CPGB. General secretary Nina Temple said she would never have joined the party if she had known about the secret funds. Delegates to the Special Congress shared Nina's feelings of hurt and betrayal. And may I take this opportunity to scotch the rumour that the revelations printed in the *Sunday Times* were a set-up by the EC in an attempt to discredit further the name of the CPGB and add to the attractions of the name-change. That kind of Stalinist manoeuvre has no place in the Democratic Left. I say that in all frankness and honesty, as someone with a proud record of silent protest against the CPGB's support for the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956.

Delegates to the Special Congress recognised that only an honest appraisal, and a rupture with past undemocratic practices, could take the best of our tradition forward with integrity. That is why we ignored the poll in our newspaper, *Changes*, which showed that 54 per cent of respondents wanted 'communist' to be retained in the title, while Democratic Left was rejected as a first choice by 80 per cent of those voting. A backward element has alleged that many delegates to the Special Congress were 'hand-picked' by the EC. Comrades should understand that it is part of the leadership's function to contact members who haven't been near a branch for years, take them to meetings to elect delegates, and tell them who to vote for. This is what we mean by extending democracy, and there is no place in the Democratic Left for anyone unable to recognise this.

Lethal caterpillars

'The moans and groans of a minority must not be allowed to detract from the stimulating character of Congress debate. A forward-looking comrade asked, "does 'communist' describe our new party? It's like calling a butterfly a flying caterpillar". A Scottish diehard replied "caterpillars are a much more lethal force than butterflies who look pretty and represent nothing". We all ignored the delegate who declared "ultimately the name doesn't matter. I am a writer and I've just finished a short story without naming the leading character". The overwhelming majority agreed with the comrade



'Well we can't sing the *Internationale*, can we?'

who declared "butterflies cross-fertilising flowers is an appropriate image for what we are going to do in the Democratic Left. I have already bonded with the new name". This is the kind of creative Marxism which will help us in networking among invisible social movements.

'I was deeply moved when Nina Temple announced "the constitution of the Democratic Left is the declaration of a new political identity". You may ask, "what kind of identity? What does the Democratic Left stand for?". Comrades will keep in mind the need to free ourselves from the Marxist metanarrative. I'm sure the editor of *Changes*, now retitled *New Times*, was correct when he explained that "the paper has really not had a party line and this prefigures what the Democratic Left is all about". Another delegate was thinking in the right direction—or rather, plurality of diverse directions recognising the three nations within Britain equally—when he explained how "Teesside CP has been successful over the last decade inasmuch as we were not recognised as a party, although we ended up more isolated than before". His contribution exemplified the exciting future that lies in store for the Democratic Left.

Congress was not without moments of tension. When chairperson Marian Darke reminded us that many comrades were using Boots special offer tickets which committed them to travelling home on particular trains, an irate visitor to Congress drew attention to the boycott of Boots in protest against the sale of animal-tested products by the said company. There was also some animosity concerning the distribution to delegates of *City*

Xtra, a listings magazine recommended by a member of the executive. Unfortunately it contained an advertisement for "adult" chatlines.

'Some comrades have doubted whether our organisation is strong enough to withstand New Times. I confess I was surprised to learn that the cost of servicing 4700 members of the CPGB with newsletters and circulars, etc, amounted to four times as much as the monies collected in dues. Speaking for the executive, Joe Marshall was forced to admit that "the system has fallen apart...if we had a rapid growth, it would bankrupt us". No doubt that explains why many former members of the CPGB have so far refrained from transferring their membership to the Democratic Left. There is a principled position designed to ensure the financial stability of our new organisation.

'Comrades, we could not have transformed our party without recognising the supreme importance

of engaging with feminist currents and celebrating the rich diversity of people from different cultures. Already we are harvesting the fruits of our pluralistic vision. At the Special Congress, only 182 out of 210 delegates described themselves as white; male delegates comprised only just over 75 per cent of the total.

Old dogs

'Some cynics have suggested our party is too long in the tooth to meet the demands of New Times. It is true that 22.4 per cent of delegates were pensioners, and many more members may decide to take up the proposal for joint membership with Age Concern. But let nobody call these comrades staid. They retain the flexibility which over the past 40 years has allowed them to reject such old-fashioned dogmas as working class revolution, the leading role of the party and much more. Indeed, the overwhelming vote in favour of the new constitution of the Democratic Left, with only one vote against and two abstentions, shows that old dogs can learn new tricks, especially when the EC shows them how.

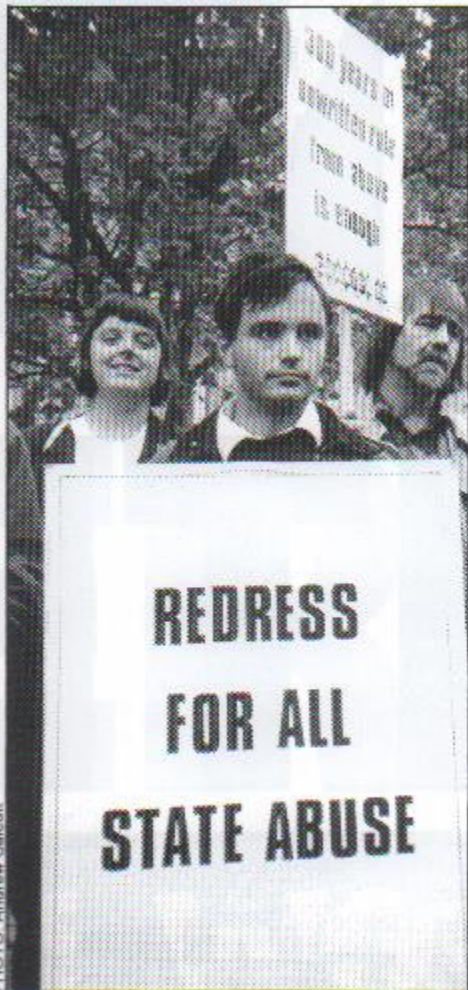
'The Democratic Left is a new-born baby suckling on the proud record of the CPGB. We will create a culture of equity and sustainability, based on empowerment through postal ballots and the dream of Global Wales, towards diverse alliances which are democratic, humane and green. No one must repeat the scandalous remark made by one member, that "this is just a bad dream". NB: all comrades should try to attend the first of our open forums entitled "Hegemony and Easter".'

The chattering class struggle

A thousand people went to the Charter 88/Independent conference, 'Towards a Written Constitution', in Manchester in November. Afterwards, one of them spoke to Andrew Calcutt

My dear, it was such an inspiring weekend. My first workshop was about capitalism and democracy, with a loud red-faced man saying how democratic the market is, and a delicate-looking chap with flowing white hair saying that if we want democracy we should challenge capitalism, although we need a free market for things like book-publishing. A slightly confused person mentioned Aristotle and the exchange of collective piles of fruit. A lady at the back said how glad she was that Victorian industrialists retired to the country and didn't carry on with their ghastly factories. She thought Lord Salisbury and the landed chaps had the kind of alternative values we need. I couldn't agree more. We would all be better off with fewer cars, more horses, and lots of baskets of fruit for the sick. Finally the white-haired man,

'That's fighting talk where I come from'



rather sweet really, said that advertising persuades us to want things we maybe don't want, just as slaves were conditioned not to want freedom. How true! We have far too many clothes, far too much junk food. Our real needs are clean streets and clean air.

'We were promised a speech from the man who used to edit the Marxism thingummy that's closing down. But he didn't appear. I did enjoy the workshop which was moderated—a much nicer word than 'chaired', don't you think?—by Will Hutton, the *Guardian's* economics editor. He was very concerned about industrial clusters. Then there was Geoff Mulgan, a sort of tieless-in-Soho young man who advises the Labour Party. He wanted 'to transform the company from an institution whose members are stockholders to an institution whose members work for it and invest their lives in it'. An embittered young man muttered something about too many dead miners and construction workers having invested their lives in the company already. Cynicism of that kind is quite uncalled for I feel.

Anally retentive borrowing

'Another speaker was a delightful poppet called Hilary Wainwright, who reminded me of the little one in *The Two Ronnies*, but said some very serious things. I was so pleased when she said 'human enlightenment came from the experience of the war and realisation of everyone's contribution'. I've always thought that the Second World War was one of the nicest moments of British history. It would be so good if we could go back to that sense of community. I'm afraid I couldn't quite follow dear Hilary when she talked about regional banks and anally retentive borrowing—she said herself she was going on too long. If I see her again I must ask where she bought her lovely rainbow waistcoat.

'Those trades union chaps were thankfully thin on the ground. At Labour conferences, they always struck me as rather forbidding. Someone said 'once we are all citizens we will be able to trust each other', and it seemed to me everyone present was already a citizen one could trust. One could feel at ease at the Charter 88 conference, without worrying, so to speak, about what was happening to the silver teaspoons.

Adolescent screaming

'At lunchtime a coach party drove into Manchester for a Vigil for Democracy. Standing around in Albert Square for half an hour, really. An over-enthusiastic Green person tried to make us chant 'What do we want—democracy! When do we want it—now!'. Most of us, I feel, regard shouting and screaming as rather adolescent.

'The climax of the conference was the plenary session on Saturday afternoon. The moderator was Geoffrey Robertson QC. I found him slightly unctuous—I couldn't help thinking he was a

mixture of Nigel Lawson and that awful Bob Monkhouse. (Whenever he appears on television I wonder whether the lowest form of human life is a Tory voter from a humble background. Are such people naturally stupid or something?) Despite his oily manner, Mr Robertson did say some quite poetic things. He said our British constitution would be 'the flesh made word' (*pace* St John the Divine), and should be 'inspiring, capable of being learned with pride by future generations of schoolchildren'. Stirring stuff.

Ordinary professionals

'Whoops! I forgot to say that the point of Saturday afternoon was to hear from four people who have drafted model constitutions. First was John MacDonald QC, who did the Liberal Democrats' *We, The People*. 'Why are we here instead of trying to get into Twickenham?', he began. 'We are angry because we have been so badly governed.' Mr MacDonald was very keen on equal access before the courts. As he pointed out, 'if you are a multinational or on supplementary benefit, you may be alright'. But for ordinary professional people, a libel action is out of the question. This must surely be the most blatant travesty of British justice.

'The next speaker was James Cornford, director of a Labour Party think-tank. Unfortunately no one had read Mr Cornford's published proposals because they cost £20, and as he himself said, 'we can't afford to reprint them'. However, Mr Cornford and Mr MacDonald spent a lot of time agreeing with each other, so one can only suppose that the Liberal Democrats' document is a fair guide to the thoughts of Labour's constitutionalists.

'Next speaker to the lectern was Frank Vibert, a rather stern man from the Thatcherite Institute of Economic Affairs. He said we should be more like the Americans. What rot! At least Tony Benn doesn't go in for that sort of thing. Dear Tony, still wearing the same cardigan and smoking the same pipe. He spoke with such enthusiasm about ending 'the culture of obsequious subservience'. Didn't care for his ideas about 'all social advances coming from the bottom', but I still can't help admiring him. I always think of him as a sort of mirror-image of Sir Keith Joseph, who was terribly right-wing just as Tony Benn is wildly left. But both men are indefatigable British democrats.

English russet apples

'Then the chair of Charter 88 read out The Manchester Declaration: 'We the undersigned, gathered here in Manchester, are convinced of the urgent need to apply Britain's traditions of liberty and tolerance to our own system of government.' How moving, and how strange it is that the nation which led so many peoples into the realm of democracy has denied that privilege to her own people. Unfortunately, the declaration was rather too long and when dear Anthony Barnett (I always think of him as our Woody Allen) got to the end, there was a bit of an anti-climax. More silence and shuffling of feet than rapturous applause. One woman even said she found it 'impossible to get excited about the idea of a document'. And that odiously cynical young man asked what protection America's Bill of Rights had afforded black sharecroppers.

Four of us travelled back on the train together. We shared some quiche and English russet apples, and talked about lawyers we know. I said I thought most judges try hard really—when they say those awful things about how the Birmingham Six would be better off hanged, it's just like rugby players letting off steam after a hard game. One of those football persons asked if we would mind making less noise because he was trying to sleep. Really! And they call this a free country.'

PHOTO: Andrew Calcutt

Two years after the end of the Cold War, a new East-West frontier is being drawn across Europe. The conflict in Yugoslavia has become the focus of a major propaganda offensive by the European right, which has elevated it into an historic battle between Western civilisation and Eastern barbarism.

Joan Phillips looks behind the myths being promoted about the war between Serbia and Croatia, and reveals the right's real agenda

Two tribes go to war. For anybody in Britain following the conflict in Yugoslavia, this is the message being transmitted by the media. The war between Serbia and Croatia is depicted as a tribal bloodbath, the inevitable result of conflicting ethnic identities with deep historical roots.

This is just one of the myths being manufactured in the West about the war between Serbia and Croatia. The underlying cause of the conflict has been buried beneath a mountain of propaganda.

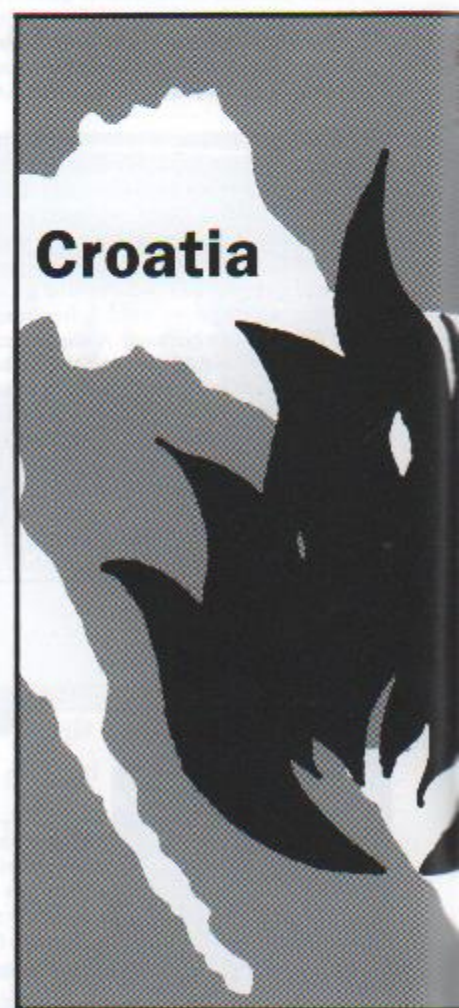
Two tribes?

If we are to believe the media version of events, Serbs and Croats are separate races: two ethnic groups, which speak different languages, have separate confessional histories, adhere to different values and embrace conflicting cultures. According to this interpretation, Serbs and Croats are destined by their genes and their histories to hate one another. What we are apparently witnessing is the enactment of an ancient blood feud, a war of revenge between two antithetical peoples.

Roger Boyes, Eastern Europe correspondent for *The Times*, described the conflict as a war between warrior tribes: 'Fighting is at the heart of the relationship between Croats and their Serb neighbours.'

(*Warsaw Voice*, 13 October 1991). Boyes went on to suggest that the Serbian minority in Croatia is descended from an ancient warrior band known as the Grenzer, as if the activities of a few people a few centuries ago can explain the dynamics of the current conflict.

Tribal explanations tell us nothing about what is happening in Yugoslavia today. The idea that this



FRONTIER

Europe's new East

conflict is rooted in the antagonism between two conflicting ethnic identities is spurious. In fact, what we have in Yugoslavia is the *invention* of ethnic difference by Croatian nationalists who want to justify their claim to independent nationhood, and by Western commentators who want to justify their support for the Croatian cause.

One language

For example, Croats describe in detail the linguistic superiority of Croatian over Serbian, and insist that they are two languages. In fact, there is only one language: Serbo-Croatian. Serbs and Croats may use different scripts (Latin and Cyrillic), but their spoken language is about as different in dialect as a Yorkshire and a Lancashire accent. In recent years, however, Croats have been busy inventing new words and pronunciations. These days when Serbs travel from Belgrade to Zagreb, they find that they cannot make themselves understood or understand what is being said.

This invention of ethnic difference is a relatively recent phenomenon. Not all that long ago, most people in Yugoslavia would have identified themselves as Yugoslavian, not Croatian or Serbian. Although they didn't belong to the same state until the formation of Yugoslavia in 1918,

most Serbs and Croats have regarded themselves as having a common language and culture since the Vienna Agreement of 1850. The present conflict has nothing to do with age-old ethnic enmities. As we shall see, it is very much a consequence of contemporary realities.

A second myth promoted by the media coverage of the Yugoslav conflict is the idea that this is a battle between democracy and communism. On one side stands Croatia, democratic, pluralist and influenced by the Western tradition. On the other side stands Serbia, communist, centralist and influenced by the Eastern tradition. Franjo Tudjman, the Croatian president, was given a platform in the *European* to broadcast this lie: 'We are not just different peoples but different civilisations. The struggle here is the same that has been going on in Eastern Europe for the past three years: democracy against communism.' (18 August 1991)

Democracy v dictatorship?

The same line has been pursued in the editorial pages of the British media. The *Independent* put the case for Western intervention in the conflict by presenting it as a straight fight between democracy and dictatorship:

'The Cold War is over. Communism is everywhere discredited. One of its last redoubts is in the Serbian leadership.... Their assault represents a clash between unreconstructed, Brezhnevite communism and democracy. Europe cannot stand by and watch the two most Westernised and prosperous republics being destroyed by an army whose leaders are essentially totalitarian.' (4 July 1991)

In fact, both figureheads in the current conflict, Franjo Tudjman of Croatia and Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, are old Stalinists playing the nationalist card. Both are former high-ranking members of the Communist Party. Franjo Tudjman fought with Tito's partisans in the Second World War, graduated to chief of cadre policy in the Yugoslav People's Army and in 1961 became the country's youngest general. Slobodan Milosevic joined the Communist Party, rose through its ranks and took over the Serbian League of Communists in 1987.

In terms of their politics, there is little to separate the two. Both have renounced communism, embraced the market and championed nationalism in order to secure a base of popular support in their respective republics. The only difference between them is that Tudjman is boss ►



THE COLD WAR

East-West divide



Two images of the barbarian East, past and present: a German propaganda poster depicting bloodthirsty, communist Neanderthals (1919); an *Independent* cartoon showing a Serbian general wreaking death and destruction (1991)



of Croatia, a republic which has a good chance of making it in the new market economy, while Milosevic is boss of Serbia, a republic which is being left behind in an economic limbo. Tadjman's nationalism is that of the top dog, Milosevic's that of the underdog. Western commentators who suggest that the conflict is between democratic Croatia and communist Serbia are deliberately muddying the waters.

Western coverage of the fighting inside Yugoslavia has reinforced the invented distinction between Croats and Serbs. Each side has accused the other of committing sectarian atrocities, and no doubt both have plenty of blood on their hands. But Western observers have largely turned a blind eye to Croatian provocations, while taking every opportunity to condemn the Serbs. At the start of December, for example, a carefully leaked report from the European Community monitors inside Yugoslavia branded the Serbian-dominated federal army as a cowardly band of terrorists wantonly killing civilians. The attacks on Serbs inside Croatia did not warrant a mention.

Hidden agenda

Why are these myths being churned out for popular consumption? They have certainly not found their way into the newspapers by accident. In fact, they are part of a hidden agenda being pursued by right-wing Western newspapers and politicians. The aim of this hidden agenda is to suggest that the Yugoslav conflict is a

Frontier War between Western civilisation and Eastern barbarism.

The very idea of a Frontier War hinges on a definition of the West and the East as distinct entities. In this propaganda offensive, Croatia stands for all that is good about the West and Serbia represents all that is bad about the East. Croatia is presented as Western Christian, democratic, prosperous and cultured. Serbia is depicted as Eastern Orthodox, communist, impoverished and backward.

The West is good...

In other words, Croatia is a *civilisational frontier* between West and East. In this definition, it is clear that the West and Christendom are one and the same thing, as are the East and heathendom. It is taken as given that Western Christianity is a good thing, and everything which falls outside it does not meet the standards of civilised society.

In order to sustain the Western right's argument, it is necessary to present a highly selective and revisionist interpretation of Yugoslavia's past. Today, Croatia's identification with Western Christianity is being promoted as a measure of its civilised values and enlightened tradition. Nobody has pointed out that during the Second World War, the Catholic Church in Croatia (backed by the Vatican) played a prominent role in the barbarous genocide against Serbs, Jews and Gypsies under the fascist Ustashe régime of Ante Pavelic.

According to Western propaganda, the current conflict goes

back centuries. The battle line being drawn in modern-day Yugoslavia is said to be the same as the old frontier that once divided the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires. Yugoslavia is supposedly splitting along the old axis that separated Christendom and heathendom, Rome and Byzantium, civilisation and barbarism.

This interpretation requires a character assassination of the Serbs. The implication is that the Serbs have never shrugged off the legacy of centuries of rule under the Turkish yoke. They are dismissed as having a Byzantine mentality, whatever that is, while the Croats received the benefits of European civilisation as part of the Hapsburg empire. The weight of Western commentary is increasingly to present the Serbs as Ottoman savages who are importing their Balkan feuds into the heart of Europe.

Barbarian hordes

The demonisation of the Serbs reached its apogee in coverage of the siege of Dubrovnik: 'Like the barbarian hordes advancing on Rome', ranted the *Daily Telegraph*, 'the federal forces have abandoned all restraint, forfeiting any right to be termed more than a lawless mob' (13 November 1991).

Even Prince Charles was roped in to do battle in defence of the Croats. He duly excoriated the Serbs for their dismemberment of the city: 'In the midst of our short lives on this Earth it [Dubrovnik] represents in the form of bricks and mortar those intangible values, principles and aspirations which have made Europe



ILLUSTRATION: Trustees of the Imperial War Museum



ILLUSTRATION: The Independent, 25 November 1991

what it is.' (*Daily Telegraph*, 13 November 1991)

The tabloids indulged their penchant for drawing parallels between every dictator under the sun, merging the evil character traits of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic and Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to achieve the composite expletive 'Slobbosaddam'. Meanwhile, the *Guardian* gave a platform to Oxford history professor and reactionary Norman Stone to demand the restoration of the Nuremberg tribunal and the indictment of Serbian leaders for war crimes (13 November 1991).

A fascist cause

Croatia has become the cause of the European right. Margaret Thatcher has launched a personal crusade on its behalf, touring European capitals to drum up support. She has even gone on record saying that Britain and the West should have armed Croatia and taken a harder line against Serbia. Her stand has struck a chord with reactionaries throughout the continent, who have seized on the civil war as an opportunity to start rewriting the history of the Second World War (see page 29). Fascists and right-wing militants from all over Europe are flocking to the side of Croatia, some joining up to fight as mercenaries against the Serbs.

The high-profile propaganda war focused on Yugoslavia has got nothing to do with a concern for the victims of the conflict. The Yugoslav events are being manipulated by the European right for its own wider

political ends. By presenting the Yugoslav conflict as a Frontier War, the right is attempting to redefine and reinvigorate the idea of Western civilisation. Its campaign against Serbia is designed to promote the superiority of Western civilisation and values by counterposing them to Eastern barbarism and backwardness. The message is that Serbia represents a threat against which the Western world must defend itself.

Serbia non grata

Spelling this out in the *Independent*, Peter Jenkins asked whether there was any place for Serbia in the civilised world:

'Europe was supposed to be a war-free zone, a haven of civilisation: it was for the lesser tribes of Africa and Asia to engage in murderous civil wars, for Arabs to show inhumanity to Arabs.... When we weep for Europe, are we so sure that Serbs are quite a part of the Europe we have in mind? There were two Europes for many centuries before the Cold War was thought of: Western Christendom, Catholic and baroque, and Eastern Orthodox Europe which, in the Balkans, merged into the Ottoman Empire and the world of Islam. Subconsciously, we may regard the conflict in Yugoslavia as belonging more to the third world than our own.' (12 November 1991)

There we have it. The Serbs are a race apart, on the same level as the 'lesser tribes' of the third world. And,

really, we cannot allow such people ever to be part of Europe.

Behind the headlines in this propaganda war, the debate is about who is and who isn't part of the West. Many European commentators say that it is easy to envisage the reincorporation of Croatia into the Christendom of which it was for centuries a part. But they could never consider the Serbs, or for that matter, the Bulgarians and Romanians, to be part of the West.

Just two years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the old East-West divide, the West is resurrecting the even older, nineteenth-century idea of the East. A new line is being drawn across Europe, separating East and West along the ancient fault line separating Rome from Byzantium. The East is once again becoming a code word for backwardness and barbarism.

Eastern 'other'

The recreation of an Eastern 'other' is very much a response to the fears and insecurities generated by the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union has robbed the Western powers of their old ideological enemy, the communist threat, against which they could both cohere themselves and mobilise support for the status quo. For the past two years, they have been looking around for a new enemy against which they can bolster their authority, and so make the Western way of life look good at a time when it doesn't have much to offer except recession and austerity.

It is in this context that the right ►



is erecting a New Frontier to replace the old Iron Curtain, and the idea of the backward East is gaining currency alongside the demonisation of the third world and immigrants. It is likely that this theme will be pursued with ever increasing vigour in relation to Eastern Europe as time goes on. The depiction of Eastern Europe as an uncivilised backwater is becoming a central component of the right's quest to forge a new identity for itself and a new legitimacy for Western capitalism.

Excuses, excuses

There is an additional rationale behind the idea of the backward East. It provides the perfect excuse for the failure of capitalism to deliver on its promises of prosperity and democracy in Eastern Europe. The notion of the backward East has the advantage of holding Eastern Europe itself responsible for the failure of the market. The social crisis engulfing Eastern Europe can be blamed on the backwardness of its people and culture.

This is the biggest lie now being spread in the West about the Yugoslav conflict: the idea that the country is being torn apart by primitive people incapable of running their affairs in a civilised fashion. The reality is that Yugoslavia is being torn apart by the impact of the market. Capitalism is to blame for fomenting the divisions which have exploded into civil war between Croatia and Serbia.

The war in Yugoslavia is a direct consequence of the differential impact of the market on the six republics and two provinces that made up the Yugoslav federation. The opening up of Yugoslavia to the world economy over many years has exacerbated the country's uneven regional economic development, and contributed to the fragmentation of the Yugoslav federation.

Yugoslavia divides

For the richer republics of Slovenia and Croatia to the north, the extension of market relations throughout the eighties brought prosperity and stronger links with the world economy. For the poorer regions of Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia and Montenegro to the south, the market has little to offer. Worse, it has acted as a spur to their richer northern neighbours to demand more control over their own resources and an end to the system of subsidies to the south.

The growth of nationalism, and the trend towards the break-up of Yugoslavia, took off first in the more privileged republics of Slovenia and Croatia. It was the regional Stalinist

officials in Slovenia and Croatia who first began to make nationalist noises in the seventies, and who, in the eighties, threatened to secede unless they got their way. These bureaucrats sought to secure their futures by grabbing what they could of the opportunities provided by the market.

The rise of Slobodan Milosevic and his brand of Serbian nationalism was a response to the increasing assertiveness of Slovenia and Croatia. In Serbia, Milosevic appealed to the widespread economic discontent and popular resentment against the richer northern republics, and channelled it into a nationalist perspective.

Rich v poor

In reality, what we have in Yugoslavia today is a civil war between rich and poor, presented as a war between civilisation and barbarism. The West's propaganda offensive obscures the real cause of the conflict—the divisions opened up by the impact of the market—and instead blames the violence on the warmongering mentality of the Serbs.

If the European right's offensive continues to its logical conclusion, Serbia will be wiped off the map of Europe, or at least relegated to a sub-tier of the continent known as the East. Far from opposing this, many on the European left advocate such a policy themselves. Support for Croatian independence is a popular cause on the left generally. Some radicals say it should be enforced through the barrel of a gun, issuing strident calls for the British government to deal with Serbia in the same way that it dealt with the Libyans and Iraqis.

'Bomb Serbia'

Labour MP Ken Livingstone declared that the only way to stop Slobodan Milosevic was to use Nato's overwhelming airpower: 'We should issue an ultimatum to Serbia to withdraw within days. If this is ignored we should then destroy the Serbian air force from the air and any Serbian units operating outside Serbia.' (*Sun*, 13 November 1991)

Professor David Marsland, writing in the liberal *New Statesman & Society*, was just as forthright. Appealing to the radical patriotic tradition of the British left, Marsland argued that once again it was Britain's 'unique responsibility to stand up and fight for freedom'. He stated that Britain should recognise the independence of Croatia unconditionally; establish a military alliance with Croatia; and present Serbia with an ultimatum: accept a ceasefire and withdraw or face war with Britain. The alternative was

baldly stated: 'If not, British aircraft flying from Cyprus and Austria could destroy the Serbian air force and fleet in one day. Tanks and military formations could then be wiped out at leisure from the air without much difficulty.' (1 November 1991)

At the moment, the consensus in Europe is that there should be some sort of United Nations intervention in the conflict. Some Western powers (Germany, in particular) are more enthusiastic than others (Britain, for example) about how far to go. This simply reflects the fact that they have different interests at stake. Germany is keen to use the conflict to assert its leading role in the European arena; conscious of Germany's growing assertiveness, Britain has adopted a more cautious approach.

Partisan policy

However, despite the conflict of interests among the Western powers, all of them are pursuing a partisan, pro-Croatia and anti-Serbia policy. This was illustrated at the start of December by the EC decision to lift economic sanctions against Croatia and other republics, while renewing them against Serbia and its ally Montenegro. It is also clear that if the UN does intervene in Yugoslavia, its troops will not be there to play a neutral, peace-keeping role. UN intervention means the effective partition of the country, and a recognition of Croatian sovereignty.

Serbia is being set up, if not for a shooting war then at least for pariah status. The demonisation of Slobodan Milosevic, and the Serbian people in general, requires an unequivocal response. It is not necessary to be a supporter of Slobodan Milosevic to be an opponent of Western intervention in Yugoslavia, whether in the shape of economic sanctions or military strikes, whether led by the United Nations or the European Community.

No Western solution

The West has no solutions to the conflict in Yugoslavia. Indeed, it has assiduously promoted the extension of the market, which is responsible for accelerating the fragmentation of the country along regional lines. Now, the Western right is seeking to exploit the resulting chaos to its own advantage by setting up Serbia as a bogeyman against which to mobilise support for the idea of Western civilisation. Any further intervention by the Western powers in this conflict can only hasten the disintegration of Yugoslavia and turn the Balkans into a bloodbath for the people who live there.

Erasing the past

Evocations of the murderous civil war of the 1940s abound in the coverage of the current civil war in Yugoslavia. The present conflict between Serbia and Croatia is often described as a re-enactment of the wartime struggle between Marshal Tito's communist partisans and Ante Pavelic's fascist Ustashe.

A sinister twist has been added to the story however. This time around, the Serbs are accused of being the villains and the Croats are the heroes. By drawing parallels between the past and present struggles, revisionist writers and thinkers are attempting to vindicate the Ustashe regime retrospectively.

Until recently, the history of Yugoslavia's wartime experience was uncontested and uncontroversial. On 10 April 1941, Ante Pavelic's Ustashe movement proclaimed its own Independent State of Croatia (NDH), following the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia. Under the protection of the German *Reichsführer*, the Ustashe regime conducted a reign of terror from 1941 to 1945.

The Nazi quisling regime was fanatically Roman Catholic, seeking the forced conversion of Serbian Orthodox Christians within the boundaries of the Croatian state, generously drawn by Hitler. The spiritual leader of Catholic Croatia, Archbishop Alois Stepinac, welcomed a regime hostile to what he called 'the schismatics, the curse of Europe'. Lucky Serbs were converted to the true faith at gunpoint. Others were not so lucky. They were massacred in a genocidal campaign which wiped out up to 700 000 Serbs, Jews and Gypsies in the Jasenovac concentration camp alone.



Adolf Hitler and Ante Pavelic shake hands on the creation of a fascist Greater Croatia

In Croatia, the history of the Second World War is being rewritten and the wartime fascist Ustashe regime is being rehabilitated, to the delight of the European right.

Joan Phillips reports

torturing, raping, burning, drowning. Killing became a cult, an obsession. The Ustashe vied to outdo each other, boasting of the numbers of their victims and of their own particular methods of despatching them.'

The archives show that even the German SS was shocked by the barbarism of the Ustashe. It is hardly surprising that when the war ended, with the Ustashe routed by Tito's Yugoslav People's Army, the partisans took no prisoners.

For nearly half a century, nobody in Yugoslavia dared to question the anti-fascist interpretation of what happened during the war. Since April 1990, however, when Franjo Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) won the elections, there has been a concerted campaign to rehabilitate Croatia's wartime leaders.

Tudjman's election campaign brought out all the old symbols of Croatian nationalism. In the

Meanwhile, the figures for the wartime genocide committed by the Ustashe are being disputed by rival sets of historians and politicians. Zagreb historian, Ivo Goldstein, disputes the death toll at Jasenovac. Belgrade writers say at least 700 000 died there. Goldstein, whose grandparents were murdered in Jasenovac, says the total figure was a tenth of that.

Tudjman himself has been at the forefront of reinterpreting the Second World War. His book, *Historical Wastelands: Historical Truth*, is an apology for the Holocaust, stating that for the Jews, 'genocidal violence is a natural phenomenon, in keeping with the human-social and mythological-divine nature'. On various occasions, Tudjman has said that the murder of tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies was carried out by a handful of Croats; and that Jasenovac was largely run by Jewish inmates, who used their power to rob and murder Serb and Gypsy prisoners.

Some Croatian revisionists have suggested that many of the killings were in fact carried out by the other side. Lea Bauman, another member of the Jewish community in Zagreb and an official of the ministry of information there, alleges that the Serbs exterminated the Jews of Serbia during the Second World War.

Blaming the communists

The aim of this propaganda exercise is to minimise the crimes of the Ustashe; to suggest that they were a justifiable response to the communist threat; and to restore the reputations of those who fought with the fascists. The implication is that the Ustashe were merely patriotic Croats, fighting to defend their nation against communist subversion.

This revisionist project has a wider significance outside of Yugoslavia. It has been seized upon by sections of the European right who have long sought an opportunity to start rewriting the history of the Second World War.

Since the Second World War, the barbarism of the fascist era and the Holocaust has posed a major problem of credibility for the European far-right. Now the right has seen its chance to erase the past. The conflict in Yugoslavia is being used as a surrogate for rewriting the history of the Second World War. By equating the Serbs with communism and barbarism and the Croats with democracy and civilisation today, the right is suggesting that the actions of the Croatian fascists in the past were a legitimate response to the threat of communism represented by the partisans.

From this perspective, those who fought with the Ustashe were patriotic Croats who wanted to protect the fatherland against Bolshevism, just as those fighting on the Croatian side today are defenders of the Western way of life against Eastern barbarism. If this propaganda campaign continues unchallenged, and is allowed to establish a new interpretation of the Second World War, it will lend a new legitimacy to the politics of the right. ●

On taking power, the Ustashe issued decrees banning the Serbian Cyrillic script, closing down Orthodox schools and forcing Serbs, Jews and Gypsies to wear armbands. In June 1941, the Ustashe education minister stated the government's policy towards the Serbs: convert a third, expel a third and kill a third. By then the Ustashe had already killed an estimated 180 000 Serbs, Jews and Gypsies. But that was only the beginning.

The atrocities committed by the Ustashe were described by British army officer Sir Fitzroy Maclean in his book, *Divided Barricade*:

The massacres began in earnest at the end of June [1941] and continued through the summer, growing in scope and intensity until in August the terror reached its height. The whole of Bosnia ran with blood. Bands of Ustashe roamed the countryside with knives, bludgeons and machine guns, slaughtering Serbian men, women and children, desecrating Serbian churches, murdering Serbian priests, laying waste Serbian villages,

Croatian capital Zagreb, buildings were draped with the once banned chequered red and white flag of the Ustashe, while bookshops and street stalls began to dispense rewritten histories of the old civil war. Maps of Greater Croatia, bearing a photograph of Ante Pavelic in fascist uniform, went on sale in Zagreb's main square. Graffiti declaring 'NDH—God is with Croatia' appeared on walls in Zagreb's centre and suburbs.

Tudjman fought with Tito's partisans against the Ustashe. But his government has been quietly burying the past. One of Tudjman's first acts after being elected president was to rename the Square for the Victims of Fascism in Zagreb as the Square of the Croatian Kings. His government's illustrated booklet on the historical glories of the republic gives three brief sentences of its six page overview to the Ustashe state and makes no mention of the atrocities committed in its name. Now there are suggestions that the memorial museum at the Jasenovac camp outside Zagreb may be closed for 'lack of funds'.

Burying Tito

Margaret Thatcher pays her last respects to Tito at his funeral in 1980

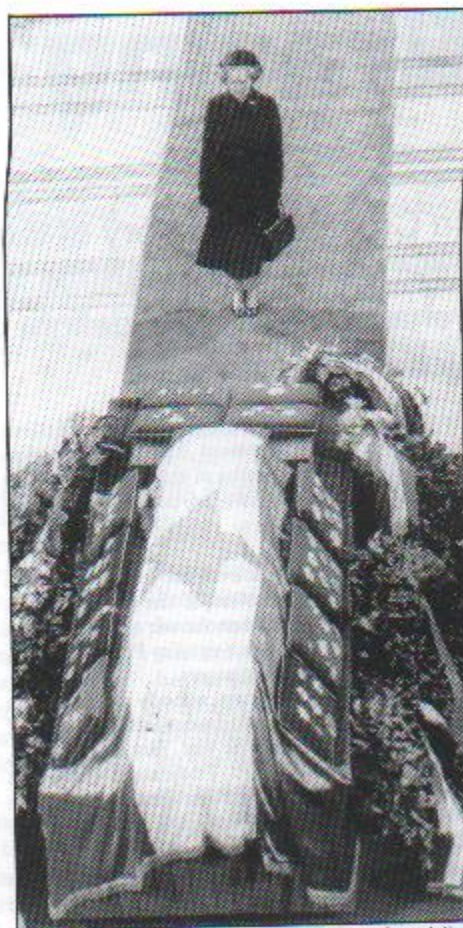


PHOTO: Press Association

These days nobody seems to have a good word to say for Yugoslavia's former leader Marshal Tito. Andy Clarkson looks at how Western leaders have forsaken their favourite 'communist'

For years Marshal Tito, Yugoslavia's postwar leader, was feted in the West as the symbol of a united Yugoslavia and a critic of the Soviet Union. Now he is being castigated as a 'communist tyrant' who imposed totalitarian rule and a forced union on Serbs and Croats. According to the *Financial Times*' Eastern European expert, Judy Dempsey, 'Tito's Yugoslav communists brutally suppressed [Croatian and Serbian] statehoods, but in the name of "Yugoslavism" after 1945' (22 November 1991).

Serbs condemn Tito as a Croat who designed federal structures to contain their national aspirations. Croats blame Tito for the existence of Serbian communities in their republic. According to one Croatian militiaman, 'Tito deliberately tried to mix up the races by putting the Serbs over here' (*Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 1991). In reality, Serbs lived in Croatia long before Tito was born. But today the former ruler is being held responsible for all of Yugoslavia's problems.

Tito then and now

The attacks on Tito are an attempt to blame communism for the crisis in Yugoslavia. Making this accusation stick involves rewriting history so as to play down the West's close relationship with Tito during and after the Second World War.

In 1941, Germany occupied Yugoslavia and created a puppet Croatian state. The two main

anti-German groups were the monarchist Serbian Chetniks, led by General Draza Mihailovic, and the pro-Soviet partisans, led by Josip Broz, commonly known as Tito. The Hitlerite Croatian regime could not cope and, by 1943, the Yugoslav resistance was holding down 25 German divisions. Even so, the movement was seriously split because the Chetniks preferred to fight the partisans rather than the Germans.

British allies

The British wanted to step up aid to the Yugoslavs so as to draw more German divisions away from France. In September 1943, Winston Churchill sent Tory MP and SAS Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean to assess the capabilities of Tito's partisans. When Maclean confirmed that the Chetnik guerrillas were fighting Tito rather than the Axis, Churchill sent the partisan leader letters that 'made it clear he regarded him [Tito] as an ally and as such promised him all possible help' (F Maclean, *Eastern Approaches*, p418).

Churchill even suggested to the house of commons in February 1944 that Tito's movement was more nationalist than communist: 'The communist element had the honour of being the beginners, but as the movement increased in strength and numbers, a modifying concept and unifying process has taken place and national conceptions have supervened.' (Quoted in

G Kolko, *The Politics of War*, p133) During the war, unlike today, Yugoslav nationalism was viewed in a positive light by the British authorities.

Nowadays right wingers like Margaret Thatcher and Norman Stone extol the virtues of Croatian nationalism. During the war, however, the British establishment had little time for the concept of Croatian independence. Indeed, the British right has spent much of the past 40 years criticising Yugoslav experts like Maclean, for not encouraging Churchill to back the fiercely anti-Croatian Chetniks against Tito.

Titoism is OK

To the mandarins of the British foreign office, Tito might have been a 'communist', but they believed he was their communist. The Americans were cooler towards him, preferring to work with Mihailovic's Chetniks. However, when Tito broke from Stalin in 1948 at the start of the Cold War, everything changed.

In March 1949, CIA director Walter Bedell Smith commented that 'The Russians fear Titoism above all else. The United States does not fear communism if it is not controlled by Moscow and not committed to aggression' (quoted in J.L. Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, p161). The Americans began to supply Yugoslavia with loans, grants and food aid. In October 1956, during the Hungarian uprising, US secretary of state John Foster Dulles told president Eisenhower that, 'our policy of backing Tito was paying off in terms of an increasing desire on the part of the satellites for independence from Moscow' (*The Long Peace*, p188).

During the sixties and seventies, Yugoslavia became the West's showcase for private enterprise within Stalinist Eastern Europe. Hundreds of millions of dollars from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank poured in. The foreign tourist trade became increasingly important for the economy and small businesses expanded under the cover of 'self-management enterprises' and 'workers cooperatives'.

After the Cold War

In June 1966, Yugoslavia became the first Stalinist country to conclude an agreement with the Vatican, when Tito signed a deal with the Pope to exchange representatives. The same Pope, Paul VI, had been a sympathiser with Croatian fascism during the Second World War. Like other Western leaders, he became a fan of Tito's critical attitude towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

No less than 147 foreign dignitaries attended Tito's funeral in May 1980 to pay their last respects. British prime minister Margaret Thatcher was there to praise him as 'a great fighter, a fearless leader and a courageous statesman. He created modern Yugoslavia.... His efforts, like Yugoslavia's independence, are recognised the world over'. West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt also paid tribute to Tito as 'a fighter for his country's independence'.

Today the Cold War is over and, as examined elsewhere in this issue of *Living Marxism*, the expansion of the market economy has brought prosperous, pro-Western Croatia into conflict with Serbia. In these changed circumstances, Thatcher condemns the concept of 'Yugoslavia's independence' which she once praised, and calls on the West to support Croatia's attempt to break up Tito's federal state. Likewise, the only 'fighters for independence' whom Schmidt's successors in the German government support in Yugoslavia today are the Croatian secessionists. As the interests of the Western right have changed, so has its interpretation of history, and its judgement of Marshal Tito.

Don't mention the war?

Rob Knight writes from Frankfurt on attempts to clean up Germany's forgotten past

In the middle of Frankfurt there is a Jewish cemetery. It has high walls and a tiny iron gate, which is kept permanently locked. I have yet to find any other evidence of Frankfurt's once-thriving Jewish community. Educated young Germans know that there used to be a large Jewish community in the city and that it is no longer there. But they don't know where the Jewish areas used to be, and they don't know the details of what happened to the Frankfurt Jews. Neither, for that matter, do most of them know what their own parents and grandparents did during the Nazi period.

Such vagueness about Germany's recent past is typical. It seems particularly odd to a British person brought up on a solid diet of Second World War propaganda. Germans are puzzled when I explain that as a child I read hundreds of war comics which celebrated the virtues of the British Tommy and the wickedness of the German 'squareheads'. It was in these, also, that I learned my first words of German, although 'Englischer Schweinhund', 'Gott in Himmel' and 'Achtung, Spitfire!' have limited usefulness today.

Historical hot potato

It is an equally odd experience for Germans who, when they come over and watch British TV, discover that there appears to be a war going on between Britain and Germany. When it is explained to them that Britain is a country with no future, which has to find solace in the past, they understand. Particularly if they have to spend time on the London Underground or negotiating other parts of Britain's crumbling infrastructure.

So to a British person of my generation it seems very strange that the past is so opaque here in Germany. It is not that the past has left no mark. Come out of the main railway station in Cologne, walk in any direction for half an hour, and you will pass only a handful of buildings that are more than 40 years old. But there are no monuments or plaques to explain what happened. It looks as if some crazed town planner ran amok with a bulldozer. The role of the Lancaster bomber is given no credit.

Occasionally I see something which brings the past into stark relief. In a little village on the Rhine, one of many which exist now for the tourist trade alone, I came across a wall plaque. It explained how, on 9 November 1938, the synagogue which stood on that spot was burnt down. That was *Kristallnacht*, the night when Jewish shops, homes and synagogues were destroyed throughout Germany. The fact that it had also happened in this tiny village brought home just how systematic this terror had been.

The terrible experience of Nazism and the trauma of defeat in the war mean that the recent past is an historical hot potato. The whole modern German history is so sensitive that all banknotes are illustrated with pictures of Germans from the Middle Ages. Nobody knows who they are, which is a great advantage. Even somebody as long dead as the nineteenth-century statesman

Bismarck has been too controversial for the currency, because of his association with German nationalism.

After the war there was a conspiracy of silence about what had happened. Eventually a liberal consensus emerged and came to dominate. Blame for the past was shared out among the entire German population, thus letting big business, which had funded and encouraged Hitler, off the hook. German children were taught little of the detail about what had happened. Instead, they were told that they had to be 'tolerant' and non-aggressive, to prevent any recurrence of the terrible past. They were taught that the problem was caused by fascism, and that everybody should be against fascism. But what fascism was and where it came from were left unexplained.

Clean up

Consequently the past was never confronted, only covered in a treacly kind of liberal pacifism which pervaded German society for a long time. German nationalism in particular was seen as a bad thing. This was not too much of a problem for the postwar West German authorities. Germany had to rebuild, and it did so under the aegis of the USA. German politicians could mouth platitudes about peace and democracy from behind the guns of the American armed forces. Meanwhile Germany's economy grew from strength to strength, until it reached the point where it was not only dominant in Europe, but was starting to rival its US 'protector'.

Now a great change is taking place in German society. Massive shifts in international politics, brought about by the decline of the USA and the end of the Cold War, have pushed Germany into the limelight on the world stage. Germany's political and diplomatic influence is coming closer to its economic strength. In boxing parlance, Germany is starting to punch its weight in the world.

The German authorities are now trying to win popular support for their new global status. Germany's past is being cleaned up. There is a stream of books, newspaper articles and TV programmes trying to rewrite history. Increasingly, the Nazis are being presented as German patriots who were threatened by communism and went a little too far in their reaction. At the same time, Germany is giving itself a new role as the defender of civilisation amid the ruins of Eastern Europe today, so lending legitimacy to German expansionism in the region. Through rewriting the past and casting present-day expansion in a positive light, German nationalism is being given a clean bill of health.

New expansionism

What remains of the German left cannot cope with this new development because it has never escaped from the old myths about Germany's past. It believes that the main danger is a resurgence of Nazism. It does not recognise German nationalism as dangerous unless it comes dressed in a brown shirt and swastika. When German nationalism instead drapes itself in the flag of freedom, the left accepts it as a force for progress. So the left has recently been obsessed with a handful of neo-Nazis, leaving German capitalists free to pursue their new adventures in the Balkans.

German society is very vulnerable to this new form of expansionism. There is little or no opposition to Germany's encouragement of the civil war in Yugoslavia. German support for Croatian independence is taken as a self-evident truth. All of this makes opposing German imperialism a pressing task within Germany. It will involve challenging both the attempt to rewrite history, and the assumption that German capitalism can be a force for good in the East. ●



ILLUSTRATION: Richard Strand

Economical with the truth

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One day the economic statistics seem to show the recession getting worse; the next, economists claim that new figures prove the upturn has arrived. Phil Murphy cuts through the expert waffle, and points to some hard evidence of a deep slump

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Mark Twain's view of the value of official figures—'there are lies, damned lies and statistics'—has often been applied to the inaccuracy of economists. Economic 'experts' have traditionally been treated with the same derision as weather forecasters—although, as with the weathermen, this doesn't stop people listening to them.

In the current recession, however, the value of the fine words emanating from the economics profession has reached a new low. The gap between what economists and journalists say about the state of the economy and the reality of the economic situation is wider than ever.

Most of us would expect government spokesmen to lie about the recession and talk up the economy for electoral reasons. Over the past year, Tory chancellor Norman Lamont's insistence, first

that there was no recession, and then that the recovery had begun, would have convinced few people if his had been a sole voice crying in the economic wilderness.

But Lamont has not been alone. Most supposedly non-partisan professional economists have joined him in presenting every minor statistical variation as evidence of something real—usually as proof of a real upturn. The result has been to create widespread confusion about whether the British economy is going up, going down, or bumping along the bottom.

The problem with economists today is that their work has less and less to do with what is happening in the economy. The economics profession has so degenerated that most experts now believe that little or nothing can be done to influence the workings of the real economy. They observe that government policies, from manipulating interest rates to cutting taxes, have little effect. This brilliant discovery has led many economists to retreat from economic analysis into narrow impressionism. They ignore the broad picture and emphasise the 'deep significance' of the latest marginal change in output or inflation figures. Even more characteristic of today is the tendency to abandon economics altogether, and focus on the feelings of consumers or businessmen as reflected in 'confidence' surveys.

Economists have become preoccupied with debating the import of the latest statistic. For example, is the 0.3 per cent rise in national output in the third quarter of 1991, as a result of an upturn in North Sea oil sales, more or less important than the continued decline in the manufacturing sector? How does the latest small increase in consumer confidence balance a small monthly fall in retail sales? How does a drop

in headline inflation sit alongside an upward shift in factory gate price levels? Such debate can go on forever because it is meaningless. The issues discussed are of even more marginal significance than the statistics to which they refer. To be charitable to the economists, it is an extreme case of not seeing the wood for the trees.

Those who wish to know the true state of the British economy should ignore the non-debates among the economic experts, and take a look instead at the underlying economic fundamentals. These confirm that, whatever precise stage of the recession we are at, the British economy is in ruins. The prospects for any significant upturn are circumscribed by the depth and breadth of the slump.

The British economy resumed its long-term decline during the 1960s. Over the past two decades extraordinary developments, like the massive expansion of credit and the boom in City-based financial speculation, have kept British capitalism afloat and allowed it to survive the recessions of the early seventies and early eighties. However, most of these measures have been insubstantial and short-term. Their ability to pull the British economy out of its current slump is in serious question.

It is worth spelling out the significance of some of the basic indicators which the statisticians don't like to talk about.

Profitability Company profits in Britain are now slumping again. But even at their eighties' peak, profitability rates never regained the levels seen before the British crisis started in the early seventies.

Things are even worse than the publicly announced profit figures suggest. For example, in 1991 Maxwell Communications Corporation (MCC) reported falling but still respectable profits of £150m. However, an analysis of MCC's profit figures reveals that the company made almost nothing from its supposed line of business, publishing and broadcasting. Instead, more than half of its profits came from foreign exchange dealing and a lot of the rest from other gambles on the property and financial markets. Since the death of its founder, it has become clear that many of Maxwell's speculative assets are just handfuls of paper; the 'profitable' corporation is worthless. Scratch the surface of the figures from many other British companies, and you will find a similar picture of low industrial profitability alongside high-risk financial ventures.

Investment With low industrial profitability British capitalists have neither the real resources nor the incentives to make substantial investments at home. Business fixed investment has fallen 15 per cent over the past year and will fall further. This alone rules out any significant recovery. A more important indicator of British economic weakness is the fact that manufacturing investment as a share of national output has fallen by one third since 1970. And the underlying trends are even worse than the headline figures suggest. Capital has shifted away from productive investment, towards parasitical speculation. During the 1980s the share of investment categorised as 'fixed capital spending' went down from over 70 to about 50 per cent. The share that went into speculative takeover activity rose from less than 10 to 30 per cent at the end of the decade.

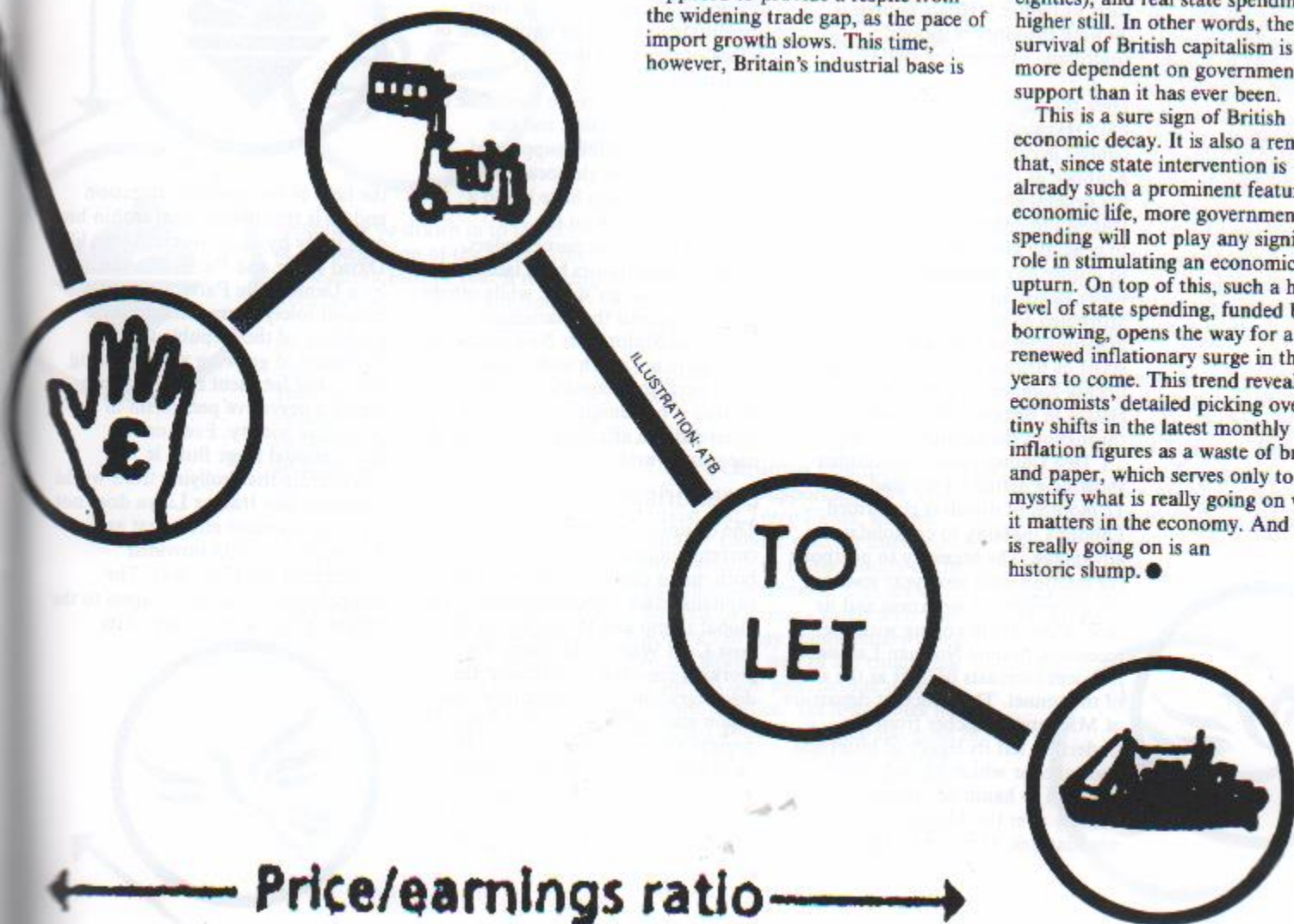
Manufacturing competitiveness Without real investment Britain's international competitiveness continues to fall. From the late 1950s to the present there has been a steady deterioration in Britain's manufactures trade balance, from a surplus equal to about nine per cent of national output to a deficit of about three per cent. Recessions are supposed to provide a respite from the widening trade gap, as the pace of import growth slows. This time, however, Britain's industrial base is

too weak even to supply the needs of a stagnant home market. So imports continue to flood in, and Britain faces the rare prospect of a combined recession and balance of payments crisis.

The consequence is that British capital becomes more and more indebted to the rest of the world. With the good fortune of North Sea oil and the City's financial earnings from abroad, the crunch has so far been postponed. But profitable oil reserves are expected to run down during the nineties, and the City is facing stiff competition from rival financial centres in Frankfurt, New York and Tokyo, all fighting for a bigger share of the global financial cake. The recently-expressed fears of a sterling crash are certainly well-founded; but they cannot be explained by the economists' obsession with the last quarter's trade figures.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement After more than a decade of Tory rhetoric about 'taking the state out of the economy', government borrowing is back up to the level of the last recession. Remove the short-term proceeds from privatisation and the sale of government land and buildings (a new phenomenon from the eighties), and real state spending is higher still. In other words, the survival of British capitalism is now more dependent on government support than it has ever been.

This is a sure sign of British economic decay. It is also a reminder that, since state intervention is already such a prominent feature of economic life, more government spending will not play any significant role in stimulating an economic upturn. On top of this, such a high level of state spending, funded by borrowing, opens the way for a renewed inflationary surge in the years to come. This trend reveals the economists' detailed picking over the tiny shifts in the latest monthly inflation figures as a waste of breath and paper, which serves only to mystify what is really going on where it matters in the economy. And what is really going on is an historic slump. ●





Politics in paralysis

Mike Freeman believes that the lack of dynamism in pre-election British politics reflects far more than the dullness of the party leaders

The election, far from being the climax of a long drawn-out contest between visionary convictions, looks like being a struggle between two sorts of failure.' (Hugo Young, 'Beware the vibes of gloom', *Guardian*, 3 December 1991)

Over the past 12 months, the polls have revealed a remarkably even contest between John Major and Neil Kinnock as they slug it out towards the general election. However the inability of either of the major parties to generate any internal dynamic or to inspire any enthusiasm in the wider electorate cannot be entirely attributed to the personal inadequacies of their leaders. The stasis of British politics reflects the uneasy balance between the major classes in Britain, and indeed throughout the capitalist world.

Two Gallup polls in December showing a definite Tory lead after 12 months of disasters confirmed Labour's inability to consolidate its advantage. The necessity to postpone the election until next year revealed the government's weakness and its lack of success in coping with the recession, despite Norman Lamont's frequent forecasts of light at the end of the tunnel. The reluctant departure of Margaret Thatcher from the leadership left its legacy of bitterness and rancour which has repeatedly returned to haunt her successor, most notably over the Maastricht negotiations. Meanwhile Major's



team have abandoned the poll tax, but have opted to follow through Thatcher's unpopular policies in relation to health and education. As if they had not problems enough, Major's colleagues—notably Baker, Lamont, Lilley, Waldegrave—have created a few more through their ineptitude, creating an impression of a lack of clear and decisive leadership.

Labour's inability to capitalise on the Tories' difficulties, and the apparently consistent support of 40 per cent of the electorate for the Conservative Party have led to a renewed emphasis on the personalities of the party leaders. Some commentators have launched a 'Kinnock must go' drive, while others have discovered the charismatic powers of Major's Mr Nice image. In fact, there are much wider issues at stake here: the stagnation of British politics is not unique, but part of a wider pattern affecting the advanced capitalist world.

Dual crisis

The distinctive feature of the current conjuncture is the paralysis of both major classes in society. The capitalist class is incapacitated by the global slump and the problems of the post-Cold War world order. The working class has experienced the disintegration of its traditional trade union and political organisations. At present the advantage lies with the capitalists who are fairly confident about imposing their will more directly on the rather atomised and apathetic masses. Yet, the capitalists'

evident inability to overcome the problems of deepening slump and rising international rivalries limits the scope for any long-term equilibrium. The emergence of new forms of working class resistance and new forms of organisation is inevitable.

The crisis of ruling class politics is evident throughout the advanced capitalist world. In the USA, until a few months ago, president George Bush, the mighty conqueror of Kuwait, anticipated an easy ride to a second term of office. Now the glory of the Gulf War has evaporated in



the heat of the domestic recession and he is threatened from within his own party by racist reactionaries like David Duke and Pat Buchanan, and by a Democratic Party which has revived solely in response to the problems of the Republicans. Problems of growing poverty, drug abuse and incipient racial warfare create a pervasive pessimism in American society. Even on the international stage Bush is discovering that bullying third world countries like Iraq or Libya does not have the cohesive effect that anti-Soviet propaganda provided throughout the Cold War. The unapologetic attitude of Japan to the recent fiftieth anniversary of its





attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbor reflects the growing challenge from the East to the USA's global hegemony.

It is little more than a year since Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats triumphed in the first elections in a unified Germany. Now Kohl's party presides over the economic and social tensions resulting from unity.

Throughout Europe, far-right, anti-immigrant, racist and anti-semitic movements are gaining influence; they have made national and local electoral breakthroughs in Sweden, Belgium, Austria, Italy, France and Germany. These movements have helped to divide and weaken mainstream centre-right movements as well as putting social democratic parties on the defensive.

The fact that in virtually every Western country—and in Japan—conservative parties are riven by splits and scandals reflects a wider incapacity of the capitalist elite to come to terms with the problems of recession and the post-Cold War realignments in international relations. The tendency towards European intervention in the civil war in Yugoslavia illustrates the way in which the Western powers will

ILLUSTRATION: ATB



inexorably be drawn in to the process of disintegration of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that is resulting from the impact of market forces.

In Britain the debate over Maastricht well exposes the insecurities of the establishment. Throughout the postwar period Britain remained aloof from Europe and maintained its traditional alliances with the USA and the Commonwealth. Over the years, the USA has declined in importance, Britain has been squeezed out of many of its Commonwealth markets by more efficient competitors, and trade with Europe has increased. Yet, while Fortress Europe provides the only option for enfeebled British capitalism, a substantial body of establishment opinion fears the loss of British national identity in a closer European union. Hence Europe has become a renewed issue of debate, largely within the Conservative Party, where it has become the focus for a range of internal conflicts which arise

largely from the exhaustion of the party's programme for dealing with Britain's long-term decline.

For nearly a decade—up to 1987—Thatcher's policies of privatisation and union-bashing seemed to be successful. Yet just when things became difficult in the late eighties, the programme appeared increasingly irrelevant. Though Thatcher had tamed the unions, her encouragement of market forces failed to revive British capitalism. When the government continued to pursue the same policies, privatising gas and water and promoting the market in health and education, these policies appeared irrational and provocative. The result has been to provoke conflict within the party and to alienate many of its traditional middle class supporters. While the welfare professionals recoil in disgust at various packages of 'reforms', the recession, with rising unemployment, interest rates and mortgage repossession has undermined support among the electorally crucial 'C2s', the skilled working class.

Deficient machine

Though the Labour Party has proved unable to establish a convincing poll lead over the Tories during 1991, it has greatly improved its standing on any of its election performances in the 1980s. However, it owes this advance largely to the problems of the government, particularly to the poll tax debacle and the handling of the economy. The continual media focus on the deficiencies of Neil Kinnock obscures the much more important deficiencies of the whole Labour machine. It has moved away from its roots in the trade union bureaucracy and repudiated its links with the working class but has yet to discover any distinctive identity or programme to replace the state socialism which has defined Labour in the twentieth century.

Labour offerings

The pre-Christmas expulsion of the Militant-supporting MPs, Dave Nellist and Terry Fields, was yet another Labour offering intended to demonstrate its respectability to the British establishment. This seems unlikely to impress voters who had not noticed any revolutionary threat to the British way of life emanating from this dull pair, despite nearly a decade in office. Yet it indicates how far the Labour leadership has gone in destroying the influence of the left. The result is, as one long-suffering member wrote to the *Guardian* in December, 'a party effectively dead at its roots'. In the past, the left



provided a link between the working class and the party, a link that has now been severed.

Furthermore, the left provided a source of ideas, energy and dynamism for the Labour Party that it now sadly lacks. Indeed, for decades the Communist Party fulfilled this function from outside Labour, in recent years providing it with the 'alternative economic strategy' that guided Labour in the seventies and the theory of 'Thatcherism' that offered an apologetic explanation of Labour's defeats in the eighties. It also provided, at least up to the mid-seventies, an organisational network capable of mobilising a substantial layer of working class activists around the policies of the labour bureaucracy. The ensuing disillusionment of workers with the experience of Labour both in government and in opposition paved the way for Thatcher's victories and for the subsequent fragmentation of the labour movement.

Just as everywhere conservative parties are in disarray, so, too, social democratic movements have lost momentum and direction. Recent events in Eastern Europe have not only destroyed Stalinism; they have also reflected discredit on social democracy, with which the Stalinists fellow-travelled organisationally and politically for more than half a century.



Rap is the medium through which a generation of young Americans has come to express its alienation from the traditional values of US society, argues Emmanuel Oliver

In his influential book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom expresses a popular conservative fear when he bemoans the passing of a potent symbol of America's national identity: 'The bad conscience killed off the one continuing bit of popular culture that celebrated the national story—the western.' For Bloom, popular identification with the western was symbolic of a national belief in the efficacy of the American Dream. The basic message of the western was that American society had triumphed over hardship against all the odds, and such success was possible for all American citizens.

The simple one-dimensional character of John Wayne and the ludicrous Lone Ranger (where would the Ranger be without Tonto?) epitomised the clean cut, honest national values which many Americans once believed in. Today, these characters are figures of fun and can only be aired at obscure times (John Wayne makes a lot of midweek television appearances after two in the morning). So whatever happened to the American Dream, and what, if anything, has replaced the western as a defining expression of the public mood?

If Bloom is interested in national stories, he need look no further than David Toop's appropriately titled *Rap Attack 2: African Rap to Global Hip Hop*. This is an extensively updated and expanded edition of Toop's 1984 chronicle of the rise of rap as the most dynamic form of popular culture over the past 10 years. From De La Soul's daisy age to the black politicking of The Jungle Brothers, X-Clan, Public Enemy and Queen Latifah, from NWA's obscenity trials to the gangster rap of Ice-T, Ice Cube and the Boo-Yaa Tribe, Toop guides us through the past few years to rap's controversial present.

End of a myth

Although Toop does not say this, one of the most important aspects of rap is that it articulates the failure of the American Dream. This goes not only for a large number of Afro-Americans, but for other ethnic groups and for many young whites too.

Hence the growth of the Samoan rappers of LA, the Cuban rappers of Miami, the Jewish rappers of New York, and of course white rappers such as Vanilla Ice and Marky Mark (who left New Kids on the Block before they became famous). Toop talks of Vietnamese-American teenagers forming gangs and expressing themselves in the language of rap. He points to groups like the Young Black Teenagers (four white males in fact), 3rd Base and a plethora of other white groups whose cultural identity is with the lifestyle and attitude of rap.

This is a relatively recent development. It is unprecedented in the history of America that immigrant communities should adopt the culture of the ghetto as their own. In the past, successive waves of immigrants aspired to be part of the American Dream: they wrapped themselves in the Stars and Stripes, learned the rules of baseball and embraced the all American way. Equally unprecedented is the

way in which sections of white American society have come to identify with the music, fashion, lifestyle and attitude of the ghetto.

It must be truly worrying for a conservative like Allan Bloom that the culture of the black ghetto has become the point of reference not only for black youth, but for a significant section of white American youth too. Their cultural rejection of the values of middle America in favour of the amorality and cynicism of urban ghetto life must be a source of discomfort and angst for the WASP elite.

Of course, the right would have us believe that American values have always been under attack. The McCarthy witch-hunts of the 1950s helped to create an anti-communist, pro-American consensus: in the background was a concern about the popularity of 'race music' among white teenagers.

But what happened in the fifties was something altogether different from what is happening today. True, American youth might have been beguiled by black music, but in the context of an overwhelming acceptance of the American way. Middle class America believed in itself and so did significant sections of working class America. The USA was the world's number one power. Its undisputed economic dominance gave credibility to national symbols such as John Wayne.

Degradation USA

Today, US society has difficulty making any guarantees, even to middle class, middle America. Just about the only thing which the USA of the nineties shares with the confident nation of the fifties is real wage levels, which have now fallen back to their lowest point since 1959. It is hardly surprising that, with the erosion of the certainties of the 1950s and the end of a stable economic existence, many of the symbols of the past have fallen by the wayside.

For young Americans who have grown up over the past 20 years, the material and moral poverty of America must be painfully obvious. Not committed to anything in particular, the fragmented existence of many is expressed through the medium of rap, with all its anger, humour and seemingly insoluble contradictions.

Rap expresses all the contradictions of the ghetto: the desire to make money as epitomised by EPMD (Eric and Parrish Make Dollars); the assertion of a black separatist identity as in X-Clan's exhortations towards black nationalism; a rejection of mainstream American values as articulated by Public Enemy's lyrical assaults on most American institutions, the Fourth of July included.

Of all the contradictions, music as politics is the most wearisome. The problem is not so much the attempt to get a political message across in a musical form, but the content of the message itself. A good example is Boogie Down Production's Stop the Violence campaign, which was a response to symptoms rather than causes.

The black ghetto, the product of US capitalism's failure to integrate black Americans into the American Dream, is a

violent place. Life is considered cheap by the authorities, and on the ground life is cheap. Decades of deprivation and repression have produced a vicious cycle of desperation, despair, drugs and death.

In this context, worthy calls to stop the violence will not be heard by the ghetto youth for whom rap is a way of life. Worse, they can only reinforce the notion of black on black violence being the chief problem facing the urban black community. The problem is not the violence of the ghetto, but a society which has nothing to offer black youth except degradation and repression.

If rap expresses the contradictions of the ghetto, Washington's propaganda blames the existence of the ghetto on blacks themselves.



Today, the debate is focused around the notion of the underclass (which, in the USA, is a codeword for blacks), a race apart from normal civilised Americans. The underclass discussion explains everything from black crime to black unemployment, from black drug abuse to the high incidence of Aids in the black community as an expression of black people's inability to follow the American way. In short, it explains and justifies the existence of the ghetto.

As the music of the 'underclass', rap has been dragged on to the political stage and used as a device by the establishment to define American values in counterposition to an enemy within. Tone Loc's bestselling 1989 'Wild Thing' was blamed for giving birth to 'wilding' (packs of young black males on an orgy of violence, rape and murder). 2 Live Crew had their album *As Nasty as they Wanna Be* banned on the grounds that it 'violated community standards'. Public Enemy are

accused of promoting black power and undermining the American way of life. *New Jack City*, a film inspired by rap and starring rapper Ice-T, has been accused of encouraging gang violence.

For the US authorities, hip hop has served as a titillating hook on which to hang their ideological offensive against the black underclass. However, the fact that rap has entered into the homes of many white Americans shows the extent of the problem facing the US elite. It shows that despite the criminalisation of rap and its exponents, a growing minority of black and white youth has given up on the American Dream. Even the

nihilism of the ghetto sounds better to them than the empty promises of a decaying society. We will never again see the likes of John Wayne riding tall and off into the sunset.

David Toop, *Rap Attack 2: African Rap to Global Hip Hop, Serpent's Tail*, £10.99 pbk

Rap legend,
NWA: shooting
down the
American
Dream



RAP against the

AMERICAN DREAM

A manifesto of mediocrity

Promoted as a magazine which takes a new intellectual look at mass culture, the *Modern Review* stunned John Fitzpatrick with its John Major-like greyness

If you have any doubts about the poverty of ideas, the lack of purpose and the sheer exhaustion of imagination in contemporary culture you should read the founding editorial of the recently launched the *Modern Review*. It took three people to write this nonsense—Cosmo Landesman, Karl Maton and Toby Young—but whether they did it in collaboration or in the William Burroughs cut-and-paste mode is not easy to tell.

The modern men set out a truly scandalous manifesto. Their review is to deal with mass or popular culture. Their main argument? Sit down please. Mass culture shouldn't be put on a pedestal—but it shouldn't be dismissed out of hand either. Oh yes! as John Major would say.

Er...

This staggering proposition comes after two pages of dithering. They say mass culture has 'finally become respectable', but also that it has become 'far too respectable'. Oh yes! They say it is not 'being taken seriously' in the universities, but also that there are good reasons 'for not taking popular culture too seriously'. Oh yes! They think that it is held in 'pitifully low esteem' but also that 'even the best popular art can seem shallow and insignificant next to the classics'. Oh yes! Oh yes!

The high point of the discussion is marked by a most subtle thrust. 'Just because something is popular doesn't mean it's good, but it doesn't mean it's bad either.' We are later told that such ingenious arguments are superfluous anyway. 'Mass culture doesn't need this kind of defence, the pleasure it gives is nothing to be ashamed of.' What on earth are they whining on about? It is hard to believe that this drivel got published. I think it probably occurred early on to the trio themselves that they didn't have an original idea or an ounce of wit between them. So, in the absence of anything else to say, they decided to curry a bit of favour by bashing 'the Left' and of course (the last refuge of the populist) by rubbing 'intellectuals'.

Alan Bloom (sic)

The poor dears still think that there is such a thing as 'the Left' (represented they think by Susan Sontag, Richard Hoggart, Hanif Kureishi, Jeannette Winterson and Martin Amis). Even worse, they still think it fashionable to beat the left, in this instance for its assault on 'the wanton promiscuity of postmodernism'. I'd always thought it was the old left which was wantonly promiscuous and that the PoMo crowd were all into celibacy and chastity. Apparently not. 'This time, it's not the Irving Kristols or the Alan Blooms we have to worry about but—surprisingly—the Left.'

The truth is that it was indeed Allan Bloom et al (and he would no doubt see the incorrect

spelling of his name as a vindication) who were behind the offensive mounted over the past year against the likes of PoMo and PC. The fragments of the left have merely been scrabbling about in response. In this, as in many things, these three are behind the times. Imagine saying that artists who compromise their vision by making it more commercial are now being called 'sell-outs'. I haven't heard anyone being accused of selling out since Bob Dylan went electric.

standing', they no doubt felt it was important to ape the highbrow format and hire a few thinkers. But then why spoil it by having Garry Bushell writing for them? Or is it elitism to point out that his article is incoherent garbage?

Writer and journalist Julie Burchill would no doubt think so. She is married to Cosmo Landesman, and like him is a contributing editor to the *Review*. She has not signed the editorial, but it bears the distinct imprint of her rolling pin. For years she has been birching a grateful English audience for its shortcomings, reserving her sharper strokes for those who have been stupid enough to get a higher education. Having earned a few bob and grown up a bit, I thought she might have returned to college as a mature student and got the whole thing off her chest or shoulder or wherever. Unfortunately, if her last book is anything to go by, her idea of ambition stops at wanting to get good sex and to work for a masterful publisher (*Ambition* is published by Gorgi Books, £3.99 pbk).

Oh to be a philistine

The editorial ends with a gratuitous attack upon intellectuals that has little connection with what has come before, and even less to its supposed target, Salman Rushdie. It is closely related, however, to the attack upon intellectuals in Burchill's centre-page review of Jon Savage's *England's Dreaming*, and Bushell's attack on the 'middle class left'. In fact, Burchill mounts an explicit defence of what she calls 'our "philistinism"'. In what reads like a supplement to the ridiculous Tory party political broadcast about how all is well in the land of hope and glory, Burchill proclaims that 'Little England' is 'worth dying for'. Why? Because 'the hedonistic and supremely, stubbornly individualistic English' have 'a sense of humour', 'a culture of rebellion and creativity second to none in the world' and 'MAKE GREAT POP RECORDS' (her capitals).

Class bonding

She recycles (remember, nothing new in the *Modern Review*) the old petit-bourgeois fantasy of the common bond between the profes and the toffs. Pure *Upstairs, Downstairs*. For her, it is only 'the middle class mediocrities', the 'nerds', the 'intellectuals' ('a filthy business'), the 'elitist culture' people like Jon Savage who spoil things by complaining, and running the place down. Don't they realise, she says, that it's better than France and Japan! After all, haven't we produced Ray Davies and Morrissey, and the 'much-maligned Radio One'? We've got a 'specifically English genius! It would be funny if it weren't so pathetic.

It says something about our times that a review devoted to describing and celebrating

popular culture could be launched from such a barren perspective. Burchill says she is one of the 'pale and interesting little English types'. She is actually typical of a pale, pinched and mean little English type: suspicious of foreigners, terrified of ideas, grateful for small mercies and submissive before a 'good kicking', like the one she says was delivered to the country by Mrs Thatcher. She is so desperate to belong that she has frantically constructed her own English tradition out of pop and punk and tacked it, as a youth version, on to the tail of the official myth—England as a

bastion of tolerance, pragmatism, humour, anti-extremism, saviour of the world from fascism (shades of her Stalinist sympathies here) and from itself generally. She calls this sick joke 'our cultural identity'. If she and her friends really want to die in defence of it, I hope nobody stands in their way when the time comes.

Under the title logo at the back of the *Review* is the quotation, "Give me insight into today, and you may have the antique and future worlds"—Emerson. This could be the editors' desperate request for interesting articles to be

submitted, but as it lies next to the subscription form it is more likely their boast about the quality of the existing material. I'm not sure either whether this Emerson is the guy who used to play with Lake and Palmer (more great English popsters), or that Waldo from America who had some seriously wacky ideas about mystical nature and whatnot. Mind you Waldo did give us some good advice: 'The louder he talked of his honour, the faster we counted the spoons.'

Sex Pistols revisited



Situationist Monkees?

Toby Banks on *England's Dreaming* and the punk phenomenon

For a phenomenon that lasted barely 18 months, the first eight of which were enjoyed by only a few hundred oddballs, punk had extraordinarily far-reaching consequences. Its influence can be seen and heard today in advertising, graphic design, fashion, publishing and yes, even music (some of those boys really could play).

Jon Savage's *England's Dreaming* is subtitled *Sex Pistols and Punk Rock*, but he could have added *Twentieth Century Avant-Garde, Modern Alternative Thinkers and the Breakdown of the Postwar Consensus*. No, wait, I mean it's good.

Situating pop music in a 'social context' has been the ruin of many a poor boy, but Savage has come up with a real *tour de force*. He submits every conceivable aspect of punk to a thorough but entertaining inspection, interwoven with the story of Malcolm McLaren, opportunist creator of the Sex Pistols and single-minded maker of legends.

Hated hippy consensus

I've heard of boys who want to be train robbers, but never one who wanted to be Larry Parnes. Yet this spivvy showbiz impresario, with his roster of fabricated English pop idols like Billy Fury, held a strange fascination for McLaren. After a few restless years playing with the identity of his shop in the King's Road, he hit upon the scam of assembling an anti-pop group through which he, the Svengali figure in the wings, could subvert the hated hippy consensus which dominated the rock industry and clogged the lines of communication.

The Sex Pistols were to be a sort of situationist Monkees, dressed to evoke the dandyish hooliganism of the London mob (hedonists who combined a love of art with a habit of burning down theatres and beating up proprietors whose plays disappointed them).

The rest of the story is as well known as how John met Paul, George and Ringo. But Savage

takes as critical a view of it all as such an old punk can. The 'I was there' tales are kept in check through the device of quoting from his own diary of the time, which captures well the stifling atmosphere of mid-seventies London. Stagnation, decline, repressed sexuality, xenophobia—in its more heroic moments punk held up a mirror to the nation, at a time when a desperate attempt was being made to cling on to the threadbare old myths. 'We hated older people', says Siouxsie, 'always harping on about Hitler, "we showed him", and that smug pride'.

'Punish the punks'

The hysterical reaction to punk owed more to the jittery mood of the establishment than to McLaren's famous 'media manipulation'. It's amazing to recall how the Sex Pistols were witch-hunted by press, politicians, police and patriotic citizens —'Punish the punks' (the *Mirror*). Things reached an almost surreal level when the charts were rigged to keep 'God Save the Queen' off the number one slot during Jubilee Week.

After that it was downhill all the way. The contradiction between punk's arty roots and its street kids rhetoric tore it apart once it became a 'youth movement' and the real football terrace boys caught on. Before long, a crude 'dole queue rock' tag was tied tight around punk's neck, and any bunch of tossers could cut their hair, call themselves 'The Piss Flaps' and sign a record deal.

Many of those original punks who managed to stay alive, sane and out of prison ended up working in advertising and business in the eighties. The current recession has put most of them back where they started—on the dole, and very bored. But they're not singing about it anymore.

Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming*, Faber & Faber, £17.95 hbk

Now that the dust has settled, Alan Harding ponders what the Booker Prize tells us about the state of the modern novel

The first Booker Prize was awarded in 1969, but its claim to be Britain's top fiction award dates from 1981, when the prize was won by Salman Rushdie for *Midnight's Children*. This novel and William Golding's *Rites of Passage* are the only winners of real substance. The winning author in 1991, Ben Okri, received a first prize of £20 000—worth a few drinks—but this is not what it is all about.

Selling books is big business, but it is also a tough business. Profit margins are cut to the bone. The way around this is a long print run. Medical text books and coffee table art books may qualify for this, but no publisher is going to take a risk on a serious novel unless it makes the Booker shortlist. Even this may not be enough. On 24 November, one month after the presentation, only the winner, *The Famished Road*, was in the *Sunday Times* fiction bestseller list. The *raison d'être* of the Booker is the needs of the industry, not the quality of the novel.

Diners' club

Those for whom the evening of the presentation is either the high point of the year or the lowest circle of hell are a small and self-referential group. Roddy Doyle, a north Dublin schoolteacher, was shortlisted for *The Van*, but is not a member of the London literary scene. For him, attending the shindig was a bizarre experience but it did give him the advantage of detached observation. He noted that everyone at the dinner appeared to know each other! He was wrong on one count. The Indian writer, Rohinton Mistry, who is resident in Canada, sat bolted to his chair like a rabbit transfixed in the glare of car headlights.

Meanwhile, perhaps the last power-dressed PRs in the Western world prowled and circled, making sure their product was being marketed and that their man was being seen by the right people at the right table. After all, this year's shortlistee is next year's Booker judge. So it goes.

All this is a necessary if thankless task for the armoured infantry of the book trade because the secret is already out. The rows of photographers—cameras flashing and popping—who surrounded Ben Okri long before the official announcement of the winner indicated either that he had replaced Paul Gascoigne on the road to Lazio or that he was the anointed one.

Far too long

It seems to me that the frenzy, desperation and hype are in inverse proportion to the quality of the novels on offer. None of the 1991 batch are awful, but it is difficult to describe any of them as anything other than mediocre. For the most part they are far too long for what they have got to say. And what they have got to say does seem to have been said by someone else—more compellingly and more succinctly.

As a snapshot of novel writing in Britain and the Commonwealth, the Booker shortlist presents a sorry picture. Of the six on the shortlist last year, only Martin Amis is English. There are two Irish writers and three from the Commonwealth: one African, one Indian and one from Hong Kong. This is an accurate reflection of the paucity of imaginative writing in Britain. But the quality of the others does not do justice to the creativity of recent writing from those who come to English as an acquired language or with the uniquely

acquired insight of Irish writing.

Of all the books, I found William Trevor's *Reading Turgenev* the most irritating. It has been praised for its sensitivity and control. For me, it was a novel on auto pilot. Trevor has mined the narrow seam of the hidebound nature of Irish rural life and the emptiness it induces to exhaustion. The prose is polished but precious. It moves without variety or variation in tone. It left me with nothing more than the sense of having completed a sentimental homily.

Energy and wit

By contrast, Roddy Doyle's concluding third story in the saga of the Rabbitte family is raucous, rough and inventive. If Alan Parker's *The Commitments* is anything to go by, there is another fine screenplay waiting for any director who can handle the energy and wit that Doyle translates from the streets of north Dublin. The dialogue in *The Van* is great, but that's all there is.

The contributions from the Commonwealth all weigh in as heavyweights on word count but little else. Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, set in Bombay at the time of the foundation of Bangladesh, is the story of an ordinary man living in extraordinary times. The themes are large. The execution is inoffensive but bland.

The Redundancy of Courage is by an author, Timothy Mo, who has been shortlisted for the Booker three times now. It is the best read in the straightforward sense of holding you with the story line. That being said, you would be better off with a le Carré or a Deighton. And if you want to go all the way with ambiguity of motive, guilt and redemption, there are quite a few Graham Greene novels to turn to. You won't even lose the exotic location.

The winner was Ben Okri. *The Famished Road* has been described as a 'magical realist' work, but this label has become an excuse rather than a description. It is kitchen sink magical realist. There is nothing of the surreal wit of Marquez, only the gaudy colours of a child's colouring book. There is nothing of the aching intensity of Toni Morrison, just the assertion that in a spirit world the pain of human suffering is reflected and may be resolved.

Amis a hit

My winner would have been *Time's Arrow* by Martin Amis—and not just because the book is short! Indeed the single conceit on which the book is structured—that of running a human life backwards—could have been executed even more sharply. Nor because it is fresh. Amis acknowledges Levi and Vonnegut in his afterword. The Vonnegut of *Slaughterhouse Five*, *God Bless You Mr. Rosewater* and the *Sirens of Titan* came quickly to my mind. But Amis is sharper and takes more risks.

Of all the authors, Amis probably does not need the money; nor the imprimatur of the Booker in order to be marketed. He is of the literary world in a special sense because he is its 'bad boy'. For the moment he succeeds by not winning the Booker. But his nastiness is housetrained. After this diet of stodge I've gone back to an author they wouldn't even allow to wait on table at the Guildhall ceremony: Derek Raymond's *I was Dora Suarez*. Now that is nasty but good.



The battle for the Booker

Nothing very novel

Grow up

In the wake of the festive season, let us pause a while and consider the children and more especially, childishness. Arrested mental development has always had its fans—people with Garfields crucified in their Fiesta windows; people who talk to their cats and so on. But suddenly, it's being intellectualised. It is called 'getting in touch with the child inside yourself'. I suppose the value of the exercise depends on whether the child inside you is the Boy Jesus or Bart Simpson.

What it leads to in TV terms is the elevation of old repeats to cult status, as millions of thirtysomethings sit down to the tedious *Thunderbirds* (BBC2) back catalogue, the high viewing figures of which can only be explained in terms of mass regression therapy. Soon Channel 4 is to cash in on this by repeating *The Magic Roundabout*. The previous generation avoided facing up to ageing by sticking to the hippie-style codes of its teenage years; the present one seeks refuge in the telly of its childhood (the child inside itself is presumably a couch potato).

The most perfect poetic expression of the ideal is Peter Pan, now filmed as *Hook* by—obviously—Stephen Spielberg and starring Robin Williams, the man who did get in touch with the child inside and was thus transformed from an amphetamine satirist into a wet-eyed Krankie. Let him be a lesson to you.

Americans, like the British, have a fear of growing up, but they try to avoid not only emotional maturity and responsibility but also the physical effects of ageing. The most extreme expression of this is of course Michael Jackson. Jackson is the Peter Pan of the Nintendo generation and his latest video stars his very own Wendy—the Ideal of Childhood—McCauley Culkin, the verminous star of *Home Alone* and *Uncle Buck*. Culkin and Jackson between them sum up the thinking behind this desire for a second childhood.

In the two films mentioned, the rodent-child is innocent and vulnerable but also resourceful and victorious. When Uncle Buck remarks on his ability to notice detail, he retorts, 'I'm a kid, that's my job'. This refers to the myth that kids have a moral perspicacity which becomes dulled in adulthood. This is what Jesus was getting at when he said, you must be as little children. You might pause to reflect that if McCauley was that perspicacious why did he agree to be in the remake of *Cinema Paradiso* alongside the human turkey, Bruce Willis?

The Jackson video kicks off with another aspect of the Ideal Child when Culkin sets up a pair of huge speakers in the front room, plugs in his music centre and says, 'Eat this, Dad'. The child as insatiable consumer, the dull-eyed kid who slouches in from school and grunts 'Feed Me' in the oven chips ad. This is the essence of the Turtles, of course, but it is also there in the honey-grabbing

Winnie the Pooh. Since Jackson's key market is around this age, it is easy to see why he places such a premium on the child buyer.

But *Black or White* does explore other aspects of childhood. There is a long sequence in which MoJo dances with lots of people in different national costumes, the Soviet Union being represented in these troubled times by Cossacks bobbing up and down in front of the Kremlin. The message is basically 'We are the world (we are the children)'—a message of Spinners-like idiocy or touching purity, depending on whether you have a child inside you or not.

World cultures are reduced to dressing up, much as they are when Donald Duck goes to the pyramids/ziggurats/igloos, etc. The imperialist aspect of this is obvious in both cases. In *Black and White* the traditional dances of Bali and the Steppes are replaced one by one with the Moonwalk. Imperialism is of course essentially infantile. After this comes an extraordinary passage in which a Black Panther (another potent political image) turns into MoJo, who then goes out on to a kind of Elm Street set and starts to smash a car, growl and finger his own groin. If it was Prince doing it, it would be alarming. In MoJo's hands it looks like the tantrum of a five-year old. There is no music in the bit, so it looks daft for a start. The famous Jackson puppet dance has been crossed with a kind of playground martial arts display and most bizarre of all, he keeps stopping to do a funny little nibbling gesture with his teeth while screwing up his eyes.

If the spirit of dance has brought out the animal in Jacko, then that animal is none other than Vince, the myopic Gopher from *Deputy Dawg*. It is fascinating that where lesser stars (George Michael and Kylie) try to broaden their appeal by going for credibility, maturity and sexuality, Jackson—who was mature, sexy and unbelievably credible at the age of eight—has been trying to move downmarket by turning himself into a cartoon character with a Mickey Mouse voice and the jerky articulation of Pinocchio. The video ends with a glimpse of Bart.

It is interesting that the precursors of Jackson mentioned here—Winnie the Pooh, Christopher Robin and Peter Pan—are all products of the anxious late 1920s. They offered a release from the fears of war and depression. One of the most important aspects of the Jackson-Culkin partnership is its association with money. If you really want to be childlike and carefree, get rich. Nothing makes you feel older than debt. I speak as one who knows.

Jackson in particular stands as an example of massively successful marketing. He brings hope in the middle of the recession, the feeling that you can sell anything if you try. He also embodies the exhilarating freedom that wealth brings you. He



Frank Cottrell-Boyce on TV

Nothing makes you feel older than debt. I speak as one who knows

can not only buy what he wants (llamas and oxygen tents). He can be whom he wants. Stories abound about Jacko's elaborate disguises. He has changed colour, nose, shape. The *Black and White* video contains a wonderful sequence in which people of various nationalities, sizes and sexes blur into each other. It is a celebration of the fact that identity can be multiple, that we can all reinvent ourselves. This section leaps out at you partly because it runs counter to the whole culture of the rest of the video.

The 'thinking' behind all the 'child inside' muck is that identity is stable and determined—find the child and you have the key to yourself. The thrill of Jackson is the very opposite; it is the thrill of constant change. Of course, it is easy to talk like this if you've got a surgeon and an unlimited budget but you don't have to be a millionaire to junk the child inside. One of my heroes is the turn-of-the-century burglar Stevie Morrison. He had different nicknames depending on who he was with. They were, variously, the Australian, the Frenchman and the Russian.

While I've been writing this, all of my children have found their way up to my office. One has been worried for days that he will be the victim of a wrongful arrest by the police. Another wants his breakfast but will have to wait until I print this out. Another tries to engage me in polite conversation while jumping up and down. I have just told him to 'grow up'. Let me say the same to you for '92. Be foolish, be happy, grow up.




PHOTO: Simon Norfolk - Peasant market, Bucharest

STALINISM IN CRISIS

ROBERT KNIGHT

This book explores the causes and implications of the collapse of Stalinism in both East and West.

Separate chapters focus on developments in the Soviet Union, China, the third world, Eastern Europe and Western Europe.

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the marxist review of books

James Heartfield examines the conservative revolt against liberalism

The end of liberalism

Books discussed in this article include:

Giants and Dwarfs: Essays 1960-1990

Allan Bloom, Simon & Schuster, £8.99 pbk;

The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism

FA Hayek, (Ed WW Bartley III), Routledge,

£30 hbk, £9.99 pbk; **Three Rival Versions of**

Moral Enquiry, Alasdair MacIntyre,

Duckworth, £12.95 pbk

These three authors were once liberal, or in Alasdair MacIntyre's case radical, opponents of conservatism. All defended reason against what they saw as the prejudices of the age. Today, by contrast, all three fear the corrosive effect of sceptical criticism upon tradition. All three favour tradition over reason (at best seeing the latter as a product of the former) as the only basis of a good society.

The personal trajectories of Allan Bloom, Friedrich Hayek and Alasdair MacIntyre—the transition from a liberal or radical point of view to a conservative one—represent more than the views of three academics. The shift from liberalism to reaction is the expression of capitalism's economic *decline* relative to its earlier progressive stage. But the ease with which democratic rights are circumscribed expresses the capitalists' *confidence* relative to their opponents.

When, in the last century, capitalism had the economic capacity to take the whole of society forwards, however conflict-ridden that process was, it still tended to extend political liberties. Unable to sustain the economic basis of consensus this century, it resorted to political reaction starting with the enslavement of the colonies and ending with fascism and war in Europe.

But the consequences of reaction, the widespread association of capitalism with fascism, and the rise in popularity of the Stalinist social system, put capitalism on the defensive. In the postwar era, when Bloom, Hayek and MacIntyre cut their political teeth, capitalism was trying to pass itself off as liberal once again. Its ideologists proclaimed the 'end of ideology': the end of the ideologies of fascism and Stalinism, that is, not the end of the ideology of liberal capitalism.

Now that the threat of Stalinism has been proved to be no threat at all, the reactionary trajectory of capitalism in decline has been

resumed, or, more precisely, been made explicit once again, and postwar liberals are turning into conservatives. However, as these three demonstrate by their conflicting ideas of what tradition is, rebuilding conservatism might be necessary to save capitalism but, as we shall see, conservatism also contradicts capitalism's claim to promote democracy and freedom.

Where Bloom, Hayek and MacIntyre diverge is in their understanding of what tradition is and, in particular, its relationship to liberalism: how do you accommodate the fact that the system that you are trying to conserve began life as an attack on established tradition and privilege, as an extension of reason and democracy?

Allan Bloom's response is to try to make liberalism a part of tradition—the tradition of the Enlightenment. He defended the 'great books' of Western civilisation in the debate about what American universities should teach their students. But in doing so, he made the revolutionary programmes of John Locke and Niccolò Machiavelli into museum pieces for the aggrandisement of the established order.

Friedrich Hayek, the most confident of these three, simply assumes that liberal thinkers are traditionalists. In the process he misrepresents them, as well as rewriting his past endorsement of the rhetoric of liberation. Alasdair MacIntyre, the most consistently conservative here, sees liberalism as the beginning of the end of a sure moral tradition, and seeks a return to pre-capitalist thinking.

In Allan Bloom's *Giants and Dwarfs* we are treated both to the intellectual development that led up to his 1988 hit, *The Closing of the American Mind*, and the fall-out from the book's attack on the 'relativism' taught in American universities (See 'The Battle of the Books', *Living Marxism*, June 1991). With *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bloom warned that the teaching of other cultures as equivalent to Western civilisation denigrated the latter, undermining students' faith in liberal democracies. Replying to his critics, Bloom is scathing of their insults, though one might think they gave as good as they got, and seeks to paint his opponents as incipient fascists.

The impact of Bloom's attack on the campus left suggests that in fact he has unleashed the 'fascists' upon American students. Bolstered by *The Closing of the American Mind*, right wingers have abused students in the hope of being tried under the college Codes of Conduct which Bloom identified as an incursion on free speech. 'My parents own your people' was how one of Bloom's less attractive readers, Douglas Hann of Brown University, sought to

goad black students. He succeeded in getting himself expelled. Elsewhere the founder of the National Association of Scholars, James Barber, protested at leftist bias at Duke University by burning the library's books on Karl Marx.

Bloom is at his strongest when attacking the low horizons of the left following its turn towards academia. 'Change the books not the ownership of the means of production', he parodies, 'and you change the world: "Readers of the world, you have nothing to lose but your canon" ' (p24). He is also careful to avoid any explicitly chauvinist taunts, insisting that all he aims to maintain is the best of human culture, irrespective of its origins. So, he reviles the Japanese for their racism while praising the Chinese students for embracing Western values of liberal democracy.

But the development of his idea that rival ethnic loyalties are undermining national cohesion can be seen in the pre-1988 essay, 'Commerce and "Culture" '. There he distinguishes between an

not a Conservative). In *The Fatal Conceit*, however, he makes an approach to a moral conservatism that involves a transformation of all the key concepts of *The Road to Serfdom*. By looking at that shift we can see the content of a meeting of moral conservatism and liberal economics.

In *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek still embraces the liberatory rhetoric of classical liberalism, characterising collectivism as a return to feudal despotism (as is implied in his title): 'The guiding principle, that a policy of freedom for the individual is the only truly progressive policy, remains as true today as it was in the nineteenth century.' (p178)

Hayek feels the constraints of those forms in which capitalism takes refuge in its old age—state planning, mostly—but imagines them to be a return to the fetters of the feudal order. Moribund, state-supported capitalism is taken at face value to be socialism, and is counterposed to the memory of its youth as a progressive social

In Hayek, socialism seems to have expanded its meaning beyond all ordinary usage of the term until it is virtually synonymous with reason itself

authentic nationality and an unauthentic culture: 'This abstraction "culture" is now used to supplant the instinctive concern with country, putting in its place a factitious loyalty and fostering a dangerous insensitivity to real politics.' (p277)

The real revelation in the earlier essays, however, is Bloom's tortuous relationship to liberalism and the Enlightenment. He insists he is not a conservative, but also that he is not what is called a liberal today. Indeed, as he suggests in his essay for Raymond Aron, the French postwar intellectual who promoted the idea that ideology was at an end, liberalism is no longer a viable option.

In 'The last of the liberals', he writes that 'A debilitating relativism has grown out of liberalism's healthy scepticism' (p226). Instead of being an example of critical thought for students to follow, the Enlightenment is reduced to the status of an incantation to shore up existing beliefs and institutions:

'Political philosophy is in crisis; its very possibility is doubted, nay denied, by the most powerful movements of contemporary thought. And that crisis is identical with the crisis of the West, because the crisis of the West is a crisis of belief—belief in the justice of our principles.' (p 295)

Bloom feels 'healthy scepticism' to be 'debilitating relativism' because of his non-rational belief in the West. His response is to relegate the Enlightenment spirit of liberalism to the past, as a tradition instead of an inspiration, while the present must believe in the justice of the West.

For Hayek is far from being what would be called a liberal today, though he is a defender of liberal economic ideas. In the postwar years when free market economics were derided in favour of state intervention, Hayek kept the flame burning with his anti-collectivist tracts, starting with *The Road to Serfdom* (1944). Though capitalism survived only by moderating its ordinary operations through state intervention, Hayek's defence of unalloyed free market capitalism was far-sighted. Hayek's work has come into its own because capitalism cannot survive by apologising for itself—only an uncompromising defence of the operation of the market will do.

Hayek's early work could not in the ordinary sense of the word be called conservative either (in 1960 he wrote a pamphlet *Why I Am*

system. Actual capitalism is criticised from the point of view of its ideal existence, and, lo and behold, ideal capitalism is superior!

In line with his defence of the rhetoric of classical liberalism, Hayek's position in 1944 is far from being opposed to reason: he considers himself its defender. But he understands reason to be restricted by the scope of one individual's experience.

In the years between *The Road to Serfdom* and *The Fatal Conceit* Hayek has become a figurehead for right wingers all over the world. From being the despised voice in the wilderness, he has become the champion of market values. Corresponding to this shift in Hayek's popularity with conservative politicians, his own work shows a more morally and politically conservative bent alongside the defence of liberal economic concepts. Even these latter, however, have been transformed by the change in approach.

In *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism*, Hayek maintains the form of a polemic against socialism, but on closer reading socialism seems to have expanded its meaning beyond all ordinary usage of the term until it is virtually synonymous with reason itself. Defensively, he writes:

'Although I attack the *presumption* of reason on the part of socialists, my argument is in no way directed against reason properly used. By "reason properly used" I mean reason that recognises its own limitations and, itself taught by reason, faces the implications of the astonishing fact, revealed by economics and biology, that order generated without design can far outstrip plans men consciously contrive.' (p8)

The germ of this idea can be seen in *The Road to Serfdom*, in the delimitation of reason to individual experience, but it has been taken much further here, where even individual consciousness cannot contrive better than 'order generated without design'. Intervening between individual consciousness and the external world there is now a generated order of traditional morality that is itself beyond rational investigation because, as Hayek informs us, quoting Hume, 'the rules of morality...are not the conclusions of our reason' (*The Fatal Conceit*, p8).

Hayek is aware that the redefinition of reason as tradition-based, rather than the work of the individual subject, is a departure from the methodological individualism he adopted previously:

'First there is the question of *how our knowledge really does arise*. Most knowledge—and I confess it took me some time to recognise this—is obtained not from immediate experience or observation, but in the continuous process of sifting a learnt tradition, which requires individual recognition and following of moral traditions that are not justifiable in the terms of the canons of traditional theories of rationality.' (p75)

Not only does Hayek reject *a priori* individualism in the exercise of reason, but he also qualifies the idea of the natural individual of classical liberal economics:

'The members of these small groups could thus exist only as such; an isolated man would soon have been a dead man. The primitive individualism described by Thomas Hobbes is hence a myth. The savage is not solitary, and his instinct is collectivist. There never was a "war of all against all".' (p12)

Hayek of course is right: individualism is a modern creation, only possible in a developed society. But his reasoning betrays a bad faith in the rights of the individual. Like reason, the individual is demoted in Hayek's later work to become an outgrowth of an organic tradition. The concept of nature has shifted from being one of natural rights attached to the individual to an evolved order to which we owe our obedience.

Like the classical conservative theories of Edmund Burke, Hayek holds natural instincts to be a threat to order, with their inherent trajectory towards the collectivism of the 'primitive mind'. At the same time, the conceit of excessive reason is always in danger of undermining authority by its unmediated appeal to change. Between the pull of instinctive urges and the disrespectful carping of reason, traditional morality is the last integument of a conservative capitalism.

By transforming many of the categories of liberal economics, Hayek's aim is to conserve capitalism, not to criticise it. So on certain things he will not budge. Characteristically, it is the system of abstract rules, the rules of property, that he insists upon (p63).

own views—in the middle sections is forbidding but his lucid style makes it an elegant contribution to the debate about education and morality, presenting opposing views fairly and with insight.

MacIntyre argues that liberalism must degenerate into the sort of moral relativism typified by Nietzsche, and his followers Heidegger and Foucault, because it lacks the moral certainty of tradition, as exemplified by Thomism. Liberalism's abstract moral schema, such as Immanuel Kant's categorical 'oughts', must result in a conflict between the interests of the individual ego it presupposes and the interests of wider society expressed in moral law. Kantian ethics are insufficiently grounded to resist the hedonistic impulses implicit in utilitarianism, and made explicit by Nietzsche.

Catholic Thomism, by contrast, grounds morality in obedience not to an abstract morality, but to the continuing guidance of a teacher (who we must presume to be the church, though MacIntyre knows his audience's healthy scepticism well enough not to say so). Instead of an abstract morality, applicable to all, irrespective of their circumstances, Thomist virtue develops through the 'craft' pursued by its agent. So a virtuous sea-captain might exhibit different qualities from a virtuous scholar.

MacIntyre's book tells an important truth about liberalism, though from a reactionary standpoint. The abstract morality of liberalism is dependent upon its ability to reproduce spontaneously in the lives of its adherents. Where all are seen to gain from the rules of property ownership, those rules hold good. Where those rules are seen to favour the wealthy, liberalism finds itself without traditional institutions to fall back upon.

The force behind MacIntyre's critique is that his emphasis upon particular virtues steeped in tradition is the only available counter—bar revolution—to the gap between the expectations of liberty inherent in liberalism, and the actuality of the constraints of poverty. MacIntyre's conservatism exhibits the virtue of consistency. If morality is to hold, he tells us, we must not expect to keep up with the Joneses, but to settle for our lot in life.

MacIntyre also sees the flaw in Allan Bloom's project of founding a moral tradition upon the 'great books' of Western civilisation. We are, he says, 'the inheritors...of a number of rival and incompatible

For conservatives, reason must give way to tradition. Enquiry must give way to faith. The hope for equality must give way to submission

For Alasdair MacIntyre, by contrast, it is the abstract morality of liberalism that undermines moral certainty.

MacIntyre was a left winger in the sixties, writing for the *New Reasoner*, a forerunner of the *New Left Review*. Since then his rejection of liberal capitalism, inspired (albeit eccentrically) by his reading of Marx, has changed into a morally conservative critique of liberalism. His book *After Virtue* (1981) was heralded by conservatives for its attack on moral relativism, or, as he called it, 'emotivism'. In *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, he returns to the theme by comparing the relative merits of Catholic Thomism, Nietzschean Genealogy and the liberal Encyclopaedists.

MacIntyre's book gains by the discipline of his 10 Gifford lectures at Edinburgh in 1988, comparing favourably with his Byzantine book of that year *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. Its extensive exposition of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas—MacIntyre's

traditions' (p228). The problem is that MacIntyre knows that to establish a sure moral tradition is to challenge liberalism—represented here by the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—not to reaffirm it: 'The ghosts of the Ninth Edition haunt the contemporary academy. They need to be exorcized.' (p171)

For supporters of progress, the problem of the reaction expressed in these three books is all too clear. Reason must give way to tradition. Enquiry must give way to faith. The hope for equality must give way to submission. The problem for contemporary conservatism is that it must undermine not only the moral justification of existing society—human progress—but also its claim to uphold even the formal freedoms of the capitalist system such as freedom of thought and freedom before the law. In its own way, conservatism is in revolt. ●

Read on

Peers, Queers and Commons: The Struggle for Gay Law Reform from 1950 to the Present

by Stephen Jeffery-Poulter
Routledge, £9.99 pbk

Stephen Jeffery-Poulter has written a concise and thorough history of the treatment of homosexuality by the British parliamentary system and press, particularly focusing on the postwar period when it began to be discussed more openly.

The single determining feature of the campaign for homosexual rights has been the abandonment of any attempt to relate the issue to a working class audience. For this reason, words like 'struggle' and 'movement' are misnomers when applied to postwar gay politics. What we have, instead, are isolated lobby groups congregating around different sections of the establishment as the establishment itself has adapted to keep a grip on society's sexual practices.

Jeffery-Poulter notes the problems facing the authorities in the early fifties as they encountered barriers to regaining the strict prewar regulation of Britain's sexual activities. While police arrests for 'indecent' between males was at an all-time high, the intrusion of the state into the bedroom caused its own problems. The establishment's response, which led to what is hailed by gay activists as a victory for homosexuals, the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, was influenced not by riots or struggle but by limits to the state clampdown itself—not least the embarrassment of members of the establishment being dragged before the courts as in the Lord Montagu trial of 1953.

A strong political and moral consensus on sexual practices enabled the state to update its method of regulation at its own careful pace, while maintaining a tight framework of

oppression. The fact that the state itself was able to define what was and wasn't acceptable sexual behaviour meant that homosexuality was never decriminalised. The 1967 Act did not liberate gay men: it simply redrew the boundaries of what was considered acceptable behaviour.

In the eighties, this unchallenged consensus, combined with the arrival of Aids, gave the Thatcher government one of its few successes in changing public attitudes. Jeffery-Poulter acknowledges the effect of the Aids panic in allowing the government to target those who define themselves as homosexual. But he still inclines towards a 'too little, too late' view in response to the Aids panic, taking much of the government's safe sex campaign at face value.

Despite this, he finishes the chapter on the Aids panic with a favourable review of a pamphlet on the subject written by contributors to *Living Marxism* (Dr Michael Fitzpatrick and Don Milligan, *The Truth About the Aids Panic*, Junius 1987). Contrary to what is implied by Jeffery-Poulter, the pamphlet was aimed not at gay activists as such, but at all those who need to be convinced that taking an unequivocal stand on homosexual rights is the only fitting response to the government-sponsored moral panic about Aids.

Craig Barton

Shoot the Women First by Eileen MacDonald Fourth Estate, £14.99 hbk

'Political motives apart...why do women, who have so little to gain and so much to lose, ever become guerrillas?' (p240) Despite the best efforts of the 'female terrorists' interviewed in *Shoot the Women First*, its author, investigative journalist Eileen MacDonald,

succeeds in submerging their political motives by asking a series of questions designed to reveal some other explanation for their involvement in political violence. Did they lose their mother at an early age? Did they do it for the love of a man? Or were they unable to have children?

Having stated her contempt for commentators who attribute these women's behaviour to their sexuality (they're all lesbians) or their looks (they're all ugly), MacDonald goes on to create her very own myth. The 'cause', she claims, has become a 'surrogate child' for these women, 'one for whom she may have sacrificed authentic maternal feelings, that must be protected at all costs' (p237).

Women active in national liberation movements such as the Irish Republican Army and the Palestine Liberation Organisation are asked about their 'emotions and feelings about violence' alongside women who were in the Red Brigades and other European terrorist groups in the seventies. MacDonald certainly leaves us in no doubt about her own feelings on this score. No interview is complete without a cautionary warning about the evils of violence lest the reader be seduced by the arguments of these articulate women. MacDonald admits to being more scared of the IRA women than any others, no doubt because she feels them to be a threat to the British state with which she identifies.

For those of us with less distaste for the violence of the oppressed, these interviews are compulsive reading. The women describe how involvement in a political struggle has given them a taste of the power that they would never experience as mothers and housewives. If we refuse to put political motives aside, and consider that national liberation and an end to oppression are goals worth fighting for, it would seem that MacDonald's maxim of 'little to gain and so much to lose' just doesn't make sense.

Fiona Foster

Shortlisted

On Liberty and Other Essays, John Stuart Mill, Oxford University Press, £5.99 pbk

First published in 1859, *On Liberty* remains the classic liberal statement on the relation between the individual and society. Since the French Revolution, bourgeois political theorists have grappled with the unpleasant reality that the aspiration towards Liberty, Equality and Fraternity cannot be realised in a society dictated by the capitalist market.

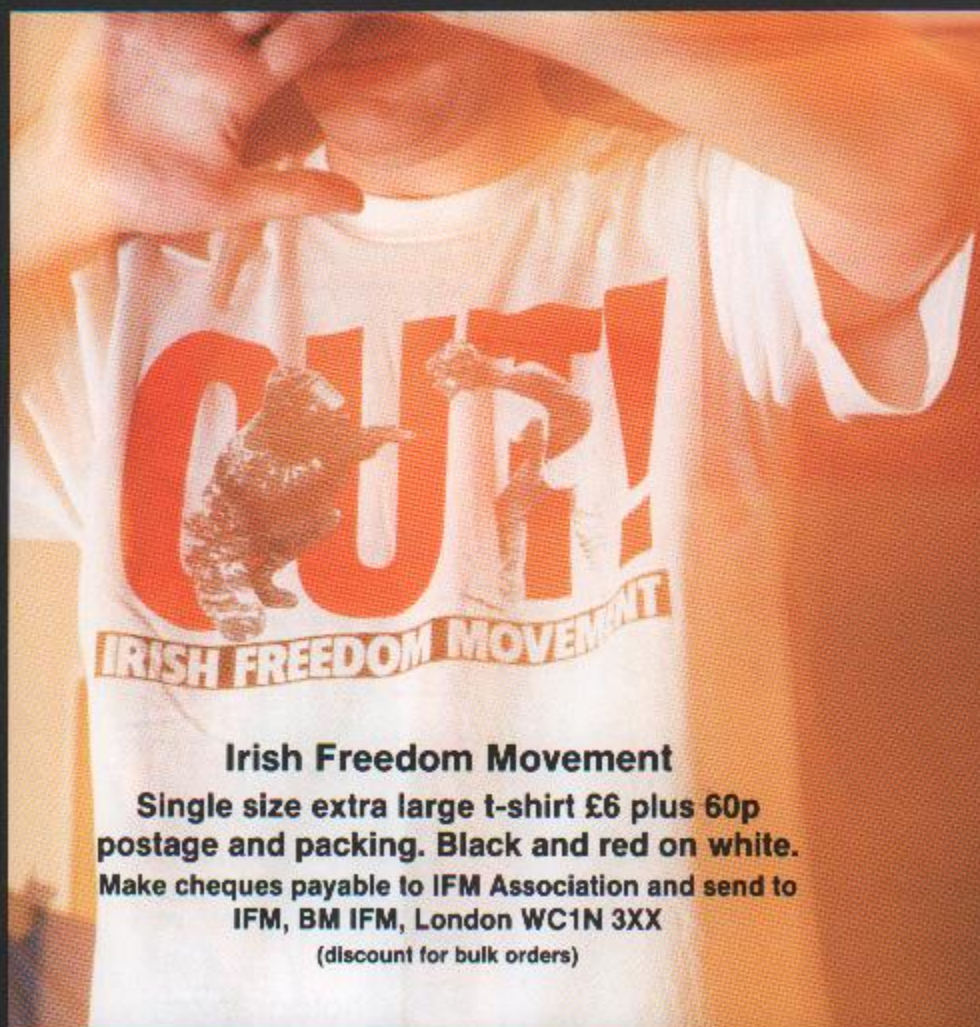
Their response has been to counterpose liberty and equality. The argument runs that if the state imposes equality then individuals

cannot be free. If individuals are free, then inequality will result. Within this arbitrary formula, the liberal solution put forward by Mill is for individual freedom tempered by responsibility and restraint.

The concepts of liberty and equality cannot, however, be understood as a trade-off between an abstract individual and society. The categories are meaningless outside the context of the struggle between classes in society and the prevailing property relations.

It is not surprising that Mill obscures this point. For him capitalism was the only way to organise society. In his lifetime (1806-1873) the key social question was the emergence and threat of the working class. Mill's defence of individual liberty for an elite and his detestation of mass democracy reflected the recognition that the working class is the gravedigger of capitalism.

Alan Harding



Irish Freedom Movement

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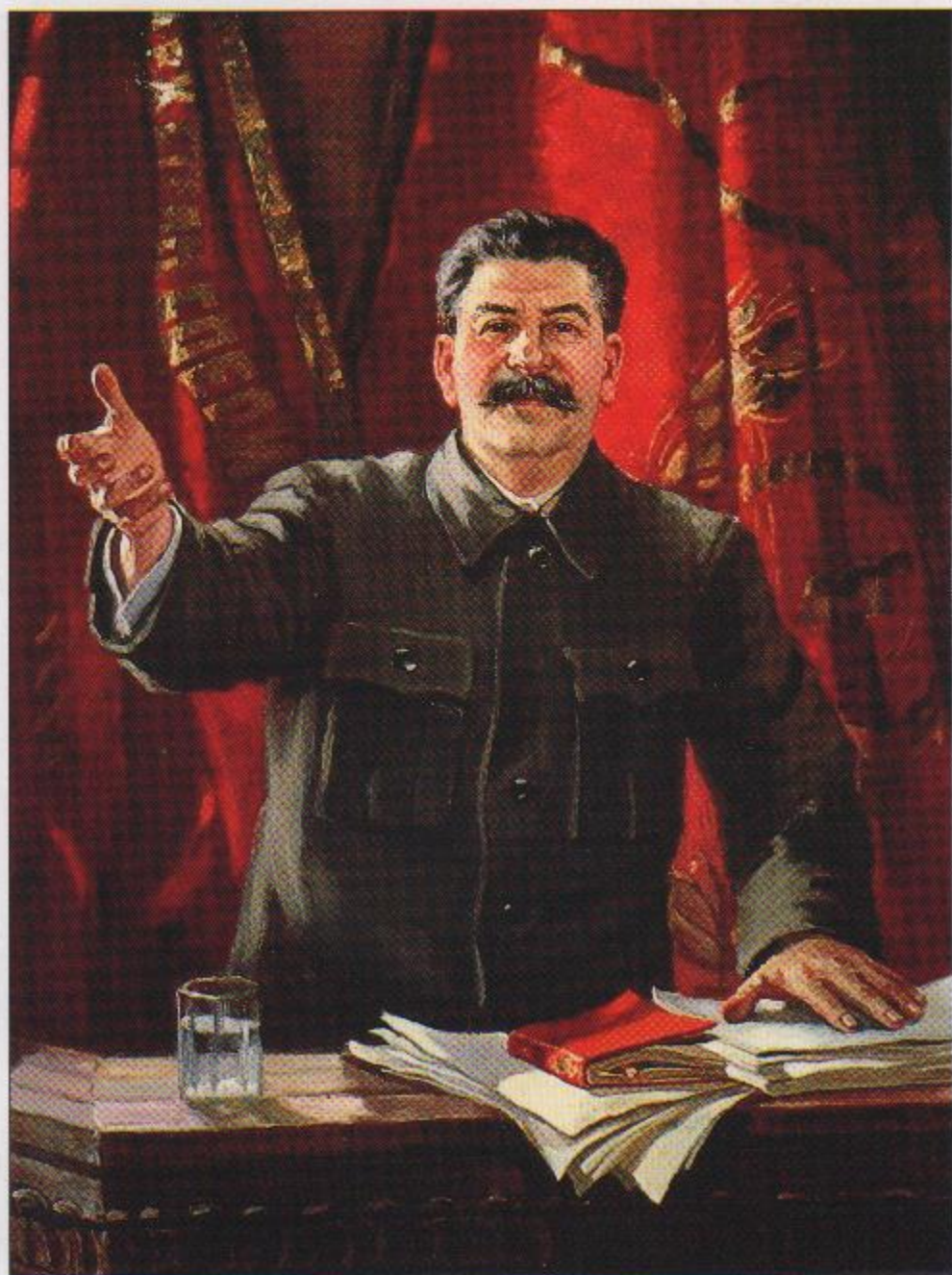
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