

# LIVING MARXISM

## TOWARDS 2000

A week of debate  
23-29 July 1993

see page 23

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COVER PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER



## The new authoritarianism

From Angola and Cambodia to Bosnia and Russia, the West is putting its foot down today. Everywhere, Western intervention stands exposed as a denial of democracy. And these new anti-democratic trends in international politics are now threatening to spill over into our domestic affairs.

This month's *Living Marxism* highlights the advance of the new authoritarianism around the world and within the West itself. It is one more example of the militarisation of international politics—and another argument for supporting the anti-war initiatives in July and August. (See opposite and back cover)

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**Mick Hume**

# The new authoritarianism

**T**he democratic process' has been redefined in the 1990s. It now means that Western governments can do whatever they want around the world. The impact of this new authoritarianism has been felt first in Eastern Europe and the third world. But it has serious implications for our lives, too.

Defending democracy has long been the avowed aim of British and American foreign policy. The West presented the Cold War as a confrontation between the Free World and Totalitarianism (despite the fact that the Free World included every pro-Western dictator in Africa, Asia and Latin America). Then Western commentators celebrated the collapse of the Soviet bloc as the start of a new age of 'people power' and global democracy. All of that is now finished.

Today the Western powers have a far freer hand to intervene in the affairs of other nations. Their right to do so is more widely recognised than it has been for a century. They no longer feel the same need to champion democratic structures in order to justify their interference abroad. Which is just as well for them, since it has become clear that international capitalism cannot sustain democracy in much of Eastern Europe and the third world.

When Western governments do pay lip-service to 'fighting for democracy' around the globe today, they mean something very different than is usually assumed. Democracy now means that the rulers of the democratic West will dictate what is best for the rest of the world. It means that the future of people

everywhere from Bosnia to Somalia will be democratically decided according to how Bill Clinton, John Major and Francois Mitterrand cast their votes on the Security Council of the United Nations. People power, 1993-style, rests with the people with the power in Western capitals.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Living Marxism*, we detail some of the methods which the West is using to re-establish colonial-style control over Africa. They range from fixed elections to wars of subversion. There may now be a few more electoral contests than in the past. But in terms of who holds real power afterwards, the West always wins the election—even when it backs a loser.

Any Western intervention in the East or the third world can only be undemocratic, since it denies people control of their destiny, and invests authority over their affairs in Washington, Whitehall, Paris, Bonn and Tokyo. Yet in the uncritical political climate of our time, Western governments seem able to attach the label 'democratic mission' to any bit of bullying they do abroad, without fear of being seriously challenged at home.

The notion that the West knows what's best for the rest of the world has now become so deeply embedded that the authorities often feel no need even to pay lip-service to the importance of defending democracy in foreign lands. Instead there is a more explicit discussion among politicians and commentators about the *problem* of democracy in unstable parts of the globe.

Today, prominent Western spokesmen imply that Russian president Boris Yeltsin

should shelve democracy, abolish his difficult parliament, and force market reforms through by diktat like the Chinese regime. Indeed it often seems that the butchers of Tiananmen Square have become role models for good government. The West has already approved the assumption of dictatorial powers by president Lech Walesa of Poland, who suspended parliament after it dared to pass a motion of no-confidence in the government.

The underlying message is that democracy remains a good political system, but that many people in Eastern Europe or the third world are not yet good enough for it. These immature nations with their undeveloped political cultures cannot be left alone to exercise their democratic rights any more than a child can be left to play with matches. Instead they need proper supervision and a firm hand from their elders and betters in the West.

As crises and conflicts erupt around the world, the Western authorities are seeking to shift the blame away from the failures of global capitalism, and on to the shortcomings of the local peoples involved. That in turn becomes an argument for the West to intervene further and assume more authority, in order to sort out the mess made by Somali warlords or Cambodian butchers or the ethnic tribes of the Balkans. Wringing their hands about the inability of others to live with popular democracy, Western governments take a tighter grip on the lives of millions.

The new authoritarianism has been consolidated first and foremost in international affairs. A consensus has been

created behind the right to intervene abroad. But these political trends will not halt at the gates of Western society. The new authoritarianism has serious implications here, too.

All of the debates about intervention, UN solutions and peace plans authored by retired British and US politicians are backed by the assumption that the Western authorities understand what is best for the peoples of, say, Bosnia or Cambodia, regardless of how those people vote or what aspirations they express.

But if we accept that our rulers know what's best over there, why shouldn't they assume that they know what's best here, too? If the British government is granted the right to ride roughshod over those people, what's to stop them trying the same approach to asserting their authority at home? The ease with which democratic rights can now be trampled around the world should send a warning signal about what is coming next within the West itself.

Behind the Conservative government's guff about classless societies and egalitarianism, there is already a dangerous undercurrent of social elitism in British political debate. And it is breaking through to the surface more and more often.

Note, for instance, the recent debate about whether a marginal group such as unmarried, unemployed mothers really deserves the full rights of citizenship (such as social security or NHS infertility treatment). Or the proposal that young people should be banned from holding raves without the express permission of the police. The increasing confidence with which many similarly contemptuous notions about ordinary people can be expressed these days is early evidence of how, having been steeled in international affairs, the new authoritarianism is creeping into British society.

Of course, there is a small problem here for the British authorities. They cannot

## People power, 1993-style, rests with the people with the power in Western capitals

abuse their own people in quite the same way as they treat foreigners. It is vital that they maintain a firm distinction in the public mind between the backward, inferior East and third world, and the civilised heartlands of Western capitalism—a preoccupation which is well illustrated by the current discussion about war crimes (see page 14). However, within those limitations, there remains plenty of scope for the government to bring the spirit of the new authoritarianism home.

For a striking illustration of what this means, take a look behind what, on the surface, appears to be one of the most boring issues in politics today; the Conservative government's opposition to the social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty and other related legislation coming out of the EC.

What are the Tories really saying in opting out of the social chapter, with its provisions on working hours, conditions and welfare?

Stripped of all the nationalist rhetoric about British sovereignty and not being bullied by Brussels, they are saying that they object to any attempt to give workers any rights whatsoever. They are saying that they want us to have no room to manoeuvre in dealing with the employers today. They are saying that working people ought to be available to be hired

or fired at will, without the right to say no. It appears that the one freedom which the Tories do insist that employees must have is the freedom to work more than 48 hours a week. In other words, the new authoritarianism already extends into the workplace.

This fact was recently confirmed in a little-noticed case. At the end of April, the Court of Appeal ruled that it was illegal for two companies to penalise their workers financially for being members of a trade union. The government's immediate response was to tack an overnight amendment on to its latest anti-trade union bill in the House of Lords, to ensure that no court could ever again interfere with an employer's ability to blackmail his employees into submission. Tory spokesman Viscount Ullswater tore up and rewrote our rights in a display of aristocratic arrogance unseen since...well, since Lord Owen redrew the map of Bosnia.

The trend towards greater Western intervention is not just a problem for people in the third world, or for those concerned with international relations. It is a problem for us all. The anti-democratic assumptions underlying it are beginning to make their mark within our supposedly democratic British society. Ask the women pickets outside Timex, summarily sacked and surrounded by police, what they think of the citizen's charter.

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

## Roy Gutman's story

In April, Roy Gutman of *US Newsday* won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting of the war in Bosnia. In the May issue of *Living Marxism*, Joan Phillips questioned the basis of Gutman's award-winning stories about Serbian 'death camps' (see 'Who's making the news in Bosnia?'). Here we print Roy Gutman's reply.

I read Joan Phillips' critique of my Bosnia reportage with interest. Just as reporters claim to be watchdogs, we must submit to the scrutiny of others. But a critique must observe the standard of objectivity it sets for the target of examination. And absent in Phillips' extended discussion of my methodology and impact of my stories on public perceptions is any discussion about the core facts. What really happened at Omarska and Brcko camps? Who told the truth: the witnesses I quoted or the military authorities in Banja Luka who were responsible for the operation of the camps? The truth matters.

First to methodology. Phillips describes mine as relying on hearsay and double-hearsay. My very first article on Omarska, on July 19, was indeed based on a secondhand account and was so presented. The military in Banja Luka refused to take me to Omarska, on the transparent excuse they, the armed authorities, could not guarantee my safety. They refused also to admit the International Red Cross until well after my articles were published. Now there can only be one reason to run an account based on hearsay: to warn that something terrible seemed to be going on. No one, starting with the US government, took the warning seriously. I will defend the story as the right thing to do in the circumstances in which I could not gain access to the site. I am grateful you gave it the attention no one else did.

So I returned to the region in the hopes of locating survivors who could say what was going on behind the closed gates. After two of the most frustrating weeks imaginable, I found two in Zagreb, then the biggest gathering area for Bosnian refugees. Theirs were firsthand accounts, not hearsay. Now, why go to print based on only two witnesses? I was convinced that the lives of thousands of people were at stake and we should take the journalistic risk on their behalf. Were the witnesses telling the truth? At least 350 reporters headed into Bosnia in the weeks following my 'Death camps' report in *Newsday* on August 2. Few matched my account. Only after my story were ITN and the

*Guardian* allowed to visit Omarska. The photos were dramatic, the settings ominous, but that was the wrong place to get the definitive story—for the simple reason the authorities clearly were intimidating the prisoners. And it turns out they also had mounted a quick and massive cover-up.

In retrospect, I am surprised that my press colleagues did not take the trouble to dig out the story but watched passively as governments, led by US and Britain, did their best to knock down my reports. For example, Lawrence Eagleburger, then acting secretary of state, said on August 18 that the US government had found no evidence of systematic killing at the camps, only of 'unpleasant conditions'.

This prompted me to re-report the Omarska story from scratch. The article ran at great length October 18 and was based on interviews with about 20 survivors of Omarska. Their accounts were mutually corroborative, whereas the story told by the Serb authorities quickly fell apart. From the accounts of witnesses, I estimated that at least 1000 prisoners were killed at Omarska alone. The prisoners and the Red Cross told me about the cover-up. The Serb authorities closed Omarska within a day or so of my story, moved nine-tenths of the prisoners elsewhere, brought in bunk beds and bedding and set up a Potemkin village story for visiting reporters, including ITN. They also concocted a tale of events at Omarska. Serb officials claimed that two people died at Omarska, both of natural causes. Yet when questioned in depth, they acknowledged to me that well over a dozen top officials and leading citizens of the nearby city of Prijedor, including Lord Mayor Muhamed Cehajic, 'disappeared' and perhaps 'died in the process of disappearing' while at Omarska.

If the facts were not there, rest assured that my story would have been knocked down long ago. The contrary is the case. Under pressure from within the state department, the US government began interviewing victims at Karlovac. They now conclude that at least 5000 people were killed at Omarska. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, special rapporteur for the UN Human Rights Commission, has also reported the daily murder of dozens at Omarska, but I do not know if he reached a numerical estimate.

You need not take my word for it. Research it yourself. The first 68 released detainees, including many from Omarska, came to Britain in September. Alone among major Western governments, your government did not debrief them or file a report to the UN commission

examining war crimes. The British press failed to pursue the story on its doorstep. You should not perpetuate the cover-up.

Let me return to the question of methodology. The Banja Luka military headquarters never issued a detailed rebuttal of my stories but in January distributed a release which attacked me *ad hominem*, alleging that I am a CIA spy, that I hired and paid mercenaries, and accepted information about rapes and concentration camps from Robert Loftus. The account was signed but did not identify the author. He is the head of army propaganda. Though he knows me personally, he made no effort to contact me. His only explanation when I phoned Banja Luka was to say he had written it under instruction from his superiors. His attack was published throughout the Serbian press, carried on Belgrade television, and is now being distributed by the Serbian government. It is, as Phillips notes, outlandish and with no evidence.

I have no problem with her using that attack as the starting point for an investigation. But please reflect. I have reported on a phenomenon that is best summed up in one word: genocide. Shouldn't you also subject the source of the assault on my reporting to a critical examination? As you know, your article about me in May was picked up and treated in the Serbian press as a confirmation of the allegations.

Put yourself in my shoes. I asked to see Loftus' diaries, as Phillips did, to determine how they were being used; but the Banja Luka command refused access. I denied the allegations in writing, but the Banja Luka authorities would not issue my denial in a manner similar to the article about me and the Serb press will not publish my letter. I seem to have no recourse. I sent a follow-up letter reminding the Serb newspapers that by law, I have a right of reply. I hired a lawyer to seek an injunction. The court denied venue on the grounds that I am a non-resident. Five months later, my letter remains unpublished.

I believe my coverage was scrupulous in its methodology, accurate in its conclusions, and will stand up to scrutiny. Can that be said of the actions and statements of the Bosnian Serb or Serbian authorities?

With regard to the Serdari massacre, I readily accepted the invitation of the military spokesman in Banja Luka to visit the site, but local officials in Kotor Varos, instead of taking me directly there, held me up for three hours without explanation. I arrived in the village in the company of the coroner. It was baffling that the corpses had been removed. The coroner had to

take the word of local militia who was killed, how and where. The exception was two corpses charred from a fire in the house. That fire was burning 12 hours after the raid, with a garden hose at full pressure within easy reach. Then there was the mysterious radio conversation that the army said it had taped and suddenly produced for my benefit in which the Muslim and Croat units repeatedly announced to each other the number killed. I proposed to write a story from the visit, but my editors objected that it would raise questions but answer none. So I continued searching. And the story later fell in place. In Zenica at the Muslim-run centre for investigation of war crimes, officials introduced me to a Muslim who had fled to Travnik, who took part in the raid. He told me, by the way, that the attacking force, mainly Muslims, had no radio.

**Roy W Gutman** *Newsday* European Bureau Bonn, Germany

### A bitter Pilger

As an admirer of *Living Marxism*, I believe you ask not to be taken seriously when you run a piece such as 'Left, right, left, right' and which reflects much of the June issue. To suggest that Noam Chomsky, Edward Said and many other socialists, including myself—socialists with a proven record of independence—now belong to some monolithic bloc known as the 'old left' and subscribe to a 'new consensus behind [Western] intervention' is downright stupid and depressingly so. And you must know it is.

For example, you lump Ken Livingstone and me together on the issue of Yugoslavia. Ken Livingstone wants serious military intervention in Bosnia, including bombing. I am totally opposed to that, just as I am opposed to the Vance-Owen plan. By describing a fake 'consensus', you deny a range of radical thought and argument distinguished by striking differences of analysis and opinion. Above all, you deny the indisputable existence of a genuine political and moral dilemma on Yugoslavia. Ask any socialist, whose views you respect, and almost certainly the dilemma will become apparent—even among those who do not care to admit it.

It is Western intervention that denies the multi-ethnic Bosnians the right to defend themselves. The embargo works, in practice, only against the Bosnians; and you clearly support this. Using the inane argument that puts the 'old left' behind Margaret Thatcher, you, alas, are in the queue behind the British government, Denis Healey, Edward Heath and Bill Clinton,

as well as others on the neanderthal right, who would applaud your denial of one of the most basic of human rights: the right of ordinary people to protect and defend themselves.

In the past *Living Marxism* has been astute in pointing out irony. It has become a distinguishing mark. It will be a shame if you lose this when the irony is too close to home.

**John Pilger** *London W1*

### Ragga v Suede

Even if the vehement homophobia of ragga stars is a reaction to white society ('Ragga and the silent race war', June), this is of no comfort, or even consequence, to a young gay man who has to grow up in the hostile environment of ignorant and bigoted peers who are encouraged and legitimised in their homophobia by, among others, ragga stars.

Whilst homophobia does fester in the political establishment, epitomised in Section 28, the Labour and Liberal parties' political correctness ensures that overt homophobia is discouraged and creates an atmosphere whereby homophobia is assumed wrong.

Ragga makes homophobia acceptable, even fashionable. Alternatively, bands such as Suede, although hyped by the journalists of the music press in order to sell papers, have managed to ensure that freedom of sexuality has a refuge from the reactionaries. Suede's popularity, no matter if it is due to hype and image, means that young people are confronted by a band that says any sexuality is good sexuality, helping homosexuals to confront a new generation of bigots.

To claim that 'black men from the ghetto' are 'some of the least powerful people in society' when they have access to millions via the charts and 'youth' television, is to deny that music has any influence or meaning beyond light entertainment. If that were the case, no one would have noticed the lyrics in the first place.

**John Williams** *Bristol*

Let's not have sloppy journalism in the *Living* section of the magazine. The article on Suede ('White Suede blues', June) was poor reporting.

Its message lied in with the 'Ragga and the silent race war' article in the same issue, which rightly exposed the sensationalisation of ragga. To consider Suede's media success as part of this racist hysteria is simply incorrect, and the anti-American sentiment expressed in *Select* magazine that you quoted should not be read as anti-black.

The *Select* article was a reactionary backlash against white grunge music, regrettably calling for a return to fey parochial English pop, announcing their intention to 'save the Union Jack from the Nazis'. Ironically, the magazine has long heralded the elusive 'summer of ragga', and acknowledged the racist nature of the victimisation of Shabba Ranks.

Laying into Suede and *Select* is easy, so why bother to twist things to make your arguments fit? Personally, I have no aversion to even a faint echo of the genius of early Bowie (whatever his politics) back in the charts, and I stand guilty of the no doubt culturally decadent crime of harking back to the musical good ol' days.

**BM Thompson** *Birmingham*

### Ban (almost) nothing

It does seem as though nearly everyone on the left is calling for some kind of censorship these days. I don't agree with them but I can certainly see the reasoning behind their actions: a ragga record with lyrics insulting to gay people potentially has a very dangerous effect on young people's perception of homosexuality. I certainly wouldn't buy it even if it wasn't crap anyway.

And something needs to be done about pornography which really is degrading. Anti-porn legislation doesn't ultimately affect availability, although it would help clear it out of shops that people frequent every day. Ultimately pornography will only be overcome by individuals choosing to reject it. But on a large scale is this realistic? The left really does need to say what it thinks about such issues especially when a minority faction of 'anti-censorship feminists' is presenting women in pornography as the paragon of 'the strong woman'.

I applaud your anti-censorship stand but am interested to know just how far you will let your faith in popular democracy go: will you tolerate 0898 child abuse numbers? Will you allow the mass of public opinion to re-introduce capital punishment?

**Simon Kyte** *Windsor*

You assert that there is patently no connection between violence in the media and behaviour at large ('Ban nothing', May). To my mind you are wrong, there must be a connection because the TV in particular is a very powerful medium.

It is important to remember that copying is one of the most significant human attributes—eg, the fashions exhibited by all the ►

sub-groups in society, from dark suits and ties to jeans and white socks. An average teenager in America will have seen something like 200 000 fights and 50 000 murders on TV. I find it hard to believe that this exceedingly violent society owes nothing to its TV.

Ian Ellis *Menstrie*

## The art of living

Why is it that people castigate art for having no connection with everyday life? M Hughes (letters, June) believes that art can only survive by 'reaffirming its commitment to life and to lived experience'.

Capitalist production processes are often extremely abstract. Such soul-destroying processes are used to exploit people in factories—picking faulty products off production lines, for example. Isn't this 'lived experience'? Abstract processes can be seen around us every day. I have no wish to defend all abstract art, but art does occur in a social context, whether it is abstract or representational. Abstract art is another reflection of the age in which we live.

I can't agree with the statement that abstract art 'cannot contain within itself the image of its inspiration'. If this were true, my own, often very abstract colour photographs (derived from 'lived experience') wouldn't exist. But then they're photographs and photography's not art, is it?

Andrew Payne *Bedford*

## Stop Larkin about

I feel that Alistair Ward ('A very English poet', June) would fare much better if he were to take advice from Kenan Malik's critical review of Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*: 'he [Said] tries to force authors as different as Austen and Conrad, Defoe and Dickens into a single framework with a single view of the "other", and thereby loses the particularity of each.'

Apart from Malik's plea for contextualisation,

Ward repeats the very errors that Malik warns against. In the 'good old days' of the postwar liberal consensus was every English writer a racist in private and a liberal pluralist in public? Are all to be tarred with the same brush in huge (illegitimate) historical sweeps?

Ward writes: 'Larkin stands in the tradition of quintessentially English poets running from Wordsworth, through Tennyson and Hardy to Auden and Housman and such contemporary figures as Roger McGough.' Evidently! Well once, to be 'quintessentially English' was to be revolutionary. Wordsworth's sentiments on the French Revolution: 'Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive, to be young was very heaven.'

Ward claims that Larkin was inferior to, separate from and disliked the interwar 'modernist' intelligentsia and its incipient elitism. Ward then goes on to place Larkin with the 'modernist' roll call of TS Eliot, Ezra Pound and DH Lawrence.

I've never read Larkin, nor do I intend to. But I know a dodgy analysis when I read one.

Robert Fletcher *Essex*

## Timex scabs?

I had the privilege to join with people from all around the UK on 17 May at Timex in Dundee to support the 343 sacked workers. My feelings of elation at being part of such a successful picket and demonstration were tempered by the ill-feeling given out to the 'scabs' going into Timex Dundee.

Let me qualify this quickly. I accept that anyone who has the choice to work on in the face of cuts and changes in conditions rather than standing in solidarity with their fellow workers, fully deserves to be called a 'scab'.

However, what of those scores of unemployed who are given the choice to take a 'scab' job or face a cut or even total withdrawal of their income support? Under Tory social security legislation, this is legal and I wonder how many of those people being bussed into Timex every day have been faced with that stark choice.

The reality of unemployed people being

a pool of labour organised by the state through the benefits system to defeat class struggles in the workplace, has implications beyond the Timex dispute which pickets and demonstrators are not addressing by calling other workers 'scabs' indiscriminately.

It is time we recognised everyone not as workers and unemployed, but as potential workers, as it is clear the bosses do, and try to bring every worker into the workers' movement to defeat the inhumanity of the capitalist class and their Tory errand boys. If we do not, we allow the bosses to divide and defeat us.

Practically, this would mean offering a basic rate for every person forced to take 'scab' work or face a cut in benefits. Given that the AEU leaders are more interested in getting their feet under the table of the bosses at Timex, rather than getting the mud of the picket line on them, it is clear that such action would have to be organised at grassroots level, by subscription and donation.

In the 1990s the workers' movement must not only talk about solidarity, it must provide a framework to bring us all together for this to happen.

Paul Gostelow *Glasgow*

## Incorrect PC

Marc Deith (letters, June)—let me make one thing clear. Political correctness (PC) is not the way to 'genuine democracy'.

Simply challenging the way people speak (as Deith would want) hardly challenges oppression. In fact it's bordering on 'let's be nice to black people'. PC actually divides and weakens the very people who can bring about a 'genuine democracy', namely the working class.

Once PC gives oppressed people special names, (black people should now be called 'people of colour'), where does it end? Now everyone lays claim to differing histories and identities. This celebration of difference disarms the working class by division (which is good for the establishment), and never politically challenges the system.

Steve Hodson *West London*

## We welcome readers' views and criticisms.

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





PHOTO: THE GUARDIAN

# Turning back the clock?

The Timex dispute in Dundee is a sign of changed times, not a return to the seventies, says Angus Kane

**W**hen management at the American-owned Timex factory in Dundee locked out 343 workers and bussed in scabs, the left glimpsed a return to its golden age of the mass picket line confrontations of the 1970s. But Timex workers face a modern multinational employer pursuing the methods of the 1990s—they need a response to match.

On 3 June Jimmy Airlic, senior Scottish official of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, explained the latest management offer to a mass meeting of Timex strikers. The deal included a 27 per cent cut in pay, a two-year wage freeze, cuts in bonuses and company pension contributions, lower sick pay, the scrapping of canteen subsidies and a chance to return to work subject to a skill assessment—or a redundancy payment of £500. The meeting lasted little over half an hour as the package was unanimously and derisively rejected.

## Bitter exchanges

The workers, some of whom have worked at the factory for 20 or 30 years, returned to the picket line which they have maintained with spirit and determination since they were locked out on 15 February. Under the influence of trade union officials and the left, the dispute has adopted the time-honoured pattern of bitter exchanges across the picket line, periodic mass pickets, demonstrations and rallies.

On 17 May Arthur Scargill addressed a rally outside the plant and 38 protestors were arrested in scuffles with the police. Scargill's presence revived images of the 1972 miners' strike when

he led the Yorkshire miners to a mass picket that closed the Saltley coke depot in the Midlands. It also recalled the mass pickets outside the Grunwick film processing laboratory in north London in 1977, when Yorkshire miners demonstrated in solidarity with a workforce made up predominantly of Asian women.

Parallels with the 1970s however tend to obscure two distinctive features of the Timex dispute—the combativeness of the employers and the spineless collaboration of the union officials. At each stage of the dispute, Timex management have raised the stakes and gone for victory. By contrast, senior union officials have behaved as a sort of cross between redundancy consultants and police informers.

At the outset of the dispute management proposed laying off half the workforce, claiming a fall in demand. The union's response was to suggest rotating the lay-offs among the workers. Encouraged by this conciliatory response, Timex insisted that they should choose who to lay off. When workers voted to strike, management broadened the redundancy package to include a wage freeze and cuts in benefits. When workers agreed to accept the lay-offs 'under protest', rather than these terms, they were locked out *en masse* and scab labour was brought in.

Union leaders made no attempt to mobilise wider sympathy and solidarity action, instead engaging in eight sets of talks with the employers. These culminated in them agreeing to present their members with the punitive 3 June package. At the same time, officials in the Scottish TUC have collaborated openly with the police to contain the scale of mass pickets. Union leaders

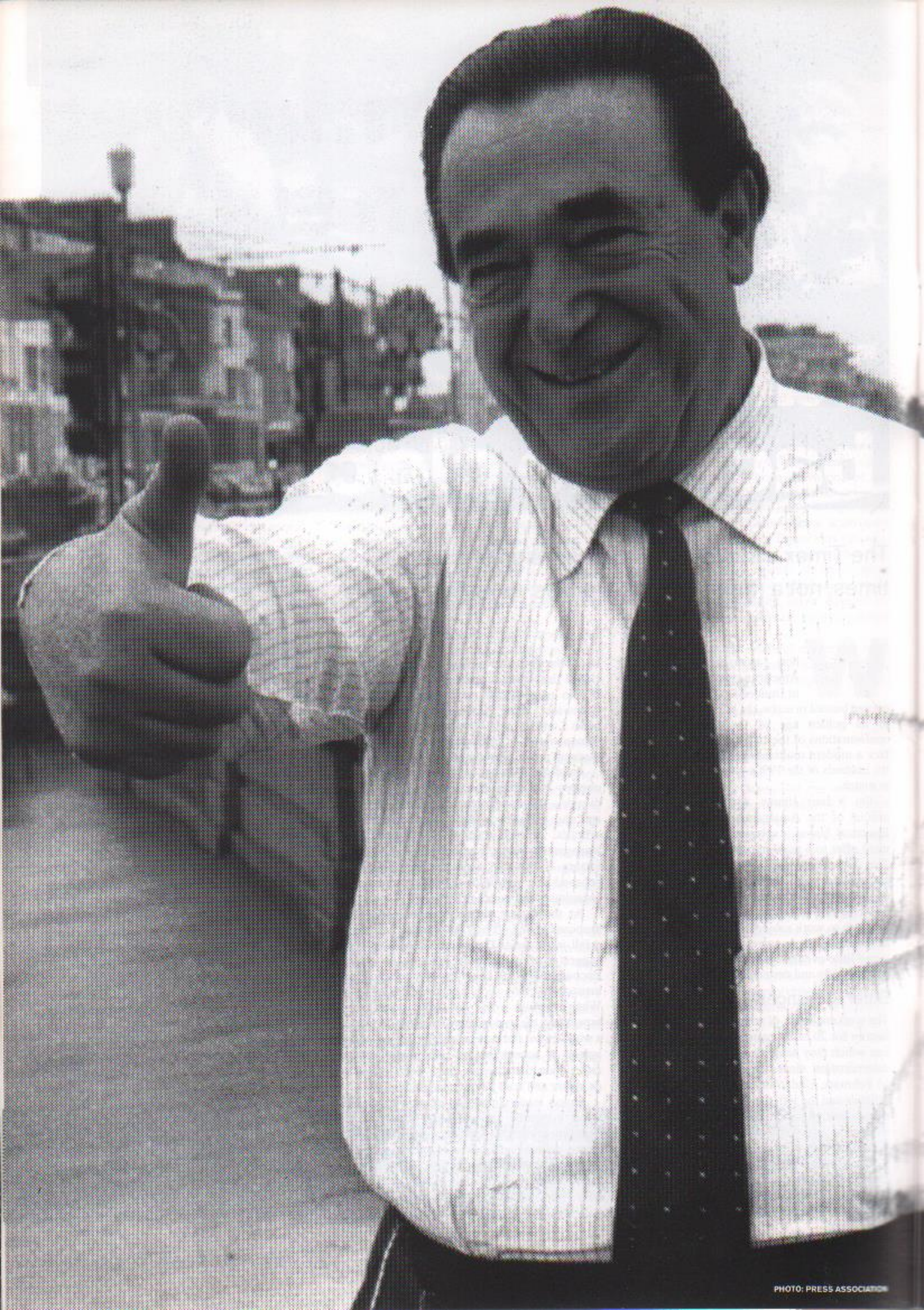
have encouraged the police to stop and search coaches bringing supporters to the picket line, ensuring that they were delayed until after the scab workers were safely inside the plant. When the police have attacked the pickets, the union leaders have readily condemned 'outside agitators' for fomenting violence.

In the past, union officials often acted as a bureaucratic barrier to the organisation of effective industrial action. But their attitude towards the Timex dispute suggests that we are now dealing with something even worse. When the officials appear to spend all of their time trying to persuade workers to accept cuts packages and helping to police picket lines, it is legitimate to ask by what criteria these organisations can any longer be called trade unions.

## No nostalgia

After five months on the picket line, Timex workers need to find a way to raise the stakes against management if they are to regain the initiative. Token mass pickets and demonstrations, with some ritual shoving and pushing, can only provide a training exercise for the police; it is not an effective way of putting pressure on the company. While it is important to keep up pressure on the scab workforce, it is necessary to devise more effective sanctions against the company, focusing on its retail operations, in Britain and abroad.

To defend jobs against ruthless employers like Timex, encouraged by more than a decade of anti-union laws and setbacks to workplace organisation and militancy, it will be necessary to break out of the straitjacket of the past and work out new forms of action and solidarity. Instead of indulging in nostalgia for a labour movement that no longer exists, we need to create new networks of activists around new strategies for action which can put workers' interests first and make no concessions to the employers and their stooges in the unions. ●



# Pensioners mugged by men in suits

When Robert Maxwell was found to have fiddled the Mirror Group pension fund, he was posthumously branded a robber baron. Yet Maxwell seems to have been something of a model for many other employers who are interfering with our pension funds and getting away with it. Andrew Calcutt reports

**'Y**our pension is safe with me', intoned the voice of Robert Maxwell in a Mirror Group in-house video in 1988. A month after his mysterious death on 5 November 1991, it emerged that £450m had been siphoned out of the pension funds of various companies in the Maxwell empire. More than 18 months later, 20 000 Maxwell pensioners are still in doubt as to whether their payments will continue. Employees and former employees under retirement age are equally unsure of their position.

'Pensions were supposed to be gilt-edged security', says Ivy Needham, a 67-year old partially blind widow and former canteen manager from Leeds. 'Now it is possible they will not be paid. I am receiving my pension but with great uncertainty, living in fear of a letter saying you'll get it this month but not the next.' She says that the stress of 'living from day to day, not knowing if you can afford a holiday or the mortgage payments' has led to serious, even fatal illness among Maxwell pensioners.

Meanwhile twin sisters Sylvia and Cynthia Hinton have been living on unemployment benefit. They worked at the Maxwell-owned Nuffield Press in Oxford for 38 years before being made redundant in February 1992. Their combined pensions contributions total £60 000 but they do not know if they will receive their pensions when they reach 60 in six years' time.

The Maxwell pension scandal prompted a flurry of parliamentary activity. A government-backed

whip-round in the City raised £6m. But more than £400m is still missing, and Maxwell pensioners continue to face an uncertain future.

There had been previous odd cases of pension fund misuse (Aveling Barford in 1988, the Charmley Davies Group in 1991). But it was the Maxwell scandal that provoked widespread concern. News of Maxwell's theft coincided with a worsening recession. In an already apprehensive atmosphere created by the economic slump, millions of workers and pensioners became fearful that unscrupulous employers might 'do a Maxwell' and abuse their pension funds to make up for a shortfall in company profits.

## 'All dabbling'

Their fears are more than justified. Maverick tycoons are not the only ones hijacking pension funds. Among employers, taking advantage of members' contributions is regarded as sound business practice. As Ivy Needham explained, while they can get away with it, 'they'll all be dabbling'.

Occupational pension schemes have mushroomed since the seventies. British pension fund assets now total £400 billion. More than 11 million employees are paying into schemes covered by the National Association of Pension Funds. Among employees aged 25 to 44, only 20 per cent do not belong to a contributory pension scheme. More than five million people are currently receiving some income from an occupational pension.

A typical pension amounts to 1/60th of the employee's final salary,

multiplied by the number of years worked. A standard contributions arrangement would mean the employee (member) paying five per cent of wages into the pension fund, with the employer contributing twice as much. Pension funds are usually managed by a board of trustees, independent in theory, but almost always company-dominated.

Largely as a result of sky-high investment returns in the eighties, most funds have tended to be in surplus; the money in the fund amounts to more than is required to meet its current liabilities. Fund members argue that pensions are deferred wages and that surplus pension funds should be used for the sole benefit of members. Corporate finance directors, however, have come to view pension funds as 'profit centres' at the disposal of the company.

The practice of dipping into funds is as old as occupational pensions. But in recent years it has been exacerbated by the slump. There are examples to be found in every sector of business.

## £1m for them

Irregularities in the management of the Lewis' Group pension scheme have eroded a £12m surplus to the point where payment of pensions is now in doubt. When Qa Business Services collapsed in September 1991, the pension fund was found to be insufficient to cover liabilities. Three executives had taken early retirement payments totalling £1m; meanwhile 130 employees lost two-thirds of their pension entitlement.

Belling, the cooker manufacturers, went into liquidation in March 1992. A year earlier, £2.1m was paid from the fund to the company to secure a refinancing scheme which was never implemented. Belling also sold one of its own subsidiaries to the pension fund for £5.5m—a back-door device for raising cash known as 'self-investment'. The independent trustee appointed by the receiver is charging £250 an hour to sort out the mess.

Self-investment at a shoe firm, Burlington, stripped the fund of £7.7m before the company went into receivership in 1992. CTU, a London-based engineering services company, went under in 1991 after ►



diverting £250 000 of pension contributions into the business. Like the Maxwell pensioners, 60 former employees face an uncertain future.

In an article entitled 'Keep a sharp eye on your pension', *Sunday Times* financial journalist Barbara Ellis concludes that 'there is increasing evidence of pension money missing from companies that have collapsed in

## The law says the fund is there for management to play with

the wake of the recession. A disturbing pattern is emerging of pension payments being—at best—delayed as businesses tried desperately to stay alive'.

Bankrupting the pension fund along with the company is frowned upon in the City. But as long as the firm stays afloat, and pension entitlements continue to be met, the law says the fund is there for management to play with. Anything goes, including complete disregard of the original terms of agreement between employees and their employer.

When pension funds are in surplus, companies regularly award themselves a refund. To them, the only disadvantage is that tax is payable at 40 per cent.

### Bossman's holiday

In April, Courtaulds announced it was to recover £83m surplus from the pension fund. Lucas Industries pensioners issued a writ for the return of £150m transferred from their fund to the company in November 1991. Self-investment helped to create a £30m deficit in the Courage pension fund. Portals Group took £7.5m from its fund, despite the fact that the trust deed said that surplus monies should only be used to increase reserves, reduce contributions, or increase benefits. The proposal for a refund was notified to the trustees only after the publication of the accounts. Contributors to the Express Newspapers fund were concerned about a £25m fall in surplus. When they protested in 1990 they learned they had been relegated from member to beneficiary status in 1988.

While employees carry on paying in, employers can take a contributions holiday whenever the fund is in surplus. British Telecom enjoyed a contributions holiday from 1988 to March 1993. The company recently began contributing again, but only after it had spent £800m of a £913m surplus

on last year's mass redundancy package, Release '92. London Regional Transport has been criticised by a high court judge for cutting its contributions by £93m.

Combined Actuarial Performance Surveys indicated that only 30 per cent of pension funds had a positive cash flow in 1991. The *Guardian* reported that 'employers have taken more than £1 billion out of UK pension funds in the last seven years'. In addition, the 1992 National Association of Pension Funds survey showed that more than half of British employers are using fund surpluses to reduce or eliminate their contributions. 'Financial directors have become addicted to pension fund holidays', says Bryn Davies, actuary and author of the Institute of Public Policy Research report on fund ownership and control.

Other scams include using privatisation or takeover as an opportunity to scrap existing pension schemes and set up an inferior version (Travellers' Fare, City Link, Cleveland Guest Engineering, TI-Dowty Engineering, various privatised bus companies and electricity producers). Some companies do not need an excuse. National Westminster Bank recently closed their existing pension scheme to new members. There is a replacement, but new employees must wait five years to join it. Standard Chartered announced that with effect from 1 June 1992, employees joining the bank's permanent staff will not be allowed to become members of the pension fund until they reach the age of 25.

Some employers (APV Food Engineering, Appledore Shipyard, Portals Group) have pre-empted the government's deliberations on raising the retirement age for women. Female employees who expected to retire aged 60 on a full company pension must now work another five years or face a reduction in their pension entitlement of up to 25 per cent.

### 'Good eggs'

In the wake of the recession, many smaller companies are ripping up traditional final salary schemes, in which the employer is expected to cover any deficit, and replacing them with money purchase schemes, in which the employer's contribution is fixed and the employees' contributions must increase to make up a shortfall. Money purchase pensions are not inflation-proof and the members' final entitlement depends on the success or failure of the fund's investment managers.

The furore over Maxwell led to the setting up of the Pension Law Review Committee, headed by Professor Roy Goode and due to report on 30 September 1993. The National

Association of Pension Funds submitted evidence to the inquiry. It called for a compensation scheme but believes that the existing trustee system is basically sound, although 'it does rely on all the trustees being "good eggs"'. The union-backed Campaign for Pension Fund Democracy has argued for a majority of trustees to be elected from the workforce, but union officials are resigned to 'not getting anything like what we want'.

Almost everyone is appealing to the Tory government to prevent pension fund rip-offs. But cabinet ministers have an appetite for pension contributions which makes Maxwell look anorexic.

After a contributions holiday, British Coal owes the white collar staff superannuation scheme £481m. But the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry have instructed British Coal to make up that difference by diverting £471m out of the pension fund surplus. The £471m refund is roughly equivalent to the £500m temporary pit subsidy recommended by the house of commons trade and industry select committee.

### What's the difference?

Trustees from the National Union of Mineworkers are taking legal action to demand repayment of £800m to the mineworkers' pension fund (the cost of another BC contributions holiday). Union president Arthur Scargill said in *The Miner*: 'there is little difference in principle between this method of withholding money, or creaming off surpluses, and the plundering in which Robert Maxwell was involved.' Getting its hands on the pension funds is one reason why the government wants to privatise the coal industry. In his column in *Pensions World*, Anthony Hilton, managing editor of the *London Evening Standard*, wrote: 'I expect the government to take over the fund and use the £13 billion assets to help meet the budget deficit.'

In March, transport secretary John MacGregor withdrew plans to take funds from the £8 billion British Rail pension fund and use them to reduce the government's public sector borrowing requirement by £4 billion. However, similar plans are likely to be implemented when the railways are privatised. The Post Office pension fund may also be plundered.

'What's the difference between Robert Maxwell and the government?' asks a retired miner from *Amberley* in the *Nottinghamshire Coalfield*: 'The difference is that the government won't be getting a visit from the fraud squad.'

Additional reporting by Ian Thorne, Andrew Morrison and Hilary Cox



# Sterile debate

**H**ealth ministers must have thought it was their birthday and Christmas come at once when mother-of-sextuplets Jean Gibbons was discovered to be a single mum.

Two weeks earlier health ministers had been pilloried by every infertility specialist within reach of a TV studio. Support groups and campaigning organisations had used National Fertility Week to expose the diabolical provision of infertility services in the UK. In France women are entitled to four state-funded cycles of IVF (*in vitro* fertilisation) as a right, plus another two at the discretion of their consultant. Here, women across much of the nation (including London) have no access to NHS provision at all. The infertile have to shell out around £1800 a go for IVF with only a slim chance of it working.

A national disgrace. Politicians said it. Doctors said it. Psychotherapists said it. Articulate women were paraded to explain the agonies of childlessness. One specialist got so carried away he declared that infertility provision was more important than cancer treatment. It takes all sorts...

But within two weeks the birth of the Leeds sextuplets had changed everything. The worm had turned, problems of getting infertility treatment were forgotten and everybody was attacking doctors for rashly providing IVF with no thought to the consequences.

Why the change of heart? The plight of nicely spoken, educated, middle class but barren couples talking of their longing for a child tugs at the heart strings. After all they have so much to give. On the other hand, the birth of six infants to Jan Vince and Jean Gibbons, a working class, unmarried, pair of divorcees who don't even live together raises different issues entirely.

When the media and political circus discussed the Leeds sextuplets the issue was not one of how much did the parents have to give—but how much were they trying to take. They were pilloried for having an agent with a brief to sell their story to a national newspaper and they were castigated for the amount that it would cost the state to raise their six children. The health correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* calculated that Jean Gibbons would receive 'at least £45 000 in benefit over the next 16 years'.

There was not just the cost to the nation to be considered, but the emotional cost to the children of being born to such inadequate and unconventional parents.

Tom Sackville strutted on the stage to threaten new guidelines if there was widespread evidence that people 'without a stable family background' were receiving infertility treatment on the NHS. And the very consultants who two weeks earlier had pleaded for more resources now lined up to insist that they really did very, very little infertility work at all. And when they did it was only after vetting couples very closely. Health authorities competed to look the toughest at screening 'unsuitables'. The head of the IVF unit at St Mary's Hospital, Manchester bragged that his hospital only treated childless

heterosexual couples who had been in a stable relationship for three years. West Essex Health Authority topped that with four years.

The Leeds sextuplet case should have served as an example of what National Fertility Week had tried to illustrate earlier in the month: the inadequacy of the service. Champion of the infertile, Professor Robert Winston shone as the one light of common sense when he insisted that to use the Leeds case as an illustration of an abuse of the system was bizarre. Regardless of the parents' marital status, the very creation of sextuplets was a disaster for everybody concerned.

You can bet your sweet life that given the choice Jean Gibbons would rather have conceived one child than half a dozen. It was a disaster which could only have happened because of the primitive way in which services are managed in many hospitals. With proper monitoring the treatment she was undergoing would have temporarily halted when it became clear she was at risk of a multiple pregnancy. But as Winston explained to a largely uncomprehending press, 'In the NHS doctors work with grossly limited and inadequate resources. Short cuts have to be taken'.

Instead of being highlighted as an argument for a better health service, Jean Gibbons' case was widely used to reinforce the point that NHS resources should only be available to the 'deserving', defined as those who not only have an illness which by general consensus requires treatment, but also a way of life considered worthy of public support.

## The Leeds sextuplets were used to argue that NHS resources should go to the 'deserving'

When Tim Yeo MP declared that 'there are serious questions about why such treatment should be provided to a woman who is not married', the only objections were to his use of the adjective 'married'. Nobody seemed to question the fact that the medical profession and by proxy the government should have the right to impose moral criteria for assessing who should and should not have access to NHS resources. Game, set and match to the government.

Once this principle is established all kinds of provision can be denied on the basis that the recipients are not deserving. There are already doctors who give smokers lower priority than non-smokers because they have contributed to their illness. How long before we have to lose weight, swim every day, and be married and monogamous for 10 years in order to sign on with a doctor? On what criteria will doctors decide who is deserving of Hormone Replacement Therapy, hip replacements or heart by-passes?

The government's economic problems mean that public spending is being squeezed hard. By introducing a discussion about who does and doesn't deserve the limited resources available, the authorities pose the provision of care as a moral problem of who deserves it—rather than a discussion of why the resources are not available to all. We should have none of it. Jan Vince and Jean Gibbons should be entitled to infertility treatment without the humiliation of being vetted to make sure their lifestyle is suitable. Doctors should be doctors not vets. ●

By creating a United Nations war crimes tribunal, says Sharon Clarke, Western governments are putting the rest of the world in the dock

**W**hat better than a war crimes tribunal to demonstrate the West's right to sit in judgement on the rest of the world?

The United Nations Security Council has decided to set up an international tribunal to try those accused of war crimes in Yugoslavia. It is the first attempt to prosecute alleged war criminals since the Nazis were put in the dock at Nuremberg.

Those who complain that nothing will come of it, because there are too many legal and political complications, miss the point. It doesn't matter if the 11 Western-appointed judges never convict anybody. That the court exists, and is internationally recognised as legitimate, will be sufficient for the purposes of the Western powers. It will confirm their moral authority around the globe.

When it comes into operation in September, the war crimes tribunal is due to concentrate on the civil war in Yugoslavia. But there is already talk of widening its remit to cover crimes committed by African warlords, Iraqi generals and others. Soon Western-appointed judges could be prying into the affairs of every third world state and passing judgement on their peoples.

The assumption behind the West's war crimes initiative is that the source of violence and barbarism is to be found over there—in the East and the third world. By comparison, the great and the good over here are assumed to have clean hands, and be qualified to decide the fate of the guilty.

### The accused

What the war crimes discussion means is that some of the poorest and most powerless peoples on Earth are being blamed for causing war and oppression around the world, while the wealthy and powerful in the West are absolved of all guilt. 'They' are held responsible for the crimes; 'we' are responsible for meting out the punishment.

What is a war crime anyway? The term has now been accepted into the everyday language of international politics. Yet closer inspection suggests that there is really no such thing as a war crime. The notion of war crimes and war criminals is an ideological construction, used to brand those of whom the Western powers disapprove—and, by implication, to boost the moral credentials of the West itself.

# Why they love a good

The discussion of war criminals assumes that atrocities are committed by a few particularly evil men with a propensity to behave like barbarians. The implication of singling out war criminals in this way is that other combatants act like gentlemen during a war, and are guilty of nothing. In reality, war creates an environment in which all are brutalised. Atrocities are committed on all sides of every conflict. In war, anybody can become capable of doing things which were unthinkable beforehand; but some have a lot more power than others with which to do it.

The strange thing is, however, that massacres are not called war crimes when they are carried out by those with the most power to commit atrocities—the forces of the USA, Britain or their allies. Since the Nazi trials at the end of the Second World War, there has been no mention of war crimes: not when the Americans slaughtered an estimated four million people during the war in Vietnam and Cambodia; nor when the British conducted massacres while putting down anti-colonial rebellions in Kenya, Aden and Malaya; nor when British paratroopers shot dead 14 Irish civilians on Bloody Sunday; nor when the French tortured and killed Algerians who resisted their rule; nor, most recently, when the US-led alliance killed perhaps 200 000 Iraqis in the Gulf War, using everything from napalm to fuel-air explosives which suck the oxygen out of the lungs.

Of course, there have been occasions in the past when US or British forces were accused of going too far. But the inquiries and commissions reluctantly set up in response have not been declared as grandiose international tribunals, and have never suggested that the accused be considered war criminals. Indeed the common concern has been to play down the importance of these incidents,

and to let those responsible off as lightly as possible.

The classic colonial example came in April 1919, when British Brigadier-General REH Dyer sought to teach rebellious natives a lesson by ordering his troops to fire unprovoked on a crowd of thousands in the Indian city of Amritsar. A fusillade of 1650 rounds left, according to official figures, 379 dead and hundreds more maimed. The Amritsar massacre created unrest across India. The British imperial authorities responded by imposing martial law, and setting up an inquiry into the killings. A year later the Hunter Committee reported; it whitewashed the massacre, suggesting only that Dyer be 'severely censured'. The House of Lords then condoned Dyer's actions, and a group of Empire loyalists presented him with a sword and a purse of £20 000.

### Four hours

The modern American equivalent of Amritsar was probably the My Lai massacre of 1968, when US troops wiped out an entire Vietnamese village in four hours. The details of the massacre remained a US army secret for 18 months, until they were revealed by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh in the *New York Times* in November 1969. Lieutenant William Calley was then tried—by the army's internal court martial—on charges of killing at least 109 'Oriental human beings', one of them two years old. In 1971 Calley was sentenced to life with hard labour. He appealed, and the sentence was reduced to 20 years. He appealed again, and it became 10 years. He appealed once more, and was released in 1975. On the personal orders of president Nixon, Calley served his sentence under 'house arrest', in his army apartment. He did not spend one day in prison. Dyer, Calley and many other Western commanders whose massacres are well documented have never been



# war crime

parties and institutions of the West are all facing crises of legitimacy.

In 1993, no political party can excite public support, and no established institution commands much respect. The British monarchy is up to its neck in scandal, leading Italian politicians are all accused of belonging to the mafia, president Bill Clinton's honeymoon period proved shorter than Bill Wyman's...in different ways, the pattern is repeated across the West. The combination of economic slump and political exhaustion has thrown the governmental systems of Europe and the USA into disarray.

Against that background, it is not hard to see why the Western elites are so keen to criminalise and condemn people in other parts of the world, to find an external focus through which to demonstrate their authority. Branding the East or the third world as a threat to civilised values is a backhanded way of advertising the comparative virtues of Western capitalism.

## Fix bayonets

This is the significance of the UN decision to set up a war crimes tribunal. It institutionalises the distinction between a morally superior West and the inferior peoples of the rest of the world. By condemning selected foreigners as war criminals in this way, the Western authorities seek to get themselves off the hook at home. In effect they are saying, 'Look, whatever you might think of our system, just thank God that you don't have to contend with these barbarians'. The global scourge of war, for which the Western powers are primarily responsible, is twisted into an argument for the defence of their authority.

In 1982, when British troops recaptured the Falkland Islands from Argentina, they were hailed as old-fashioned heroes who had gallantly 'yomped' their way to victory. A decade later, evidence has finally surfaced that British paratroopers bayoneted and shot Argentine prisoners of war. Scotland Yard has reluctantly been prodded into investigating. But even if any Paras were to be charged, we can be sure that they will not end up in the UN tribunal dock with the Serbs and the rest.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Tory chairman of the commons defence committee, recently made clear that, regardless of the facts about the bloodshed in the South Atlantic, British squaddies never, never, never shall be war criminals. 'I think it is an insult to them', he declared, 'to suggest that we committed war crimes'. In other words, it is not necessarily a war crime to bayonet an unarmed prisoner. It all depends who is on either end of the bayonet. ●

considered war criminals or paraded in chains before the world. Yet unknown Serbian, Croatian and third world soldiers, with only a fraction of the destructive firepower at the disposal of the West, have already been found guilty of war crimes by the Western media before the tribunal is even set up. Clearly the category 'war crime' has nothing to do with the numbers killed or the circumstances in which

they died. It is a political label, invented by the Western allies to be stuck on to foreigners as they see fit.

The capitalist powers love a good war crime story from Yugoslavia or Somalia because it makes the West look morally superior, and lends legitimacy to its self-image as the force for civilisation on Earth. That is a particularly valuable political asset for them today, when the governing



# How the West has won

Everybody seems to think that the West has failed in Bosnia. In fact it has achieved an important victory at the expense of all the peoples of Yugoslavia, argues Joan Phillips

**C**ritics have lambasted the Western powers for their lack of moral fibre over Bosnia. By signing the Washington agreement, which provides for the creation of safe havens for the Muslims in Bosnia, the USA, Britain, France and

Italy signalled that they did not intend to defend the integrity of Bosnia. According to their critics, this was an act of betrayal against a small state as bad as that at Munich, when Neville Chamberlain acquiesced to the Nazi carve-up of Czechoslovakia in 1938.

On both occasions, suggested Noel Malcolm in the *Sunday Telegraph*, appeasement led to a loss of imperial standing: 'When Mussolini heard of Neville Chamberlain's decision to kowtow to Hitler at Munich, he remarked: "This is the liquidation of English prestige." The same could be said today of the prestige and authority of the United States and Western Europe.' (30 May 1993)

Far from being enfeebled by its intervention in Yugoslavia, however, the West has been strengthened. What appears to many to have been

an embarrassing failure is in fact a political success.

Of course, individual politicians have not come out of the diplomatic circus looking very good. Bill Clinton can no longer claim consistency as a virtue, after US policy on Bosnia changed as fast as Italian governments. First there was the Vance-Owen plan, which the administration rejected, then supported, then rejected again. Then there was the proposal for safe havens: on 21 May, Clinton was warning against safe havens; a day later this was US policy.

Clinton may look like an idiot, but there are bigger things at stake than the personal standing of individual politicians. The moral standing of the West is what matters more than the popularity ratings of a US president.





(Above)  
Serb soldiers:  
apes,  
barbarians,  
communists,  
fascists,  
rapists or  
psychopaths?

The critics of Western policy in Yugoslavia say that the West has lost its moral authority. In fact, the opposite is true. Many people may be critical of what the West has done or not done in Yugoslavia, but nobody questions the West's *right* to be involved there in the first place. In fact the predominant criticism of the West is that it is not doing enough in Yugoslavia.

The Western authorities have won because most people now believe that they are a civilising force in the Balkans. Everybody accepts that it is the right and the responsibility of the Western powers to sort things out in Yugoslavia. Indeed the West is seen as having a moral duty to intervene and impose a solution.

### White 'wogs'

Even the most liberal supporters of intervention accept that the West has a civilising mission in Yugoslavia. When you strip away all the sugary coating about humanitarianism from the arguments for intervention, what you are left with is the old colonial condescension for the natives. The fact that even erstwhile radicals now share this outlook reveals the extent to which Western imperialism has been rehabilitated as a progressive force.

Implicit in many of the discussions of the war in Yugoslavia, and sometimes explicit, is the assumption that the people living there are 'wogs'. Although usually disguised by diplomatic language, racist explanations for the war in Yugoslavia are commonplace. We are constantly told that these people are fired by hatreds that go back centuries, and that is why they are fighting today. It would appear that people born in the Balkans must be genetically programmed to slit each other's throats.

### Barbarians

The Serbs have been singled out as the most barbaric, bloodthirsty and Balkan of all the warring 'tribes' in Yugoslavia. But the underlying assumption is that they are simply the worst of a bad lot. There is an increasing tendency to depict all the warring parties in Bosnia as uncivilised barbarians. In June, a few minor incidents set off a major discussion about 'gangs' of unruly militiamen roaming the mountains of Bosnia and looting Western aid convoys. Perhaps they were the same 'gangs' that used to go round looting food aid in Somalia. The effect of such discussions is to suggest that these are dark and dangerous places which need to be subjected to the civilising influence of the West.

The message behind the debate about intervention is that people in the Balkans are incapable of running their own affairs in a civilised fashion. The

implication is that racial differences are at the root of the problem: that these are less advanced peoples, who need to be guided by the superior wisdom of the mature nations.

In one form or another, this view is endorsed by both liberal supporters and conservative opponents of Western military intervention in Bosnia. The interventionists believe that the Yugoslavs are incapable of sorting out their own problems and that the West must intervene to separate the warring factions. The anti-interventionists also believe that the Yugoslavs are incapable of behaving in a civilised fashion, but draw the conclusion that the West should avoid getting sucked into the Balkan savagery. The fact that both sides share the same assumptions about Western superiority and Eastern inferiority reveals that the Western powers have won the moral argument.

Those who claim that the West has suffered a moral defeat because it has not backed up its threats with military action miss the point. Their mistake is to believe that the West intervened in Yugoslavia for principled reasons, because it supports independence for Bosnia or because it believes in human rights.

### Power games

That was never what Western intervention was about. The Western powers have used the conflict in Yugoslavia for their own selfish ends. They really could not care less about the fate of any of the peoples in the Balkans. Western politicians are hard-nosed pragmatists who act out of self-interest and nothing more. It would be a big mistake to think that they were guided by any principle in their attitude towards the various protagonists in Yugoslavia.

For example, the Western powers never had anything against the Serbs ideologically. Likewise, they never had any real sympathy for the Croats or Muslims. When they took sides, it was only because it suited their own strategic purposes. The truth is that all sides in the Yugoslav conflict have been used as pawns in a Great Power game. And all of them have paid a high price.

### Serb demons

It was an accident of history that the Serbs were singled out as the guilty party in Yugoslavia. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time. When Germany decided to use the secession of Slovenia and Croatia as the issue over which to stamp its authority on Europe, it was inevitable that support for the secessionists would have to be justified at the expense of the Serbs.

Germany first presented the conflict in strong moral and ideological terms, as one between civilisation and barbarism. But it suited the purposes

of an awful lot of Western politicians to go along with the idea that the Serbs were the incarnation of evil. For politicians down on their luck at home, and missing the Cold War bogey of the Red Menace, bashing the Serbs became a way of bolstering their authority on the world stage.

In order to satisfy the ambitions of power-hungry Western politicians, the Serbs were turned into a pariah people. In one of the most defamatory media campaigns of history, they were vilified as apes, barbarians, communists, fascists, rapists and psychopaths. As *Living Marxism* pointed out a year ago, the Serbs have been turned into the 'white niggers' of the New World Order, cast out of every major world body and brought to their knees by sanctions.

### High price

Even those whom the West is supposed to support in Yugoslavia have been used and abused with consummate cynicism. The Muslims of Bosnia, who were promised everything they wanted by the West, are the biggest losers. The Western powers invited the Muslims to apply for independence in December 1991. Led by the USA, they then recognised Bosnia as an independent state, ignoring the wishes of the substantial Bosnian Serb population, who wanted to remain in Yugoslavia. Having encouraged the Muslims to go all the way, the West then abandoned them to their fate. Having been promised the Earth, or Bosnia anyway, the Muslims have ended up with a few scraps of land, which go under the euphemism of safe havens.

On the face of it, the Croats have probably fared better than anybody else. They have won their independence, as well as new territories in Herzegovina. But they too have paid a high price for the Western-sponsored break-up of Yugoslavia. They have lost many lives, and, although they may not know it yet, they have no basis for a viable existence as an independent state.

The Albanians of Kosovo will no doubt be the next to pay the price for the West's cynical manipulation of the situation in Yugoslavia. Western politicians are now issuing dire threats about what will happen to the Serbs if they do anything against the Albanians in Kosovo. The Serbs have been oppressing the Albanians in Kosovo for considerably longer than a few months; but it was never before a cause for concern in the chancelleries of the West. Yet now that bashing the Serbs has become a way to prove how big and tough you are, Western politicians who probably don't even know where Kosovo is, are falling over themselves to find human rights abuses there. ●

A fascist bookshop is not the cause of racist murders in south-east London, and calling on the authorities to close it is certainly no solution, says Kate Lawrence

**O**n 22 April a young black man, Stephen Lawrence, was murdered by racists in south-east London. It was the fourth racial killing in the area in two years, and it sparked a tide of anger from the black community.

However, since violence broke out at a demonstration called by two Militant-backed groups, Youth against Racism in Europe (YRE) and Panther UK, anger over Lawrence's death has been displaced by a bitter row between rival anti-racist groups.

In the wake of Lawrence's murder, three different groups have called demonstrations in the area. Militant's march was followed by a demonstration called by the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), reformed two years ago by the Socialist Workers Party. The Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA), made up of members of the Labour Party and officials from trade unions and local government, has also called protests.

The row between these groups erupted after Militant's march ended in violence, when a handful of protesters escaped the attentions of Militant stewards and attacked a British National Party (BNP) bookshop in the area where the racist murders have taken place. Immediately Marc Wadsworth of the Anti-Racist Alliance accused the 'white left' of stirring up trouble. 'Their actions', Wadsworth told the *Independent*, 'led to black youths being beaten and arrested by the police' (10 May 1993).

### Political ends

At the heart of Wadsworth's attack lay the accusation that the 'white left' was using the death of Stephen Lawrence for its own political ends. 'The justifiable anger of the youth who attended the demonstration... was exploited by the organisers', he wrote in a letter to the *Guardian* (18 May 1993). In case anybody thought that ARA might be hoping to use Lawrence's death for its own political ends, Wadsworth carefully pointed out in his letter that the ARA campaign 'has been guided by respect for the wishes of Stephen Lawrence's

family who...publicly disassociated themselves from the destructive demonstration on Saturday 8 May'.

Wadsworth's attack on the 'white left' was rather ironic given that he is a longstanding member of the Labour Party—more white and with a worse record on race than any left group. In fact, ARA's primary motive in the row had little to do with politics. It was concerned that the violence which followed the Militant march should not be allowed to upset its own attempts to become the official voice of the black community, with special negotiating rights with local authorities and the police.

The message of Wadsworth's attack on ARA's rivals was that these groups have illegitimate political agendas. But the real problem with the Anti-Nazi League and the Militant-led groups is that they share the same dubious brand of politics as the Anti-Racist Alliance. Behind the mud-slinging, ARA, the ANL, Panther UK and Youth against Racism in Europe are all squabbling over who should have the franchise for

problem is the state clampdown on immigration. The recent government moves to impose tougher laws against immigrants and asylum-seekers has created an anti-foreign climate in which racists can feel free to launch attacks like the firebomb murder of five Turkish people in Solingen.

In Britain, where the far right is confined to a handful of boneheads in Bexley and elsewhere, it should be far clearer that it is the British state which poses the most serious threat to black people. The racist climate created by the authorities has ensured that you do not need to support the far right in order to see black people as a problem. Indeed far more racists vote Labour than BNP. The British 'fascist threat' is largely an invention of the left.

The rival anti-fascist campaigns in Britain are not only focusing on the wrong target. They are even asking the authorities which have institutionalised racism to lead the fight against it.

Over the past 25 years some 80 black people have died at the hands of the British police and prison

# Far right

a campaign against the 'fascist threat' in Britain. Whichever set of initials it is fronted by, such a narrow anti-fascist campaign does more harm than good.

The obsession of the left with a handful of fascists is an evasion of the real problem of racism in Britain. All of the campaigns in south-east London have focused on the presence of a BNP bookshop in the area. But south-east London has a long history of racial violence which predates the BNP presence and has nothing to do with any bookshop. This violence derives from racist attitudes which are entrenched in British society.

### Top down

Racist ideas are commonplace in Britain because nationalism is at the heart of mainstream politics. Hostility towards foreigners is institutionalised from the top down, in legislation such as immigration controls which are supported by every major political party in Britain. The message behind the Tories' current Asylum Bill, for example, is that immigrants have no right to British jobs, housing and welfare. The consequence is that black people in Britain are regarded as aliens and seen as a legitimate target for attack.

Even in Germany, where the presence of far-right groups is far more significant than in Britain, the primary

authorities. The police force acts as the front line in the state's silent race war, occupying black inner-city areas in semi-military fashion. Yet ARA, the ANL, Panther UK and YRE appear to think that the authorities will be good enough to defend black people from attack. Each group has called on the local authority to close down the local BNP bookshop. The Anti-Racist Alliance is quite explicit about its willingness to negotiate with the police about how they can play a greater role within areas of racial tension.

### Use a Condon?

Even the Socialist Workers Party, which sponsors the Anti-Nazi League, has resorted to calling on the police force responsible for violence and discrimination against blacks to ignore racism. A recent edition of *Socialist Worker* asks why the police 'hesitate to deal with the neo-Nazi group Combat-18. 'Combat 18's leaders have pictures of Hitler on the front of their "Race War" and "Armed Resistance" headlines', noted the editorial statement: 'Paul Condon, Liverpool police commissioner, says they will tackle the Nazis. So why is it that organising the arrest of Combat 18 leaders?' (15 May 1993).

Raising expectations that the Metropolitan Police could lead anti-racists lends legitimacy to the far-

that has brutalised the black communities of London on a scale which far-right sects can only dream about. Condon the anti-racist was in charge of Notting Hill police in the late eighties when they regularly swamped the area, systematically harassed black youth, and turned the annual street carnival into a massive training exercise for riot police methods. Even if Condon were to do as *Socialist Worker* requested, and arrest every member of the tiny Combat-18, it would do nothing to protect black people from violence and discrimination. But it would do a lot to improve the public image of Scotland Yard.

The demand shared by all the anti-racist groups for the authorities to close down the BNP bookshop in Bexley is equally dangerous. It not only trivialises the fight against racial violence by reducing it to a question of local council by-laws. It also gives the authorities *carte blanche* to decide what political activities are and are not to be considered legitimate. Such powers will

inevitably be used to the detriment of the left. When the ANL followed up the Militant march with its own demonstration calling for the closure of the BNP bookshop in Bexley, the only thing which was banned by the authorities was the route of the march designed to pass by the bookshop.

### Loss of faith

By calling on the police and the authorities to deal with racists, all of the rival campaigns risk arming the official sponsors of British racism with greater authority, while disarming anti-racists with the idea that the fight for black rights can be entrusted to the state.

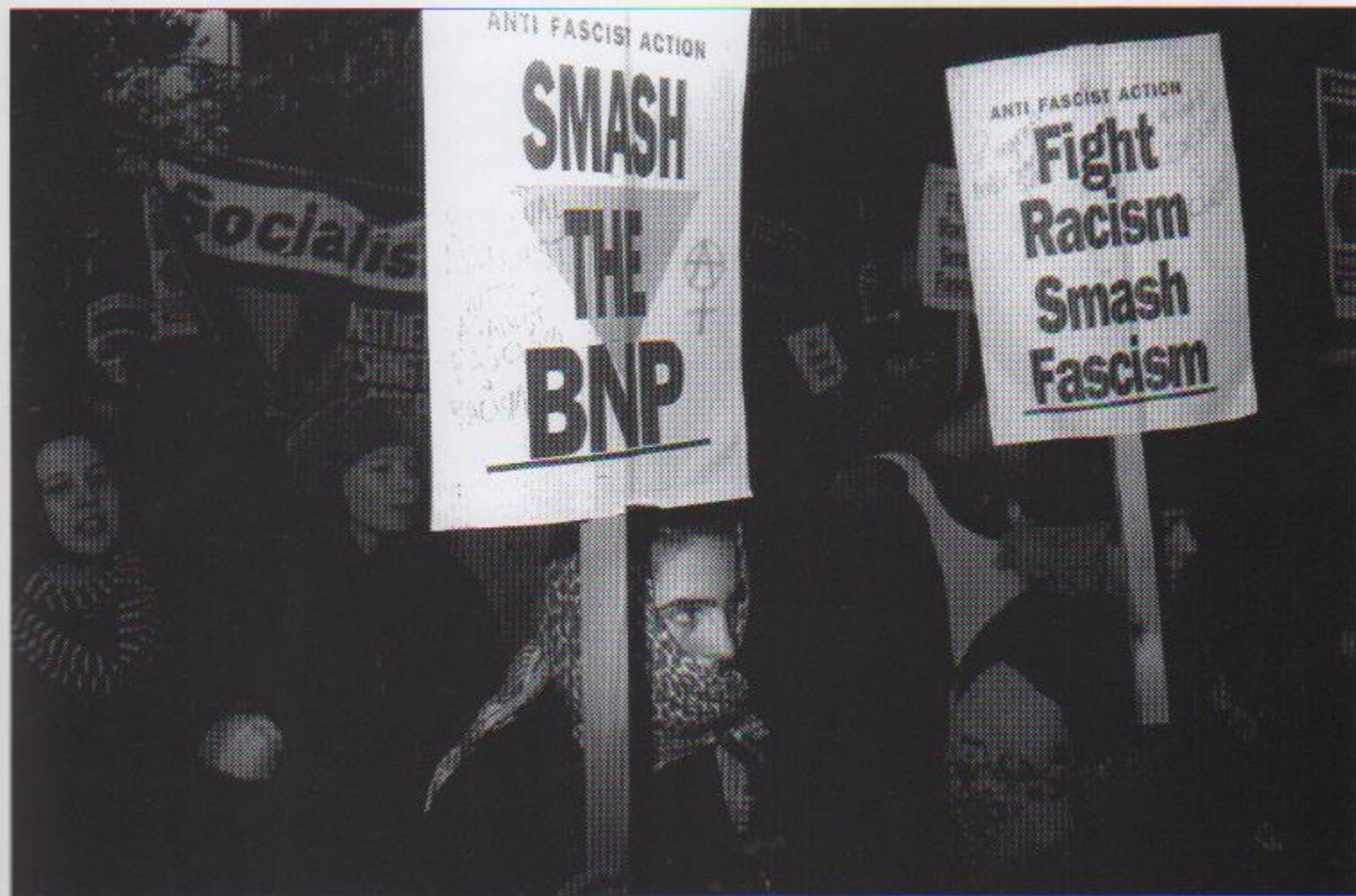
The left's obsession with fascists, and its invitations to the police and the authorities to lock up neo-Nazis and ban their books, can be interpreted as a loss of faith in its own ability to lead a campaign against racism. Rather than risk unpopularity by tackling the difficult task of combating respectable racism in British society, much of the left now appeals to the British tradition

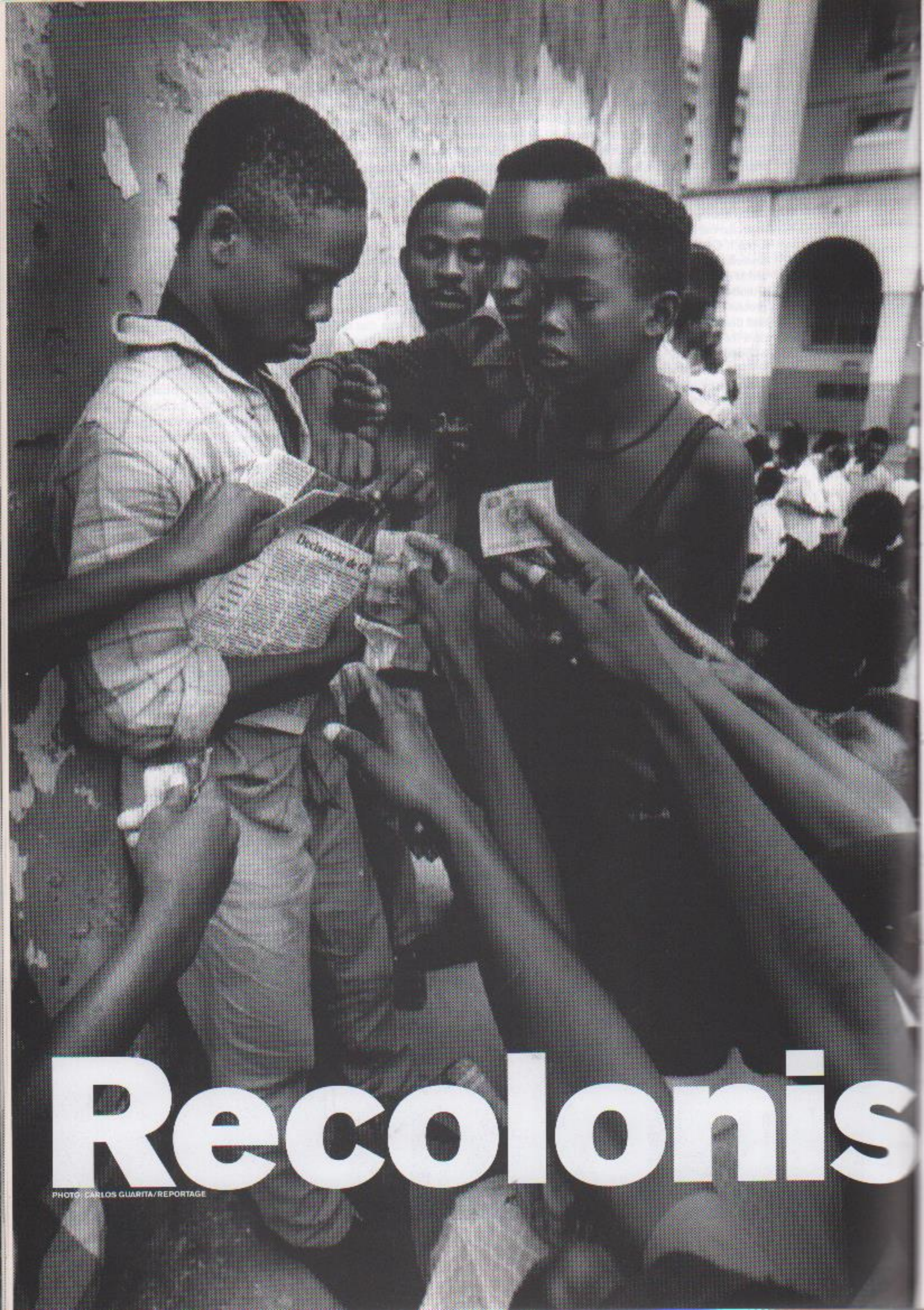
of patriotic anti-fascism, and calls on the authorities to fight the Nazis on the streets of south-east London.

Meanwhile the squabble over which group can or cannot march in Plumstead has set up anti-racists everywhere for an attack on protest as a legitimate form of struggle. In the *Guardian*, leading black conservative Joseph Harker has used the squalid row between ARA, ANL and the Militant-led groups as an argument against demonstrating and activism. Rather than taking to the streets, said Harker, the way forward for blacks is through mainstream political progress and behind the scenes lobbying—in other words keeping their mouths shut. (14 May 1993)

The danger of narrow anti-fascist politics is that it essentially endorses the reactionary consequences of Harker's view. After all, if a handful of fascists is the problem, and Commissioner Condon is the solution, then once the police have rounded them up, what else have we got to complain about?

# and wrong





# Recolonis

PHOTO: CARLOS GUARITA/REPORTAGE

Three years after it began, the crusade for democracy in Africa has turned out to be a political and economic war of reconquest.

Barry Crawford identifies the new ways in which the West is dictating how Africa is governed today. Over the page, Charles Longford reveals how recent US policies have effectively ended Angolan independence

Three years ago, French president François Mitterrand announced his plans to democratise the francophone states of Africa. The policy was dubbed 'Paristroika', and it signalled the start of the West's high-profile crusade for democracy in Africa. Before long, African regimes had all been told by Western governments, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank that their future access to support would be conditional upon them ending corruption and human rights abuses, and changing their constitutions to support multi-party democracy.

The West had never previously shown any interest in democracy in Africa. Until the end of the eighties, the conditions it imposed on African governments were tied in with the Cold War. Those who identified with the Soviet bloc could expect to face economic destabilisation and Western-sponsored subversion. Such was the treatment meted out to Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia from the seventies onwards. On the other hand,

if they identified with the West and anti-communism, African regimes were guaranteed support. So Africa's most corrupt dictators—such as Mobutu, Barre, Moi and Banda—were secured in power. President Mobutu of Zaire assisted Western and South African efforts to subvert Angola. In return, Western bankers had rescheduled the Mobutu regime's debts eight times by 1987—more often than any other country before or since.

### Some clean break

When the Cold War ended, so it seemed did the West's support for Africa's old dictators. In May this year, new US secretary of state Warren Christopher even admitted that, 'during the long Cold War period, policies toward Africa were often determined not by how much they affected Africa, but by what advantage they brought to Washington or Moscow'. Christopher promised a clean break. Henceforth, 'an enduring commitment to democracy and human rights' would be at the heart of America's relations

with Africa. Aid would be allocated accordingly.

The West's initial crusade for democracy in Africa keyed into the wave of revulsion against corrupt dictators which swept the continent after the collapse of Stalinism. That helped to obscure the true interests which were being pursued behind the banner of democracy. The hidden aims of the campaign were to establish the authority of the 'democratic' West over 'uncivilised' Africa, and to force African governments to open up their economies to easier foreign penetration by means of privatisation, deregulation and currency devaluation. The consequence was even more austerity for the peoples of Africa (see 'Africa's sham democracy', *Living Marxism*, September 1992).

Three years on, it has become clear that the most important conditions which the West now insists upon in Africa are not openness and democracy, but obedience and control. If an elected African government can do the West's bidding and maintain a modicum of ►

(Left)  
So much for  
people power:  
Angolans  
fight for  
news of what  
the USA has  
dictated will  
be their future

# ing Africa



stability, all well and good. If it cannot, then Western governments and institutions have proved quick to abandon any notion of democracy. In Zambia, the post-Cold War transition at first went quite smoothly. The incumbent president, Kenneth Kaunda, lost an election to the West's nominee, Frederick Chiluba. But when the price of staple foods rocketed and Chiluba fired thousands of civil servants, public apathy turned to anger. In March, Chiluba declared a state of emergency and arrested opposition leaders. This has not deterred the West from rewarding him with \$850m of aid.

### Unfree and unfair

Elsewhere the sham of democracy has been more cruelly exposed. By terminating all aid to Kenya, for example, the West forced the old president Daniel arap Moi to concede to elections. The anti-Moi ticket wasn't enough to hold the opposition together, however, and the president survived. Although the election was not judged free or fair, the West has resumed ties with Moi, once he met further harsh conditions. When Kenya's first multi-party parliament opened in January, it was promptly suspended. It is a similar tale in Ghana, where opposition groups were so outraged by the electoral irregularities which helped president Jerry Rawlings return to office that they boycotted the subsequent elections to the legislature in May. Rawlings' Ghana remains a favourite of the West in Africa, receiving \$9 billion in loans over the past decade.

Where election results have gone

wrong, the West has shown no qualms about abandoning democracy altogether. When the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) looked set to win Algeria's elections in 1992, the army stepped in and suspended the vote. Western condemnation was conspicuous by its absence. After all, democracy cannot be extended to Islamic fundamentalists.

Where austerity programmes are being implemented relatively smoothly, the West is reluctant to use the 'conditionality' weapon at all. President Yoweri Museveni's Uganda is the kind of one-party state the Western financiers like. He has cut 30 000 civil service jobs and abolished all price subsidies. His National Resistance Council remains Uganda's sole legal political organisation, and he has dismissed multi-party elections as a 'diversion'. With the promise of another \$185m from the World Bank, Museveni can afford to sustain that stance.

### My friend Omar

The new conservative government in France has stripped away the façade of Mitterrand's 'Paristroika' policy to reveal the real content of French intervention in Africa today. Democratisation can mean little when France's new interior minister, Charles Pasqua, refers to old guard dictators like Omar Bongo of Gabon, Paul Biya of Cameroon and Gnassingbé Eyadéma of Togo as personal friends. According to Pasqua, French support for 'my friend Omar' in the forthcoming presidential election is only the beginning: 'We will do the same in Mali, Niger and Congo.'

In this supposed age of democracy, Western governments are also seeking

to dictate African politics through old-fashioned wars of subversion. Liberia was supposed to have held elections in the middle of last year. But America has some way to go before it will allow the Liberian people any say. Most of the country is under the control of rebel leader Charles Taylor. The USA is directing a West African military 'peace-keeping' force which is bombing towns and villages under Taylor's control. The USA has also sponsored the formation of ULIMO, a new armed gang on the model of Unita in Angola, to wage civil war in Liberia. Until Taylor has been decisively weakened, the democratisation of Liberia will have to wait.

### No questions asked

So far, the West has little need to be embarrassed about the increasingly cynical character of its democracy crusade. Nobody is questioning its fundamental right to dictate the shape of African government. Many African leaders and intellectuals who once criticised imperialism have now accepted the West's argument that African culture itself, rather than Western domination, is to blame for the lack of democracy in the continent.

Having ended the Cold War, America has shifted its interest in Africa to countries where the collapse of Stalinism has produced the most marked change in attitude towards the West. Top US aid recipients this year are South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique. After its recent recognition, Angola may be added to the list. The more troublesome Zaire, Liberia and Sudan get nothing.

# So long, Angola

**T**his decision', announced Bill Clinton in May, 'reflects the high priority that our administration places on democracy'. The US president was talking about his decision finally to grant full diplomatic recognition to the formerly pro-Soviet government of Angola, headed by President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of the Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Clinton told the world's press that he had turned his back on Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the

Total Independence of Angola (Unita), which the USA had backed for 18 years, because Savimbi had refused to accept the latest peace plans. However, the world's press failed to notice that Clinton's fingers were crossed while he was speaking.

Clinton's announcement was widely applauded. America was congratulated for upholding democracy by facing down Unita, which had refused to accept the result of last September's elections and had restarted the bloody civil war. Even a liberal journalist like

Victoria Brittain, one of the few public critics of America's past role in the Angolan tragedy, thought that Clinton's belated recognition of the MPLA-led government could be 'the first small step in redressing a humanitarian and political crisis' (*Guardian*, 21 May 1993).

Nobody has seen fit to ask why America should have any say over what takes place in Angola at all. Instead, the celebration of Clinton's recognition of the government ratifies

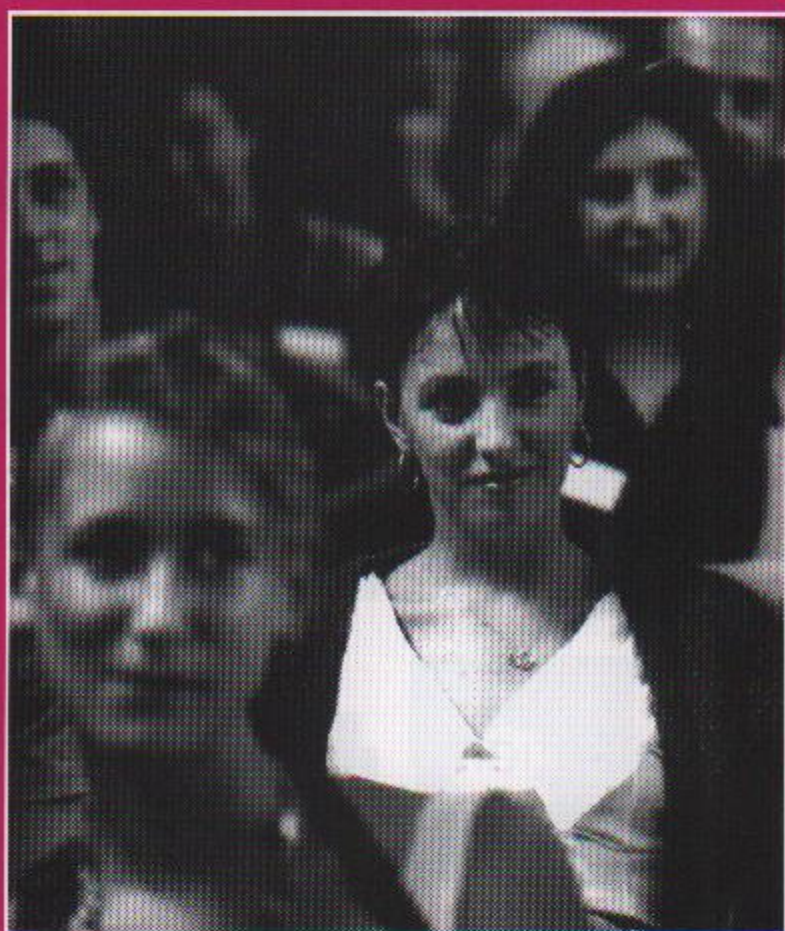
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# TOWARDS

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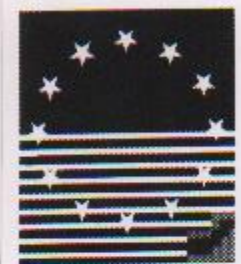
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The moral stalemate



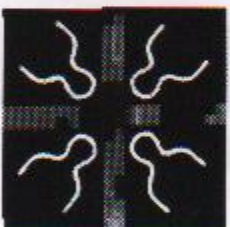
The wild East



End of the American century



Capitalism today



The degrading of democracy



Africa in the New World Order



The origins of contemporary social thought

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◀ (continued from page 22)  
the fact that an American president, not an Angolan one, will decide what can and cannot happen in Angola. After all, the power to recognise also carries with it the power to de-recognise. Control remains in American hands, and Africans are expected to seek Washington's blessing by submitting to its conditions.

From the moment the MPLA led Angola to independence from Portuguese colonialism in 1975, the USA and South Africa have tried to turn back the clock. America took

demobilising its army in line with the Bicesse accords, America and the UN ignored it. When the MPLA produced evidence that a 20 000-strong Unita army trained in Morocco and Zaire had been infiltrated into eastern and northern Angola before the elections, nothing was said. Indeed documentary evidence now shows that South Africa and the CIA continued to arm Savimbi even after the election.

The elections were in fact a major triumph for Angolan democracy. Over 90 per cent of eligible Angolans voted. But the result was not what America or

And, in order to avoid further interference in Angola's internal affairs, America not only refused to condemn Savimbi, it now insisted that negotiations had to take place between the elected government and Unita. Through the UN, the USA instructed president dos Santos to travel to Geneva to meet with Savimbi.

By enforcing all of these stipulations, America effectively elevated Unita to the same status as Angola's elected government. It colluded with Savimbi's refusal to abide by the democratic process which it had insisted upon in the first place.

If the American attitude were applied to the US presidential election, it would produce this scenario. First, the election of President Clinton could not be recognised, as he received only 43 per cent of the vote on a 55 per cent turnout. (Dos Santos, remember, received 48.6 per cent on a 90 per cent poll). Second, the defeated candidate George Bush would, under threat of violence, have to be made a virtual partner in Clinton's administration. And Clinton would be told by the UN to travel to another continent to make a deal with Bush. When applied to Angola, this is called the democratic process.

### Another 20000 dead

Some commentators blamed the Bush administration and its Cold War attachment to Savimbi for the crisis in Angola. But what change was there when Clinton took over—the president who places such a 'high priority' on democracy?

The new secretary of state Warren Christopher not only endorsed the equating of Savimbi with the government, he also insisted that democratic elections were no longer the condition upon which recognition would be based. Instead, it was 'the amount of territory held by the MPLA [which would] be a factor determining recognition' (*Africa Confidential*, 22 January 1993). This was an open invitation to Savimbi to strengthen his hand by rejecting the elections and grabbing as much territory as possible. The result was another bloody round of conflict which is estimated to have claimed a further 20 000 Angolan lives. That has been the Clinton administration's contribution to peace in Angola.

The MPLA's invitation to the Unita butchers to take up ministerial posts shows how America's campaign of destabilisation has exacted concession after concession from an elected government. By granting recognition on such restrictive conditions, Clinton has effectively assumed control and reversed the Angolan independence struggle. It is recolonisation by another name.

## The Clinton administration issued an open invitation to Savimbi to reject the elections and grab as much land as possible

Savimbi, a defeated and discredited guerrilla leader, transformed his Unita organisation into a killing machine and unleashed it upon the Angolan people. The result has been a 16-year civil war in which over half a million Angolans have died, while economic devastation, estimated by the United Nations to have cost \$100 billion in the 1980s alone, reduced Angola to destitution.

### US vendetta

Although every European government had recognised the Angolan government back in 1976, America remained determined to punish Angolans for trying to go it alone in opposition to the West. In 1989, when the effects of the war and the retreat of the Soviet Union led the desperate MPLA to endorse market economics and apply for admittance to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the USA tried to block recognition. The US vendetta against the MPLA was intensified by the involvement of troops from Fidel Castro's Cuba in the Angolan civil war. The American authorities used the issue of democracy as a front for their assault.

In May 1991, the USA pressurised the government into signing the Bicesse ceasefire agreement, which set up the September 1992 elections. In the eyes of the world, Bicesse meant that the MPLA and Unita were equal participants in the Angolan peace process. America had abrogated Angolan independence by ensuring that its terror gang received equal billing with the national government. But this was only the start.

When the MPLA complained to the United Nations that Unita was not

Unita expected: the MPLA took 58 per cent of the vote, giving it 54 per cent of all legislative seats compared to Unita's 34 per cent. And in the presidential race, dos Santos of the MPLA polled 48.6 per cent, compared to 40 per cent for Unita's Savimbi. Dos Santos' narrow failure to win an overall majority meant that a run-off was required. It never took place. Instead, Savimbi refused to accept his party's defeat and threatened to resume the war. He ordered Unita senior officers to desert from the newly unified army.

### Equality for Unita

By October, Unita had effectively restarted the civil war. Threatening the 'Somalia-isation' of the country, Savimbi demanded that the election results should not be published until they had been verified by the National Electoral Council, Unita officials and the UN. The US administration backed Savimbi's position. Herman Cohen, president Bush's African affairs spokesman, told the US congress that Washington would establish relations with the government of Angola once the UN certified the elections. Yet when the UN security council's resolution 785 endorsed the election as free and fair, American recognition was not forthcoming. Savimbi took his cue and upped the stakes militarily. By the end of October, Angola had been plunged back into a vicious civil war.

Remarkably, America justified its refusal to recognise the newly elected Angolan government by arguing that premature recognition of a presidential candidate who had not secured over 50 per cent of the vote would count as interference in the internal affairs of Angola and breach its electoral code!

# Who killed Cambodia?

The USA and its allies have bombed and starved Cambodia into oblivion. And now they have the nerve to blame Cambodians for the lack of Western-style democracy there. Helene Gold reports

**A**fter Cambodia held its first multi-party elections for 25 years at the end of May, the political scene quickly descended into chaos once more. Even before the election results had been finalised, a bitter three-way wrangle over the formation of a new government had broken out between Prince Sihanouk, the royalist party Funcinpec led by his son, and the Cambodian People's Party. Meanwhile Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge lurked in the background, threatening a new round of violent conflict.

It seemed to many observers that their worst fears had been realised. The consensus was that the West had done its best, the United Nations had opened up a path to the free world by organising the elections, but the Cambodians themselves had proved incapable of living within the democratic process.

In the run-up to the elections, the United Nations took over Cambodia. The UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) didn't just organise the elections, it ran the country. Around 22 000 UN police, troops and civilian officials governed for 18 months before the polls, as UNTAC took control of

Cambodia's five main ministries—defence, foreign affairs, information, interior and finance.

In other times such an operation, organised as it was by powers like the USA, France and Japan, would have been called a colonial occupation. This time, however, the picture presented of the UN has been that of a benign outside arbiter, attempting to bring peace and democracy to the backward Cambodians through a combination of diplomacy and firm management.

## Lawless land

Throughout the election campaign, most commentators expressed fears that the results would only lead to more conflict in Cambodia, and that the killings were bound to escalate again once UNTAC withdraws (which is due to happen within three months of the elections).

Robert McCrum described how the UN forces had acted as a temporary crutch for Cambodian democracy, and suggested that their removal could quickly lead to its collapse. 'Only then', he warned, 'will the world discover if the Cambodians have learned to walk unaided, or whether,

as so often in the past, they will stumble back into the minefield for another rendezvous with fear and violence' (*Guardian*, 22 May).

McCrumb described Cambodia as a country populated by people who have been 'killing each other without mercy for 20 years or more...a land of violent, despotic traditions, rife with malaria and malnutrition, a land virtually without laws, clinics, metalled roads, safe water or telephones'. It was not possible, McCrum implied, that democracy could thrive among people like these. An even gloomier picture of Cambodians was painted by Keith Dovkants, who described the country as a 'labyrinth of dark horrors, interwoven evil and corruption from which a pitiful people seem unable to struggle free' (*Evening Standard*, 25 May 1993).

## 'Autogenocide'

Television news reports from Cambodia have routinely talked of a society prone to turn against itself, a land of the killing fields where Cambodians seem set to kill Cambodians for the foreseeable future. 'Autogenocide' is the new word used to explain the terrible human suffering



PHOTO: REX FEATURES/SIPA PRESS

(Above)  
The image  
of the killing  
fields has been  
used to shield  
the USA

in the country. Well before the election, commentators were suggesting that the brutal nature of Cambodia's people and politics meant the UN was likely to leave with 'mission unaccomplished', but only because it had engaged in a mission impossible. It was, they argued, simply too much to expect Cambodians to be able to live together in peace. That interpretation has been strengthened by the post-election power struggle.

### Blame Cambodia

Common to commentators of all shades of opinion is the assumption that the cause of today's problems is in some way internal to Cambodia. Some journalists explain the continued destruction and suffering in Cambodia by focusing on the brutality of the Khmer Rouge, which ran Cambodia from 1975 to 1979 and has been fighting a guerrilla war ever since. Others pin responsibility on the Vietnamese-backed regime which ran the country from 1979 until the signing of the Paris peace agreement in October 1991, and which has now been renamed the Cambodian People's Party. Ultimately, all of these analyses blame the Cambodian people themselves for

their own problems. This is the premise which has led so many to accept the right of the West, through the UN, to take over the internal affairs of Cambodia.

The attempt to blame Cambodians for conditions in their country turns reality on its head. All of the arguments used to legitimise the UN 'peace-keeping' operation in Cambodia cloud over the real issue. People are given a glimpse of the trail of destruction that has been carved through this tiny country over the past 25 years, and encouraged to ask how Cambodians could have done this, and what the West should now do about them.

### A million dead

But the truth is that all of the problems which the UN is presently mandated to solve were created by the Western powers in the first place. The reporters and journalists who focus on events internal to Cambodia in trying to explain this tragedy are letting the real culprits off the hook.

In the years from 1969 to 1975, at the height of the Vietnam War, the USA dropped the equivalent of five Hiroshima bombs on rural

Cambodia in order to break up Vietcong supply routes. It was the most intense aerial bombardment of a country in history—but US president Richard Nixon and his foreign affairs chief Henry Kissinger denied that it was even taking place.

It is estimated that at least one million people died in Cambodia during this period. A further three million (nearly half of the entire population) were forced to flee the ravaged countryside for the cities. The consequent disruption of agricultural production led to mass famine. By the end of 1973 rice and rubber production—Cambodia's prime commodities—had fallen to one third of their 1968 levels. Around 75 per cent of domestic animals had been killed. The roads were destroyed, and in practice industry no longer existed. Cambodia was now the poorest country in the world. It effectively had no currency. Payment and transactions were carried out with rice or gold.

This was the background against which the Khmer Rouge came to power in 1975, after overthrowing the pro-US regime in Phnom Penh. The conventional histories of that ►



period attribute the millions of deaths in Cambodia to a policy of genocide pursued by the Pol Pot regime. In fact by far the majority of deaths (even in the period of Pol Pot's rule between 1975 and 1979) were caused by starvation, malnutrition and disease—the direct results of the US bombing campaign.

Amnesty International estimated at the time that a maximum of

known that the Khmer Rouge and other opposition groups laid the mines so successfully thanks to British expertise.

While the Western powers were helping to keep the civil war going in the eighties, America was also encouraging another refugee crisis by cynically advertising 'prosperous camps' set up in Thailand, on Voice of America broadcasts directed at Cambodia.

## 700 people lose limbs in Cambodia every month, thanks to British expertise

300 000 people died as result of the purges carried out by the Khmer Rouge. Another two million died of starvation (see G Evans and K Rowley, *Red Brotherhood at War*). Today, the Khmer Rouge is held responsible for the immense suffering in Cambodia in the past, while the USA is absolved of blame. Yet the truth is that the barbaric conditions in which Cambodians lived and died during the seventies were the result of American barbarism.

Cambodia was torn apart by the tonnage of bombs dropped on it 20 years ago. Famine and disease spread through the next decade. In 1979, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge fell from power. The USA used the invasion as a pretext to renew its war against South-east Asia and reverse its defeat in Vietnam. For the next 15 years Cambodia and Vietnam were faced with complete international isolation. Thanks to US pressure, the devastated country of Cambodia, stricken by poverty and disease, became the subject of a UN aid embargo.

### Mine-warfare

At the same time, the USA and Britain started backing the opposition coalition in Cambodia, in order to destabilise the country further. For several years, the Western powers ensured that the ousted Pol Pot regime continued to be recognised as the legitimate government by the UN. It has recently emerged that the British military trained the opposition forces in mine-warfare throughout the 1980s and into the nineties (*Observer*, 18 April 1993). It has often been reported that landmines have given Cambodia the highest percentage of amputees in the world, with an estimated 700 people losing one or more limbs every month. It is less well

The West has brought nothing but war and famine to Cambodia and the rest of South-east Asia. Yet now the consensus is that the impoverished Cambodians themselves are responsible for their problems. History has been rewritten to depict the victims as the villains. So the United Nations, which acted as a front for the US campaign to starve Cambodia of support in the seventies and eighties, can now be cast in the role of benign interventionist, seeking to bring peace, stability and democracy to a people torn between warring factions.

### No-win

Even if the United Nations departs after Cambodia has descended into renewed warfare, the authority of the West will remain intact. We are told that UNTAC has done all that it could to disarm the warring factions and bring peace to Cambodia. It has done everything possible to teach Cambodians about democracy and how to vote (which according to some commentators has been a job in itself, since these people find it hard to understand that you can only register to vote once). We are told that Cambodians have been given the best chance possible, and if the UN mission to establish peace and democracy fails, it will be their own fault. In other words, whatever happens next in Cambodia, the West cannot lose.

For the people of Cambodia, on the other hand, this is a no-win situation. They will never experience peace as long as the USA and the rest of the Western powers are granted the right to trample all over their lives.

Today, foreign powers are queuing up to exploit Cambodia's plight for their own sordid ends. The dynamic towards intervention started with Japan's emerging role in Cambodian politics. In June 1990 Japan bypassed

the UN by holding talks with the Phnom Penh government in Tokyo. This was a break with Washington's position of not moving towards a settlement until all of its conditions had been met. In July 1991 the USA was forced to shift its policy to keep pace with the Japanese intervention.

Cambodia has presented Japan with an invaluable opportunity to recast its image as a peacebroker in South-east Asia. Since Japan re-emerged as an economic power in the world, the expansion of its political influence in its own region has been held back by its bloody record of colonial conquest before and during the Second World War. Only recently, the Japanese authorities felt obliged to apologise to the peoples of South-east Asia for atrocities perpetrated against them 50 years ago.

The Cambodian situation has provided a perfect pretext for Japan to start to put these troubles behind it. It has allowed Japanese forces to return to South-east Asia, not as hated oppressors, but in the guise of peacemakers. This time it is not the imperial ambitions of Japan, but the bloodlust of the Cambodians which is being blamed for the bloodshed. Cambodia has become a stepping stone for Japan to return to the stage of international diplomacy as a major player. That is why, on 15 June 1992, the Diet (parliament) authorised Japanese forces to join the UN 'peacekeeping operation' in Cambodia—dispatching troops abroad for the first time since the Second World War.

### Past returns

France, the old colonial power in Cambodia and Vietnam, has also tried to use the current crisis to clean up its image and increase its authority in the region. The French foreign minister was the first from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to make an official visit to Cambodia. France has pledged to rebuild Cambodia's education system (under the condition that French and not English is taught in all the courses). The French have offered military assistance to any government emerging from the elections, and are already training Cambodia's police force. Once France and Japan had started to interfere in Cambodia, Washington then called for a UN solution, in order to ensure it was not left out of the carve-up.

Today all of the Western powers are back in the country they have destroyed, playing their Great Power games and rewriting their sordid colonial histories. The Cambodian people are being used as pawns—and blamed for the chaos that results. ●

# Forget glasnost

First they said Russia had too little democracy; now they say it has too much.

Theresa Clarke reports

Until recently Boris Yeltsin was held up as the hope for democracy in Russia, and praised for his one-man crusade against communism, corruption and conservatism. Commentators insisted that only when Russia had fully embraced democracy could it join the civilised world, and urged the Western powers to come up with more aid to allow Yeltsin's democratic reforms to continue.

However, of late a different message has been coming from the Western camp. Now it seems that some countries are just not ready for democracy. Democracy in Russia may be causing too many problems. Glasnost may no longer be such a good thing after all.

This change of heart reflects a growing Western unease about the failure of capitalism in Russia, and a recognition that the Russian government will have to force through even more drastic measures to shore up the market economy. Western commentators have tried to explain these developments away by blaming

found a relatively sympathetic audience. The *Financial Times* reported Senator Richard Lugar saying that the 'US could "conceivably" accept the temporary use of military power, but only if it was invoked as an explicit prelude to proper elections in Russia' (15 March 1993). One unnamed Washington official went further. According to the *Sunday Telegraph*, he argued that the Clinton administration 'would not oppose a suspension of parliament, or the abolition of the constitution, provided the bloodshed was kept under control and the troops did not run amok' (14 March 1993).

At each stage of the economic transition, the West has come up with different excuses for the failure of capitalism to regenerate Russia. First it was not enough democracy, now Russia suffers from having too much. Not so long ago, the West gave the excuse of waiting for visible political reforms before it would give more financial aid. In 1991 the Institute of Strategic Studies recommended that, since the Soviet Union was

corners will be cut, so long as the overall direction of change is clear' (*Financial Times*, 24 March 1993).

Yeltsin is certainly prepared to cut corners. Before the referendum, he imposed special rule by decree, suspended parliament, and outlined a programme for authoritarian reform. He now has the power to overrule laws which contradict his economic policies and has banned local elections for over a year.

The Kremlin guard has been renamed the presidential guard, and brought under Yeltsin's direct control. He has banned demonstrations and virtually outlawed strikes in key industries. The militia, the KGB and riot police are portrayed as the new defenders of democracy. After a recent anti-government demonstration the Special Purpose Militia Team, the new riot police, were commended for their bravery and praised for the 'impermissible' moderation they had displayed. Under Soviet rule, the



PHOTO MICHAEL GRANER

'communist hardliners' for trying to reverse Yeltsin's reforms. Worse, the hardliners are said to be using Russia's new democratic institutions to block further reform. So it is understandable, Western experts say, that Yeltsin should seek an authoritarian presidency to drive through reform and safeguard democracy in the long term.

Comparisons are often made with China, where the introduction of the market has attracted foreign investment and created the fastest growing economy in the Far East. For the West, what marks China off from Russia is its political system. China is still a repressive, undemocratic regime. Which means that Chinese rulers can impose drastic economic change on their people. Some Western observers even suggest that suddenly giving the vote to 1.2 billion Chinese would be downright irresponsible. Maybe, they argue, Russia needs to adopt the Chinese way in the future.

Today it is widely assumed that Russia needs a more dictatorial leadership if economic reform is to continue and collapse is to be averted. The implication is that, if Yeltsin cannot reform the economy within a democracy, then democracy must go.

The abolition of the Russian parliament is now being seriously considered. Yeltsin has sounded out possible US responses, and has

moving towards a more authoritarian regime, it was unwise to invest in the region. Now it is seen as being in the interest of Western investors to support a repressive regime in Russia. Reality has been inverted.

America and the rest of the Western world know that in the uncertain world of the 1990s, stability must override democracy. Western leaders are keen for Russia not to disintegrate. America, in particular, wants a US-Russian alliance. It wants to use Russia as a counter to German and Japanese expansion within the old Soviet bloc. Most importantly for America, the very existence of Russia symbolises the continuation of the bipolar world of the Cold War era, when US leadership of the West was unquestioned. The concern now is that if Russia goes, so, too, does America's pretensions to world leadership.

Just before Yeltsin held the referendum on his reforms, Edward Mortimer summed up the Western outlook:

'The West's interest clearly lies in the successful conversion of the Russian economy to market principles, so that it can engage intensively in exchanging goods and services with the rest of the world. Whether they can be reached by a purely democratic road is less certain. We may have to accept that some

same riot police won notoriety for the brutal suppression of opposition in the Baltics. Last summer, the militia expressed support for a military coup.

Even before the referendum votes were cast, Yeltsin announced that he would ignore the results if they went against him. In the event he won, although he received less than a quarter of the available votes. A recent poll showed that over 70 per cent of the Russian people see current political events as irrelevant to their lives. Support for Yeltsin has been replaced by cynical disillusionment.

Some US officials have warned that Bill Clinton may well regret giving such full support to Yeltsin. Former secretary of state Henry Kissinger sees a strong possibility of Russia relapsing into Pinochet-style authoritarian rule—not necessarily under Yeltsin's control. Senator Bill Bradley argues that it is 'important to keep open all lines of communications with other centres of power, including the parliament, the army and the Russian Orthodox church' (*Financial Times*, 15 March 1993). If there is a Chilean-style crackdown within Russia, America needs to be able to do business with whoever is in charge.

The message is: forget democracy. America will support Russia if it follows the Chinese or Chilean road to capitalist reform. ●

## Despite all the discussions of the royal family's problems, says Penny Robson, nobody has suggested the one sensible solution

**T**he British monarchy appears to be in serious trouble. Barely a week passes without another 'insider' book or tabloid 'exclusive' making fresh revelations about Charles, Diana and Camilla, Andrew, Fergie and her financial advisor, or some other character in the sub-*Eldorado* soap opera of royal life.

The fortieth anniversary of the Queen's coronation in May presented a stark contrast with previous royal occasions. This time around, the commemoration mugs and street parties were replaced by heavyweight TV debates and newspaper editorial soul-searching about the proper role of the monarchy in modern Britain.

The current arguments about the standing of the monarchy are unprecedented in modern times. Things are now being criticised which would previously have been considered beyond question, and a lot of heat and noise has been generated.

But is this great debate really a debate at all? When it comes down to it, every prominent participant seems to be on the same side. They are all in favour of preserving the Queen as the head of state. Not one public voice has spoken out in favour of the single sensible solution to the issue—the immediate and unconditional abolition of the British monarchy.

### Internal turmoil

So far, the discussion about the monarchy has taken place within terms laid down by the establishment itself. This point is often missed in media comment on the royal crisis. The most common explanations of how the current situation came about assume that the royals have buckled under the pressure of public opinion. In fact there has been no great public outcry against the monarchy. No republican movement has marched through the streets, no high emotions have been stirred in society at large. People are generally cynical about the royals. Many are sick of their self-indulgence and amused by their present embarrassments. But most are unexcited about the whole affair.

The present problems of the monarchy are less a result of external political pressure than a consequence of the internal turmoil afflicting the British establishment itself. The British ruling elite, along with its counterparts elsewhere in the Western world, is experiencing a crisis of self-confidence.

The capitalist slump has undermined everything in which these people believe. As if that wasn't bad enough, the end of the Cold War era has removed the vital cement of anti-communism from their political system. These developments have had a seriously disorienting effect on the British establishment. Its once-reliable parties and institutions no longer seem able to function in the old way, and it is thrashing about in search of a way out. The faction fights in the Tory Party, and the trend for British grandees to desert the Church of England for Rome, are two examples of this process. The ruction surrounding the royals is another.

### Carry on

In a way, the manner in which the royal scandals have developed is evidence of the *lack* of serious opposition. In the past, when faced with a challenge from its opponents, the establishment would close ranks and present a united front to the world. Today, by contrast, the demise of opposition politics has temporarily removed that political pressure. As things spin out of control, members of the ruling class are now more likely to break ranks and conduct their squabbles in public.

The private affairs of the royal family are always full of enough scandal to keep Andrew Morton busy for a lifetime. But these things never before became public property.

At the time of the abdication crisis in 1936, when Edward VIII deserted the throne in order to marry an American divorcee, the government, the newspapers and every other pillar of the establishment rallied around the monarchy, conspiring to cover up the truth and to minimise the damage to the institution. In the fifties and sixties, foreign newspapers often

reported stories of the Queen's marital problems. Such tales never saw the light of day in Britain. Today the old restraints are off, and Fergie's toe-job or Di's squidgy phone-calls make headline news.

Because the debate about the monarchy has so far been an internal establishment affair, there has been no question of anybody involved proposing abolition. The authorities all understand the important role which the monarchy has played in helping to stabilise society under their control.

As head of state, standing above party politics, the monarch acts as a symbol of historical continuity, endorsing the impression that, while governments might come and go, the British system will always carry on as it is now. And while the monarchy may be a figurehead, it is one which helps to shield the exercise of real power in Britain from public scrutiny. Through the constitutional device of the royal prerogative, the government is able to do all manner of things in the Crown's name—including going to war—without asking the permission of parliament, never mind the public (see 'Abolish the monarchy', *Living Marxism*, June 1992).

### Toadying tradition

The continued importance of the monarchy to the establishment was spelled out in one of the recent debates by Lord Rees-Mogg, who declared that abolition would only come about through war or revolution. There is little danger of the current opposition getting involved in any such unpleasantness.

The mainstream opposition in Britain today is so conservative and so steeped in the habits of toadying that it has been left behind by the new wave of criticism directed at the royals. It has been running to catch up with the Murdoch press as a voice for change. For example, Charter 88, the constitutional reform group, was very pleased with itself for co-sponsoring a major conference about the monarchy in May. Yet Charter 88's established list of demands for constitutional change has never mentioned the position of the monarchy, let alone

# Off with head of



dared to whisper the dread word 'abolition'. It was the fact that the May conference was co-sponsored by the *Times*, the old voice of the establishment itself, which finally gave Charter 88 the nerve to mention the small constitutional matter of sovereign power resting in hereditary hands.

The Labour Party, too, has been exposed as a spineless and conservative flunkey. Through all the furor about who should pay how much income tax during last year's election campaign, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition never made so much as a passing reference to the fact that the Queen paid no tax on her vast wealth. It was only after the Queen herself conceded that she might hand a little over to the Inland Revenue that Labour felt able to say 'hear hear'.

The great royal non-debate is really a one-sided discussion about how to

ensure that the monarchy survives intact atop the British state. It is about how to reform and regenerate the royal image without destabilising the system which rules us. Such a modernising trick has been pulled off in the past.

Queen Victoria, for example, was turned from an unpopular old woman into the embodiment of Britannia, after she was made Empress of India and linked with the success of British empire-building. Walter Bagehot, the leading expert on the British constitution, was shocked by how effectively the royal family—'unemployed youth and a bitter old widow'—was transformed into a popular institution. During the Second World War, after the embarrassment of the abdication crisis, George VI and Queen Elizabeth (now the Queen Mother) restored some credibility by fostering a 'family at war' image. By staying

in London during the Blitz and visiting the bombed-out East End, they sought to create the illusion that they were 'just like us' (except that their bomb shelter was

Buckingham Palace rather than the platform at Mile End tube station).

Today's discussion is about how best to regenerate the royals once more in a modern context. Some liberals suggest that they should become more like their Continental cousins, shop in supermarkets and ride bikes about London. That is unlikely to give the governmental system the mystique which the authorities want. Some conservatives with a better idea of what the monarchy is for have suggested dumping the younger royals and just hanging on to the Queen, as a wooden symbol who could be kept away from the media and only wheeled out for formal state occasions.

Whichever way this debate progresses, there is nothing in it for those who want to change society. The only decent thing to be done with the monarchy is to abolish it at once, and for all time. That in itself would achieve little. But it would at least clear the decks of some of the rubbish of history, and help to bring British politics into the present.

The current criticisms of the royals are petty quibbles. Those who are unwilling to get rid of such a rotten symbol of establishment power and privilege as the British monarchy will have no chance of achieving more far-reaching change for the better. Oliver Cromwell understood that well. He warned his men that if any of them were not prepared to countenance killing the king, they should not ride with the Roundhead

army. More than 300 years on, Charter 88 and the Labour Party remain in the Cavaliers' camp. ●



their  
state

# A fix for the

As the Tories seek to take the axe to the welfare state, Phil Murphy looks at why governments have spent 15 years trying, and failing, to cut public spending

**W**hen Labour prime minister James Callaghan and chancellor Denis Healey first turned the screws on state spending in the late 1970s, government expenditure measured about 45 per cent of British economic output. Since 1979 Conservative governments have sworn to free the market system from the shackles of the 'big state'. Yet today, government expenditure is back to the same proportion of national output as it was when the 'cut state spending' campaign started in the seventies.

With the government's budget deficit now running at around £50 billion a year, the Tories have made this year's public spending review the centrepiece of their bid to get back in the economic saddle. Michael Portillo, the minister in charge of the review, has made clear yet again that government spending must be cut. Why do they bang on about the need to reduce public expenditure? And why have they consistently failed to slash the government budget?

## Slump economies

State spending began to be perceived as a problem in the 1970s as the economy drifted into serious trouble. This was the start of an era of capitalist crisis which has continued more or less ever since. The trends towards crisis were briefly submerged during the credit-fuelled boom of the late 1980s, but soon resurfaced with a vengeance as a full-blown economic slump.

The crisis is rooted in the very way that wealth is produced in a capitalist economy. It is fundamentally caused by the intrinsic tendency within the capitalist system for profit rates to fall. (For a full discussion of this

phenomenon, see 'The slump is here to stay', *Living Marxism*, April 1993). However, the causes of economic stagnation are not widely understood in this way.

Capitalists do not see their problems in terms of falling profitability at the point of production. They experience the crisis at the level of the market place and competition. This obscures the true causes of the crisis. The secular decay of profit rates in the production process remains hidden, while attention focuses on superficial, surface aspects of the recession. In this way the symptoms of the crisis are mistakenly identified as its causes.

## Tax, tax, tax

One favourite scapegoat has been high state expenditure. The claim that state spending causes problems for capitalists has an apparent logic to it. This is because public expenditure has to be paid for out of the surplus produced by the economy.

Capitalists expand by investing the profit they reap from past operations. If they are not making enough profit over a period of time, they cannot keep going (and the banks will not extend credit indefinitely to unprofitable enterprises). Capitalists may not understand the inherent tendency towards falling profitability. But they are only too aware of the problem of finding sufficient funds to finance their operations. State spending is seen as exacerbating these financing difficulties. Most state funds come from taxation. And one way or another, the employers have to pay the government's taxes out of their profits.

It is obvious that the employers pay a duty like corporation tax. What is less obvious is that, in most circumstances, the employers also indirectly pay for their employees' income tax, and for sales taxes on the goods their workers buy. This is because increased taxes on income or purchases are usually compensated for by higher wage levels, so allowing real living standards to be at least maintained. In these circumstances higher taxes will be reflected in higher wage bills, which cut into what's available as profits.

Government tax revenue today stands at over three times the level of the post-taxation trading profits of British industrial and commercial companies. This means that a five

per cent cut in government spending and taxation would be the arithmetical equivalent of a 15 per cent rise in profits. So, although government spending and taxation do not themselves cause the tendency for profit rates to fall, there are good grounds for capitalists to feel that high state spending makes their own situation worse.

## Debt trap

Borrowing money to fund state spending doesn't get around this problem either. Although an advanced economy like Britain can build up quite a large government debt without facing pressing demands for repayment, the loans do have to be serviced. Interest has to be paid to the creditors and there can be further costs involved in rescheduling borrowings when the time comes for notional repayment. These costs add to the state budget and themselves need to be financed—through taxation, or more borrowing.

More and more government borrowing on the world's capital markets also tends to push up interest rates. In turn, these higher interest rates will swell the cost of debt financing. In the longer term there are limits to how much foreign financiers will be prepared to lend a government. The timing of this borrowing drought cannot be predicted, as it depends on many economic and political factors in the country concerned and internationally. However, the fear of such a state financing crisis is another reason for governments to wish to cut spending levels.

## 'Stop-go'

From the standpoint of the individual capitalist and of the Treasury, there are good reasons to want to cut state spending in a time of economic crisis. The higher expenditure is, the more likely that employers will have to bear some of the cost, through higher taxes. Public spending doesn't cause the crisis, but it can appear to aggravate it as a deduction from the funds which could be made available for capitalist growth.

Against this perspective some old-fashioned Keynesians would argue that state spending can provide additional demand in the economy. But this in itself won't help to resolve the problems of unproductive British industry. If British goods are already

# system



less competitive than foreign goods, then most of the demand stimulated by government spending will simply boost imports, contributing to the huge trade deficit. The Keynesian argument falls apart with the exacerbation of balance of payments crises—a pattern well illustrated by Britain's postwar experience of the 'stop-go' cycle.

So why has the rhetorical drive to cut state expenditure had such little effect? The essential reason is that, despite all the limitations of state spending, the modern capitalist economy is too feeble to survive without it.

Blaming state spending for the slump is a classic case of mistaking the symptoms of the crisis for its cause. ►



State intervention in the economy grew in the first place because the market system was incapable of sustaining a dynamic of growth on its own. Modern capitalism needs state assistance to survive.

State intervention has been on a rising trend for a century, during which the secular trend in capitalism has been towards stagnation. The state has become crucial to offsetting the

### Modern capitalism needs state assistance to survive

effects of falling profitability. The dominant role of the state in the economy therefore reflects the less dynamic character of the modern economy. Capitalism cannot do without it.

There are two main aspects of state intervention which cost money but have been necessary to maintain the capitalist system. The first is direct assistance to industry, through state subsidies. In the past, particularly since the Second World War, this has involved both direct government grants to private companies and the nationalisation of important but unprofitable sectors.

In recent years, however, things have changed. The privatisation programme has helped to create the impression that the government has a more free market, hands-off attitude towards industry. In fact, the reverse is true. State subsidising of British industry has become even more pervasive, but is no longer always immediately identifiable in government accounts.

Today, for example, government regulations protect parts of industry from international competition and sanction price-fixing cartels (these forms of state support remain vital to some of the big privatised corporations). The state provides tax credits for investment. And perhaps most importantly, central and local government contracts provide crucial support for British business.

Without government contracts, for everything from building warplanes or constructing roads to providing cleaning and catering services in the NHS, the private sector would be in a far deeper crisis. The multifarious ways in which the state now aids the private sector will be investigated further in forthcoming issues of *Living Marxism*. For the moment, however, it is important to note that this has implications for attempts to

cut the other major aspect of state expenditure—the welfare state.

First and foremost, the welfare state was created for the good of British capitalism. Welfare measures were implemented by the state from the turn of the century in order to ensure a fit and compliant working class, able both to fight foreign wars and to work effectively on the home front. The elements of a welfare state were established in the early years of this century: the School Meals Act, the Hospital Panel (the forerunner of the National Health Service) and the first National Insurance Act.

After the Second World War these welfare measures were much extended with the creation of the NHS and the expansion of the education and social security systems. This was partly to ensure a healthier, better educated workforce, and partly a key element in the construction of the postwar political consensus.

During the fifties and sixties, Britain experienced an economic boom. While profits were relatively high, the burden imposed on the business sector by state spending was tolerated easily enough. In the seventies, the impact of the economic crisis stimulated the drive to cut back on state spending. But it quickly became clear that this was much easier to propose than to execute.

#### A luxury wasted

Treasury figures attribute most state spending to welfare provision. Today, for example, spending on health, social services and social security amounts to 44 per cent of British government spending. Education represents another 12 per cent and housing five per cent. The assumption on the right has been that this spending was a luxury wasted on the working classes, and could therefore be axed with little detriment to the functioning of the capitalist economy. But that assumption has proved false.

It turns out that the 'welfare' budgets contain a lot of spending which supports the economy. For example, in 1991 about 15 per cent of total government expenditure was accounted for by the welfare budgets' spending on goods, services (excluding wages and salaries) and capital grants to the private sector. In other words, this £34 billion of 'welfare' spending in fact goes towards maintaining the health of the private sector. As such, it is hard for the state to cut it, especially at a time of economic crisis.

Tory ministers seeking to cut public spending have also faced the political constraints created by the fact that not just working class, but many middle class people now rely on the welfare state for employment; the wage bill for this sector came to around £38 billion in 1991. Even the social security budget

has proved politically difficult to cut ruthlessly, since many of the transfer payments go into the pockets of the middle classes.

The intricate way in which even the 'softer' parts of the state budget work to prop up the capitalist economy and the status of the middle classes has created enormous barriers to successive government attempts to cut spending. This provides the backdrop to the current public spending review.

With the budget deficit soaring ever higher, the time is coming when the government has to try to make some hard decisions about forcing through tax rises and spending cuts. It has already gone some way towards preparing the ground politically.

#### Undeserving lords

By kite-flying the notion that nothing could be ruled out of the cuts discussion—pensions, child benefits, dental care, prescription charges—the Tories have sought to win acceptance of the idea that deep cuts are now necessary. They have done so by packaging their cost-cutting exercise as a moral campaign, dividing people into those who deserve welfare services and those who do not. So cuts minister Michael Portillo argues that universal benefits are absurd since Lady Thatcher and Lord Callaghan do not need a state pension, while some health authorities insist that patients who smoke do not warrant proper medical care. 'The whole point', says Portillo, 'is to make sure that our public spending goes to the people who need it most'.

From the Tories' perspective, however, the people who need it most are those running British business. Behind the high moral tone of government speeches, the main targets of the cuts are not members of the House of Lords, but working people. The late Norman Lamont's last budget started the deficit-cutting campaign by raising indirect taxes, like VAT, which disproportionately affect the worse-off sections of society. That is a pattern we can expect to see repeated as the government embarks on a round of swingeing cuts and tax rises. (And in today's workplace climate, where management has the whip hand, there is little chance of passing on tax increases to the employers through pay rises).

By winning their moral campaign around public spending, the Tories hope to achieve a decisive shift against the political constraints which have held back previous spending cuts. This renders them a greater chance of success than in the past. But the fact that much of state expenditure is more vital than ever to the operation of the capitalist economy still stands in their way.



# Going for bloke

**E**very era has its symbols. Ten years ago we had Keith Joseph, Margaret Thatcher, pickets and council estates. Somewhere along the line they were replaced by John Major, Gary Lineker, Essex Man and starter homes. And, of course, the *Sun* man.

The *Sun* man stands in front of a variety of backdrops—holiday pool, dream kitchen—and shouts about Britain's top-selling daily paper. He is a media bloke, a breed specialising in no-nonsense endorsements of beers, safety locks and DIY. He looks like he's probably got a brother in the services, and in the golf club bar he likes to use the occasional military expression like 'SOHF' (sense of humour failure) or 'NFI' (not fucking interested). His vaguely southern accent could best be described as Policeman's English, and he likes to call people 'chaps'.

Like the Michelin man, he has evolved almost imperceptibly over the years. He has been refined. His rough edges have been redrawn. He shouts less. His leisurewear has become blander and his backdrops more suburban. Scrupulously nondescript, ever so classless. Neither common nor snobbish. Trustworthy and simple, like a dog. People are supposed to identify with him, although in real life he would be despised by the professional middle classes, and envied for his house and money by anyone in an inferior position. Certainly he would not inspire any great personal affinity. So for presentational purposes he must be drained of as many of his unappealing characteristics as possible.

For a while, being this kind of totem for the 'classless society' was a fairly easy job. For ordinary people, there was the promise of a better life. And the middle classes were prepared to pay a price for classless politics: mixing with barrow boys in suits and earrings was preferable to strikes and conflict.

By the nineties even the slowest public schoolboy had realised that the best career move was to go for bloke. They disguised their accents as best they could, said 'cheers' a lot and learned the names of footballers. Peregrine Worsthorne remarked that by the end of his time at the *Daily Telegraph*, it had become necessary to 'play down the public school aspect'. In the City, accents became 'more consumer-friendly'. A right-wing populism gained a footing, with Andrew Neil's *Sunday Times* railing against the 'snobocracy'.

The recession has pulled the rug from under the bloke. For real Romford boys the problem is straightforward: how to keep themselves in the style to which they are accustomed. The middle class versions are in a more complicated situation: for them, becoming a bloke was a hell of a compromise. Before the age of the white-collar bloke, people knew their place. Working class boys grew up fast, left school early and had a few enjoyable years binging their mum a fiver a week and spending the rest on booze, birds, cars and holidays. Then they got married and settled down to a life of making ends meet. Middle class boys endured an extended childhood at boarding school, on the understanding that the good life comes to those who wait.

Now that 'popular capitalism' has become to Tories what 'team of the eighties' is to Crystal Palace supporters, the promise of the comfortable life seems like a rather cruel joke. The young middle

classes are feeling uneasy and insecure. They are experiencing their own version of the identity crisis that has stricken their establishment elders. The fathers know who they are but don't know where they're going; the sons aren't even sure of who they are.

When people are scared of the future they take refuge in the past. Parents look back to the war. Young people look to their youth. But what if your youth was spent wearing sports jackets with elbow patches, swotting for exams, listening to Genesis albums and wondering what girls are like? What do you get nostalgic about?

For years the middle class twenty and thirtysomethings wallowed in their childhoods, chattering inanely about those 'rilly gud' bubble gum stickers you used to get, and how Scoobydoo was, like, *amazing*. Then the seventies revival gave them the chance to trade in their life of teenage sacrifice for a more exciting and socially acceptable version. Suddenly those days spent chasing muddy rugby balls and translating Latin are transformed into a montage of inner-city discos and parties, football terraces and scrapes with the Old Bill.

They are buying into working class culture in a big way. No proletarian stone is left unturned. Selected safety zones have become theme parks for an alternative heritage industry. Black cabs decant parties of well-heeled gals outside the Clapham Gala, where—after a quick drink in the quaint pub where 'everyone just watches television' (yah, they rilly do, honestly!)—it's eyes down for a night's bingo with the grannies and housewives. And it's perfectly splendid fun: 'The excitement when one has to cross off one more number is sometimes more than one can bear.'

If you think you can handle any more examples, you can cab it down to the Old Bull and Bush—sorry, old Ferret & Firkin. Roll out the barrel, the gang's all here: a real East End knees-up...with no

cockneys...in Chelsea. It sounds simple, yet the reality is more complex. The old-time numbers initially receive a respectful hearing, and the Sloanes join in the bits they know ('Alive, alive-o-oh!'). It's the seventies pop that gets them going, though, and soon the pianist switches to his wedding reception routine, pounding out the Boney M numbers for an increasingly excitable crowd, which makes game attempts at 'disco dancing'.

However, as the night progresses, brains slip into something more comfortable. Ancient folk memories are stirred. A semi-circle of prop forwards assembles ominously and performs an enthusiastic frug to 'Yellow Submarine'. A young couple entertains their friends with an amusing re-enactment of a film in which a car drives in the wrong direction on a motorway. 'You're going the wrong way!' they scream at each other, again and again, getting redder and redder. I went to the toilet, got a drink and came back to find them still going strong.

By closing time the pianist has given up trying to be heard. 'You'll Never Walk Alone' is drowned out by a deafening rendition of 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot', with all the actions. For a few sweet minutes everything in their world is as it was meant to be.

All too soon they must step out into the night. A row of teenagers sitting on a wall starts an aggressive chorus: 'We are the famous CFC!'. Everyone hurries past. ●

**He is  
trustworthy  
and simple,  
like a dog**

# A man they like to ban

Ken Loach talked to Kirsten Cale about the problems of making films in censorious Britain

Ken Loach and the censor have rarely seen eye to eye. Loach's documentary on trade union leaders, *Questions of Leadership*, has never been shown in Britain. Another documentary, *Which Side Are You On?*, was dropped by the *South Bank Show* after rows in the cutting room. Loach's production of the anti-Zionist play *Perdition* was pulled from the Royal Court Theatre 36 hours before the first performance. *Hidden Agenda*, his political thriller set in Ireland, was taken off the air by Channel 4 after the Warrington bombing earlier this year. 'Censorship in Britain', Loach observes, 'has been fairly constant.'

On the Continent Loach's work has won critical praise. *Hidden Agenda* and

*Riff Raff* both won prizes at the Cannes Film Festival, as has his latest film, *Raining Stones*. *Which Side Are You On?* won first prize at the Florence festival.

In Britain, however, Loach has been smothered in critical silence, largely for political reasons. *Hidden Agenda* was panned by the critics and decried by the establishment when it came out in 1990. Tory MP Ivor Stanbrook condemned it as an 'IRA film'. A group of British journalists campaigned to have it dropped from the Cannes Festival because it didn't 'represent' Britain. The *Evening Standard* critic Alexander Walker, 'who has a strong loyalist background', Loach recalls, 'made a spectacle of himself' at the press conference.

What did Loach feel about Channel 4—which supposedly supports independent

film makers—removing *Hidden Agenda* from the schedule after the IRA bomb in Warrington? 'With Channel 4', says Loach, 'the declared issue was that the audience would be so emotionally involved in Warrington that anything to do with Ireland would not be seen fairly. The undeclared issue is that anything that isn't overtly condemnatory about the IRA is in bad taste and unacceptable, especially when people are distressed. Our argument against this is that people are more open to discussing the Irish situation when something like Warrington happens.'

Loach points out that the media completely divorced the bomb in Warrington from the Irish War. 'Warrington was presented as if it had nothing to do with the British being in Ireland. The unacceptable things that Britain is doing there have not only had a devastating effect on the Irish, but have further corrupted British political life.'

His description of the treatment of *Which Side Are You On?*, the 1985 documentary about the miners' strike, casts light on the way the media twist current events. Executives on the *South Bank Show* claimed that Loach's film was 'politically weighted' and particularly objected to a sequence which showed the police baton-charging miners at Orgreave. 'We had arguments in the cutting room', recalls Loach. 'Melvyn [Bragg] came along a bit but the key figure was Nick Elliott, one of the guys who's just paid himself £2m in a hand-out. He turned into Hitler and said, "if you cut that, we will broadcast". We said, "No, we won't cut it".'

After *Which Side Are You On?* won an award in Florence, 'Melvyn negotiated with Channel 4 to put it out'. But Channel 4 was also at pains to maintain 'balance': 'The pay-off was giving Jimmy Reid [the ex-Stalinist shop steward turned rabid anti-union commentator] half an hour straight to camera attacking the miners' leadership the next week. That was somehow their balance.' Loach points out that 'censorship is more acute when there is something at stake like the miners' strike', but 'ten years after, they would tolerate *Which Side Are You On?* because they know the end of the story: they know they won'.

Loach argues with fluency that state censorship is both insidious and discreet: 'The government appoints people to the key posts in the media who have a very subtle understanding that they are guarding the long-term strategic interests of the state. These people are in turn involved with the people who write the news and so on. They'll often be quite anti-government, but not 'anti' the long term consensus on which they feel the state is based. So they can be very critical of say, Thatcher or Wilson, while being quite censorious on class issues.'

It's not censorship imposed in a crude way by the government. The state has a very subtle, very British way of doing things, so it appears that the government isn't censoring.'

He argues too that censorship is nothing new. 'We think of the sixties as a very uncensorious time, but that was when they banned *The War Game*. The worst period was the early eighties when producers and commissioning editors were in the thrall of Thatcherism. I was particularly censored but other people were as well then.'

So where does Loach himself stand on the issue of censorship? 'All censorship is dangerous', he says—but then concedes that some censorship is necessary. 'It's a difficult case to argue', he says, choosing his words carefully. 'You have to make a political judgement about the things being said. It's a liberal dilemma. We say we are opposed to censorship on everything; but we therefore allow the fascists to say what they want. I am not in favour of allowing something that promoted fascism or racial hatred or the equivalent against minorities who are vulnerable. If you had a contemporary film which actively encouraged supporters of the far right, I would', he says, 'not want it shown.'

Isn't it dangerous to give the state which he rightly says 'operates censorship in its own class interests' more power to do so? Loach ducks the issue: 'It's not up to me. It's an entirely academic question.'

Loach's latest film, *Raining Stones*, the story of a man on the dole scamming to pay for his daughter's communion, is a commentary on working class survival in modern Britain. How, I wondered, does Loach's portrayal of working class lives differ from, say, that of Alan Bleasdale, who wrote *Boys from the Blackstuff* and *GBH*? 'I don't want to be unfair to Bleasdale', says Loach, 'but I think the views I share with script-writers like Jim Allen are far more positive and optimistic. The last scenes from *Boys From the Black Stuff* were very despairing; and the working class characters were reduced to oddities and eccentrics. That's not my view at all. On the Manchester estate [where *Raining Stones* was set] people were really having a bad time, but we were invigorated by their strength.'

Loach says that he aims to 'give people the sense of their power to change things', a view he feels is shared by too few film-makers: 'There's always been very little oppositional material. You remember the highlights but the day-in day-out stuff has always been very anodyne. We know that the broadcasting institutions will follow a long-term political line. Our response can either be to walk away, or to struggle to get the odd programme out knowing we'll never affect the mainstream.'

PHOTO: SIMON NORRICK



# Sonic the scapegoat

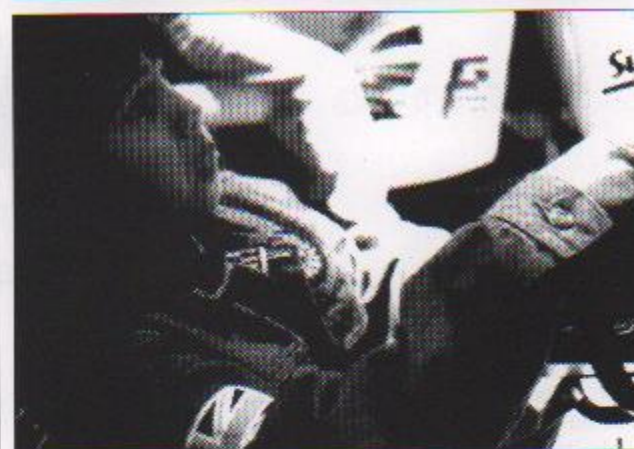
Graham Barnfield takes off his anorak and wonders why video games have created such a panic

Last night I performed a simulated act of reification, in which slices of immaterial code acted as living beings, arranged and treated as objects. That is, I played with my Game Boy.

That particular piece of cyberspace English came from *New Left Review*, the latest recruit to the ranks of video game hysterics. According to *NLR*, game players are 'socially maladjusted, anorak-wearing males', video arcades are like 'sex parlours', computer games manufacturers have a 'parasitic relationship to the military industrial-complex', while the games themselves involve the 'construction of a self...[which] pre-figures the hideous creations of a military exploiting new applications of genetics, nanotechnology—and computing.' I'm surprised that Rupert Murdoch wasn't in there somewhere as well—after all, what could be more scary than a video game made in Wapping?

Ever since Super Mario replaced Mickey Mouse as the most recognised children's icon, politicians, journalists, social workers and doctors have rushed to alert us to the impending end of civilisation. Psychologists have warned of the connection between violent computer games and juvenile crime, and have wondered what kind of adults will emerge from the arcades. Others have worried about the addictive power of 'kiddle cocaine'. Cementing the link between games and family breakdown, the *Daily Telegraph* interviewed a single mum from Croxteth who had bought the kids a console, despite supposedly feeding them on potatoes and Maltesers because of poverty. The medical profession has launched an inquiry into whether games-playing leads to epilepsy. The British Board of Film Censors has slapped a '15' certificate on *Night Trap*, a Sega games-nasty supposedly too violent for youngsters.

Journalist Tony Parsons (the hack who thinks he's hip) has accused Sonic the Hedgehog of being the grave-digger of pop music. Writers on the *Guardian's* society and women's pages have been busy counselling us on how to cope with losing touch with our eight-year old as he withdraws into a world of brutal graphics and postmodern landscapes. And *NLR* worries about our children being in hock to the military-industrial complex. No wonder that even David *Baywatch* Hasselhoff spent almost half an episode preventing his son playing *Streetfighter 2*, an international punch-up complete with



a Sumo wrestler called Honda and a fire-breathing Indian fakir.

Anyone who was a teenager in the late seventies and early eighties gets a sense of déjà vu. In those days the now quaint Space Invaders were presented as a sinister threat to society's cohesion. Extra-terrestrial jellyfish with missiles, these two-dimensional beasts wolfed our small change and were subjected to a substantial moral panic. Experts in the media and other moral custodians claimed that 'Asteroid Addiction' would lead a whole generation into truancy. TV academics warned that careers of petty crime would ensue as players sought to support their dependency. The result of the scare was that the manufacturers of the Atari console got rich, a lot of school dinner money disappeared into amusement arcades—but civilisation somehow managed to survive.

A few years later Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles came in for the same treatment. The Turtles were 'objectionable', wrote critic Bryan Appleyard, because of the assumption that 'society is in disarray and the authorities are too corrupt and incompetent to do anything about it.' The message of Turtle films, argued Appleyard, was that 'Western values have failed, only those alien systems can protect us.'

It tells you something about the society in which we live when our moral guardians become terrified about children's toys. We survived Space Invaders and Ninja Turtles, and you don't need a PhD in computer programming to know that Sega, even with its new Mega-CD, is unlikely to open the gates to the barbarians.

No matter how high a score you can rack up on your consoles, the real winner in all this is games manufacturer Sega. Having spent several million pounds launching spoof cat food and washing powder ads, only to fly-post or jam them with pirate TV, it is clear that a rebellious image sells. Last year Sega Entertainment's profits were 28 billion yen outside of Japan, and its market performance for this year has rattled even the giant Nintendo corporation. No amount of hysteria will stop them coining it. If anything, the latest video nightmare scenarios were made in marketing heaven. After all, who needs to pretend to be a pirate station when every columnist and news broadcaster is already telling your target audience that you're the devil incarnate?

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# MPTV

In November ITV plans to screen a new drama series called *A Woman's Guide to Adultery*. The chances are you will have heard something about it already. On *Breakfast Time*, perhaps, or in the paper. If so, you probably won't have heard about the cast—a dazzling array of high wattage stars including Theresa Russell, Sean Bean and Amanda Donohoe. Nor will you have heard about the blinding radiance of its script—the work of the only authentic genius in television drama. What you will have heard is that Ken Livingstone appears in it, playing a Labour Party apparatchik. Ken 'stipulated no sex scenes'. Now, Red Ken is in one scene of this three part series, but somehow it has become his show. How did this happen?

Livingstone's sex shock is only the most glamorous example of a growing tendency for politicians to turn up on non-political programmes. Paul Boateng, for example, has done the *Clothes Programme* and a weird little daytime quiz called *A Word in Your Ear*, which also featured Neil and Glenys (you know...Kinnock). Neil has also done some sad radio shows, Norman Tebbit and Austin Mitchell front a chat show on Sky. As recently as the late eighties, TV was viewed with suspicion by both the left and the right. So, when did they all get married?

In the eighties, investigative ITV documentaries were the only oppositional discourse that even tried to preach to the unconverted. The Tories saw TV as their enemy and waged a war on the TV establishment that started with crude censorship (eg. the Sinn Fein ban) and ended with the virtual dismemberment of ITV. At the same time, however, the party machines learned to manipulate the tight schedules of TV news to their own ends, providing pre-digested sound-bites and picture opportunities that fitted so nicely into the TV format that they were accepted and transmitted more or less passively by both ITN and the BBC.

By the time of the last election, the Tories had got so good at this they were able to provide an image of John Major that appeared to be amateurish, shambling and naff (John on his little soap box), but which was actually a carefully staged riposte to the suspicious glitz of the Kinnock campaign. The interesting thing about this is that at first it looked like the TV news was gunning for Major, had set out to make him look like an ineffectual wimp. Only later did we realise that this was every bit as manufactured as Maggie in her combat gear with a statue of Churchill. It was getting hard to tell the parasite from the host.

The clearest example of this confusion was *Spitting Image*. At first it looked like satire. It had a great slogan—'If we all spit together we can drown them'. In fact, having your puppet on *Spitting Image* became quickly something to brag about, only a step down from being installed at Tussauds. Puppets can't help being cuddly. All caricature is a kind of flattery. When the history of the era comes to be written, it will be seen that Luck & Flaw saved the monarchy when Norman St John Stevas couldn't.

The political establishment absorbed *Spitting Image*. Is the same

thing happening with *Have I Got News for You*? The first series had an element of danger to it. Angus Deayton and Ian Hislop especially seemed prepared to use the quiz show to publicise political scandals which before had been known only to the readership of *Private Eye*. Guest politicians who sat next to Paul Merton were likely to be shown up as tongue-tied half wits. For the first time in a very long time, a political conversation appeared that was fun and cool. But mainstream TV has a blinding-out effect that is difficult to control.

The success of the first series made Deayton into a darling of the glossies. The pre-publicity for the present series dwelt on his sex appeal. The banter between the rounds once buzzed with the latest Iraqi supergun allegations; now it is concentrated on Angus' nasal hair. The show's conspiratorial intimacy has curdled into a clubby flatulence. They still tell Maxwell jokes (the news is that Maxwell is dead). The political guests look a lot more comfortable than they used to. But this time I think they didn't win. It is not the political establishment which has absorbed the television opposition, but the blandness of TV which has absorbed the political. Where *Spitting Image* made its hate figures look driven, passionate and effective, *Have I Got News* makes them look like a few more celebrity squares.

Of course, politicians have courted publicity and sought to associate themselves with 'apolitical' fun since the days of the Roman Republic. But there is a significant difference between a *Word in Your Ear* and the Coliseum. Where the Coliseum was a venue of dizzying splendour in which the conflict of life, death and power was dramatised, *A Word in Your Ear* is a load of crap. Daytime quiz shows are peopled by Z list 'celebrities'—known in the business as Tofats (Turn Out For A Tenner).

There was a time when politicians were regarded as eminent. Suddenly the whole political caste seems to be aspiring to the condition of Lionel Blair. When Edward Heath conducted orchestras or sailed yachts, he was trying to project certain ideas about himself. What is interesting about, say, Edwina Currie on *Pebble Mill* is its almost Dadaist lack of purpose. You could not even call it self-advertising as there seems to be no self to advertise. It said nothing about Edwina except that she was still alive and available.

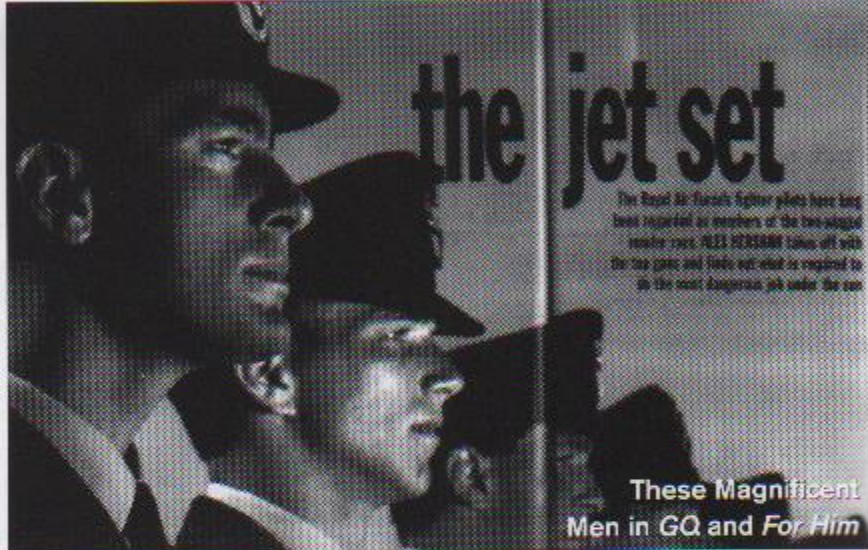
Livingstone is a special case here. He has been so savagely marginalised by his party that merely to advertise his existence is a political act, which is why I wrote him into *A Woman's Guide*. The same cannot be said, however, for Tony Blair, who was apparently seen on *That's My Dog*. What does this mean? It means that conventional politics has atrophied to the point where politicians no longer have anything to say except 'Hello', over and over again, like latchkey children ringing local radio phone-ins, sending greetings to 'anyone who knows me', finding some proof of their own existence in the answering echoes of hyper-reality, like those forlorn dog owners who stand in the middle of fields and wave at trains, hoping that we will wave back and reassure them that they really are there. ●

## They all seem to be aspiring to the condition of Lionel Blair



the secret  
**WARRIORS**

Andrew Calcutt on the  
glamourisation of militarism  
in the glossies



These Magnificent  
Men in GQ and For Him

# Style wars

Once upon a time, journalism's hip young guns used to treat the military with the same disdain as Hawkeye in MASH. Michael Herr's 1977 book *Dispatches*, which first appeared in the American magazine *Esquire*, is perhaps the best journalistic account of the Vietnam war. Herr broke with the prevailing consensus by suggesting that war could be sexy and addictive. But he patched isolated flashes of glamour into an overall description of the US army as Catch-22, made bearable only by the anaesthetising combination of drugs, the Doors and Jimi Hendrix. Herr's war was a dirty business, whichever side you were on.

No longer. For today's trendy jourmos war is synonymous with glamour. It's fashionable now to describe the way of the Western warrior as the route to self-realisation and unadulterated stimulation. War has joined women, cars and fashion as a staple ingredient of men's style magazines such as *GQ* and *FHM*. From photospreads on the sartorial style of US special forces to *Top Gun*-style reportage of the Gulf War, militarism has won sex appeal.

In 'The Jet Set' (*GQ*, February 1993), Alex Kershaw profiled 'ludicrously handsome' RAF fighter pilots—'members of the two-winged master race'. After watching 'with a lump in our throats, the televised pictures of young Tomado pilots returning from sorties during the Gulf War', he went in search of 'what it was that made...[them] different from those of us down below on Civvy Street'.

Flying in the back seat of a fighter gave Kershaw an experience somewhere

between an orgasm and a cocaine high: 'I've had my first real fix of G[force] and it feels better than most sex.' He stops himself banging helmets with the pilot (as in *Top Gun*), because 'somehow it would be too crass, too American, too belittling of...[the pilot's] jaw-dropping skills'. He is admiring and even envious of a former college mate who has found excitement, challenge and a sense of purpose in the RAF: 'a friend had left me behind...I realise I do not, after all, have the "right stuff".'

Kershaw wants to assure us that whatever else the 'top guns' may be, they are not bloodthirsty: 'They did not join the RAF with the faintest blood-lust. If they were actually to experience combat, well, that would be just part of the job.' He quotes Gareth 'Bob' Roberts: 'None of us joined to be killers. All of us joined the RAF to fly. It just happens to be a sideline which we may or may not be involved with.'

So there you have it. The Tomado crews that wasted Iraq were really on a personal development programme. I'm sure the Iraqis who were incinerated on the road to Basra would be relieved that they were simply the unfortunate victims of a sideline.

If the RAF pilots are the new glamour boys of the men's magazines, the problem with Iraqis is that they have no, well, style. In 'Bomb Squad' (*GQ*, October 1992), Stephanie Cock gave an account of the work of a UN team in Iraq 'in search of Saddam's nuclear stockpile'. UN inspector David Kay is described as 'boyishly middle-aged'. In contrast Iraqi official Sami al-Araji wore 'brown trousers slung beneath an oversized belly' and 'waved his arms about like a rug

merchant in a souk.' Another Iraqi official Jaffar dia Jaffar committed the cardinal sin (in a style magazine) of wearing a tie with 'a spot on it'. Now you would never catch Jonathan Ross doing that.

French philosopher Jean Baudrillard famously declared that the Gulf War never took place, but was merely an illusion played out on our TV screens. Some British style magazines seem to think that rather it was a style war played out on the catwalks.

Even those magazines which in the past prided themselves on their anti-war stance have joined in the new *Top Gun* mood. In the sixties and seventies the American magazine *Rolling Stone* was at the centre of the protest movement against the Vietnam War. But when the American marines invaded Somalia last Christmas, *Rolling Stone* was all in favour. 'This is the first large-scale military operation in history', gushed PJ O'Rourke, 'to be launched for purely altruistic reasons.'

O'Rourke (a liberal turned Republican reptile) paints a picture of Somalia as a sort of more nightmarish version of South Central LA: a place filled with 'packs' of thieves and 'huge wads of filth'; a country which has experienced 'the complete breakdown of everything decent and worthwhile' (except Somali women who are 'mainly beautiful'); a place where 'the average Somali' is 'the man in the gutter'.

Into this vision of hell enters a beatific George Bush, hugging orphans. 'The expression on George Bush's face', observes O'Rourke, 'was better than decency—it was pleasure.' And I bet his tie was spot-on. ●

# MARXIST

## REVIEW OF BOOKS

Daniel Nassim separates the prejudice from the analysis of Japan's national resurgence

### Merchants and samurai

**The Japanese Question: Power and Purpose in a New Era**, Kenneth B Pyle, AEI Press, £14.50 hbk

**Pacific Rift: Adventures in Big Business where Japan Meets the West**, Michael Lewis, Hodder & Stoughton, £9.99 hbk

**People and Power in the Pacific: The Struggle for the Post-Cold War Order**, Walden Bello, Pluto Press, £7.50 pbk

**The Secret Sun**, Fred Hiatt, Simon & Schuster, £14.99 hbk

**Underground in Japan**, Rey Ventura, Jonathan Cape, £7.99 pbk

There is an enormous gap between the importance of Japan and the quality of the Western literature on the subject. Japan has the world's second largest economy and a growing political profile. Yet many studies of the country consist of little more than prejudice.

*The Japanese Question* and *People and Power in the Pacific* stand out as serious studies of Japan and its relation to the wider world. In particular Kenneth Pyle, a professor at the University of Washington in Seattle, has written a book with some important innovations in the treatment of Japanese national identity. *The Japanese Question* is an unusual study of how the world looks from Japan's point of view and an examination of what he calls Japan's sense of 'national purpose'. His aim is to show how Japan's understanding of its position in the world is being transformed. This approach enables Pyle to link such apparently disparate themes as foreign policy, controversies about the school curriculum and discussions of Japanese culture. Walden Bello, a Filipino who is the executive director of the Institute for Food and Development Policy in San Francisco, has produced a useful primer on Japan's relationship to East Asia.

Japan's dilemma today lies principally in the tension between its economic power and its political and military weakness. That can be seen in the strains internal to Japanese politics between its postwar pacifist constitution and outlook and the growing recognition that Japan will have to become more assertive internationally. It can be seen too in the strains upon the alliance with America; the division of labour established during the Cold War, during which America guaranteed the peace while Japan rebuilt its economy, is coming apart at the seams.

Pyle starts his examination of Japan's national purpose with a fresh look at the postwar era. He suggests that 'much more than has been commonly recognised, Japan's purpose in the postwar world was the result of an

opportunistic adaptation to the conditions in which the Japanese leadership found their nation, and a shrewd pursuit of a sharply defined national interest within the constraints that the postwar international order placed upon them' (p20).

The phrase 'opportunistic adaptation' is an important one. Immediately after the war the USA demilitarised Japan and redefined it as a pacifist state, a concept enshrined in Article 9 of the constitution. Japanese leaders expressed public support for the 'peace constitution', while seizing the opportunity to concentrate on economic growth. In the view of many American commentators the Japanese hitched a free ride at the USA's expense.

The postwar sense of purpose was codified in what is generally called the 'Yoshida Doctrine', after the conservative prime minister Shigeru Yoshida (1946-47 and 1948-54). The three main tenets of the Yoshida Doctrine as defined by Pyle (p25) were: Japan's economic rehabilitation must be the prime national goal; Japan should remain lightly-armed and avoid involvement in international political-strategic issues; to gain a long-term guarantee for its own security, Japan would provide bases for the US army, navy and air force.

The conception of Japan as a 'merchant nation' was the dominant one in the postwar period. Japan was to concentrate on economic growth while 'samurai nations', like the United States, would ensure global security. Not everyone accepted the metaphor of samurai and merchant, but most Japanese conservatives agreed that Japan would be an economic rather than a military power.

Naohiro Amaya, a top bureaucrat at MITI (the Ministry of International Trade and Industry) was one of Japan's leading exponents of the merchant nation theory. In a controversial article published in March 1980 in the *Bungei Shunju*, Japan's leading conservative magazine, he explained how a merchant nation had to behave in ►

a world dominated by warriors. 'For hares to multiply in the jungle, and for merchants to prosper in the warriors' society, it is necessary to have superb information-gathering ability, planning ability, intuition, diplomatic skills, and at times whining sycophancy'. He went on to say that 'if circumstances compel, Japan must grovel before the military nations'.

Amaya did not believe that Japan should be prepared to grovel under all circumstances. He warned that if Japan's security was threatened, 'the time will have arrived to forsake our merchant past and become a warrior nation'. But on balance he believed that Japan should preserve its merchant role for as long as possible.

Amaya's restatement of the longstanding merchant nation thesis provoked uproar, because it was written at a time when Japan was beginning to re-examine itself. In the late seventies and the eighties, the Yoshida doctrine came under attack. For the far right of Japanese politics, a marginal force throughout the postwar years, Article 9 of the constitution had always been an abomination. But the main movers in the conservative renaissance of the eighties were two prime ministers: Masayoshi Ohira (1978-80) and Yasuhiro Nakasone (1982-87).

The intellectual foundation for the right-wing resurgence was laid by Ohira. He commissioned nine study groups, consisting of the country's leading conservative intellectuals and bureaucrats, to examine various aspects of Japanese society. These included Japan's national security, culture, the economy and its relation with the Pacific Basin.

Ohira died before the study groups presented their final reports. It was not until Nakasone's premiership that many of the ideas were implemented. Pyle defines the four main elements of Nakasone's grand design: Japan would no longer be a follower nation; Japan would be prepared for global leadership by being remade into an international state; Japan would develop a new liberal, rather than traditional, nationalism; Japan would assume an active role in global strategic affairs.

Some of Pyle's terminology is misleading. For example, the call for a 'liberal nationalism' means that Japan should be less parochial. Nakasone believes that the Japanese should not just concern themselves with economic growth. In his view they also need a sense of self-confidence based on the quality of the nation's tradition. The main reason for reforming the education system was to gear it more towards inculcating a sense of national pride among Japanese schoolchildren.

One of the consequences of the growing tide of nationalism that Nakasone tried to promote is clearly drawn out in *Underground in Japan*. As an illegal migrant worker in Japan for almost a year, Rey Ventura experienced the growing force of Japanese racism at first hand. He was one of a growing army of illegal migrant workers in Japan, now estimated to number about 300 000.

That nationalism—and consequently racism—is growing in Japan is clear to see. The more interesting question is why is it happening now? Pyle fails to spell out why Japan's leadership felt the need to start forging a new national identity. He tends to take the debates at face value rather than relate them to broader developments in the real world.

The conservative resurgence in Japan coincided with

a growing perception of American decline. Often this was experienced as a failure on America's part to defend Japan from communism or from third world nationalism. For almost three decades the Japanese economy had boomed while the US, playing the role of world policeman, had ensured a relatively stable global environment. But in the seventies the Japanese economy began to lose its dynamism just as America's world power began to falter.

By far the most important indicator of American decline was its defeat in Vietnam. It was not the loss of Vietnam itself that was so devastating. It was that it proved the US to be no longer all-powerful. The fall of Saigon in April 1975 was a symbolic event in Japanese history as well as American. For Japanese conservatives it meant that their nation would have to become more assertive and self-reliant.

The defeat in Vietnam coincided with growing economic problems inside America and foreign policy reverses overseas. The report commissioned by Ohira on national security noted in 1980 that 'the most fundamental fact in the changing international situation in the 1970s is the termination of clear American supremacy in both military and economic spheres' (quoted in Y Nagatomi [ed], *Masayoshi Ohira's Proposal: To Evolve the Global Society*, Foundation for Advanced Information and Research, p232).

Even Amaya's 1980 article, while holding to the merchant nation concept of Japan, spelt out a positive litany of American failures: 'On top of Vietnam came the Watergate affair, the Arab-Israeli war and the oil crisis of 1973, uncontrollable inflation combined with the loss of American industry's competitive urge, the decline of the dollar, the exposure of the embarrassing gap between the promise and reality of president Jimmy Carter's human rights diplomacy, and the incredibly swift fall of the Shah of Iran. Against this backdrop there were menacing Soviet advances into Angola, Ethiopia, South Yemen and Afghanistan, the decline of US influence in the Middle East peace negotiations, and the erosion of American military superiority over the Soviet Union to the point of actual inferiority in some respects.'

Japan has been trying to come to terms with American decline for almost 20 years. In response Japan has gradually taken a more activist role in the world. Gone are the days when, as one former ministry of finance official recalled, 'Japanese delegations to international conferences were ridiculed as 'triple S' delegations: smiling, silent, sometimes sleeping' (P Volcker and T Gyohten, *Changing Fortunes: The World's Money and the Threat to American Leadership*, p57).

As long as the Cold War existed, the basic relationship between the USA and Japan remained intact. Japan's growing world role from the 1970s was more of a modification than a rejection of the previous relationship. Anti-communism provided a justification for an alliance in which the US was still the senior partner. The existence of the Soviet Union provided legitimacy and coherence to the relationship between the USA and Japan.

Even the best authors on Japan have failed to come to terms with the implications of the end of the Cold War. The more far-sighted, like Pyle and Bello, recognise that some modification is needed. But they do not fully grasp that none of the old rules apply any longer. Any attempt to

preserve the old US-Japan relationship, even if in a modified form, is doomed to failure.

Pyle's answer to these tensions is that the USA should take a more far-sighted view. Rather than cling on to existing relationships the US should give Japan some leeway to develop a broader role in the world. The two should, in his view, be tied into a multilateral relationship with other countries in Asia, with the USA still playing a leading role.

If Pyle had explored the changing context more fully, he would see that re forging US-Japan relations cannot be so straightforward. It is not a simple question of clever diplomacy and new multilateral institutions. The US-Japan relationship was stable after the Second World War because it was tied with a bond of common interest. In today's world the forces of conflict are greater and the ties of mutual interest are weaker.

Walden Bello describes a region in which the USA is the leading military power and Japan the economic giant. America became a power in the Pacific at the end of the nineteenth century. By the 1880s American planters had taken control of Hawaii. After the Spanish-American war of 1898 the US took over the Philippines and Guam in the Western Pacific. General Arthur MacArthur, chief of the American army that colonised the country, described the Philippines as the 'finest group of islands in the world'. Its strategic location gave its captors 'a means of protecting American interests with the very least output of physical power, that has the effect of a commanding position in itself to retard hostile action' (*People and Power in the Pacific*, p10).

It was MacArthur's son Douglas, the US Pacific commander in the Second World War, who most clearly expressed America's vision of the Pacific after the war with Japan. 'The strategic boundaries of the United States were no longer along the western shore of North and South America; they lay along the eastern coast of the Asiatic continent.' (p13) And the boundaries have stayed there ever since 1945, with the USA retaining a massive military presence.

Yet Japan is the leading economic player in East Asia today. It has the highest levels of investment, the largest trade flows, is the main source of high technology and the chief provider of bilateral aid. Japan has established a division of labour in which Japanese goods are produced on a regional basis. In this set-up, the capital-intensive functions are usually performed in Japan, while labour-intensive functions are carried out in countries where labour is cheaper.

Bello underestimates how unstable this gap between economic and military power makes the region. The situation he describes is relatively new. Japan only began to play an economically dominant role in the eighties. As Japan extends its economic reach and the US suffers more domestic problems, the geopolitical set-up in East Asia will become more fragile. To make matters even more complex, both Russia and China have at least some capacity to play a regional role.

The growing power of Japan has led some Americans to make outspoken comments against what is ostensibly an ally nation. The top US marine corps general in Japan, Henry C Stackpole III, told Fred Hiatt in an interview that 'The Japanese consider themselves racially superior. They

feel they have a handle on the truth, and their economic growth has proved that. They have achieved the Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere economically, without guns.' He added that American troops should remain in Japan for years 'largely because no-one wants a re armed, resurgent Japan. So we are the cap in the bottle, if you will'. (*Washington Post*, 27 March 1990, quoted in *The Japanese Question*, p16) Although the general was rebuked by the Bush administration, there is no doubt that his views are widely held.

Stackpole's interviewer, Fred Hiatt, was the *Washington Post* correspondent in Tokyo from 1987 to 1990. He has packaged American fears into the plot of his novel, *The Secret Sun*. His hero, an American journalist (naturally), has unravelled a plot by Japanese scientists to use miniature atomic weapons against the US. The combination of prejudice against Japanese micro-electronics and the fear of revenge for Hiroshima are characteristic of the new genre of Japan thrillers.

*The Secret Sun* does have a few redeeming features. One of them is a cameo character called Theo Zarsky: 'A magazine editor from New York who had spent three months in Tokyo and then written a book telling the world everything that was wrong with Japan and the Japanese.' (p44-5) Zarsky is evidently based on one of America's leading 'Japan experts'. *The Secret Sun* also has the dubious merit of containing the most ludicrous sex scene that I have read in years, but I won't spoil it for you.

A real life Theo Zarsky can be found in the shape of Michael Lewis, an associate editor of the *Spectator* and best-selling author, whose *Pacific Rift* tells us in all seriousness that 'anyone who has seen one of the 17 (and counting) Japanese-produced Godzilla movies has also seen, in miniature, the Japanese view of the world' (p17). You might just as well try to understand the British view of the world from watching an episode of *Thunderbirds*.

Lewis' tale focuses on a Japanese businessman in New York and an American businessman in Tokyo. As well as interviewing his two subjects, he has evidently made a short trip to Japan, read a few books and skimmed some press cuttings. Unfortunately he seems to believe this has turned him into an instant expert.

Like many other books on the subject, *Pacific Rift* and *The Secret Sun* are examples of the growing American paranoia about Japan. Although both books are ostensibly about Japan, they tell us more about American fears and anxieties. Indeed it is to anti-Japanese chauvinism that Rey Ventura's otherwise fine *Underground Japan* owes its publication. Whatever the realities of discrimination in Japan, the charges of racism that Americans like General Stackpole make against the Japanese are cynical in the extreme. The most striking feature of Ventura's story is how familiar it sounds. Ventura describes a routine of discrimination by employers, harassment by indigenous workers and coercion by the police. The privations that he endured are common to migrant workers everywhere, whether Mexicans in the USA, Turks in Germany or Bengalis in Britain.

For American thriller writers, the image of Japanese racism is an excuse for their own Japanese-bashing. For those serious about understanding Japan, these developments are best understood in the context of greater international tensions.

**Post-War Britain: A Political History New Edition 1945-92**, Alan Sked and Chris Cook, Penguin, £7.99 pbk

This is a fine introduction to postwar British history. The first edition was published in 1979 and this new version takes the story up to the fall of Margaret Thatcher and the Major premiership. The strength of the book remains the firm narrative and good prose which enable the authors to impart a great deal of material without overwhelming the reader. For anyone familiar with this history and especially the political views of Alan Sked, Euro-sceptic candidate in the Newbury by-election, the most interesting sections are both new and short: the new introduction and Chapter 15, 'From Thatcher to Major', and in particular the last three pages—'A Final Judgement on the Thatcher Years'.

In the introduction Cook and Sked claim that they have 'striven to resist' making the book an analysis of Britain's decline. Yet their concluding section begins with the insight that the hope that the Thatcher government had reversed decline between 1985 and 1988 was no longer credible. The same section ends with their comment on the Major/Hurd acceptance of the Maastricht treaty: 'Great Britain had not merely declined. She had now given up.'

Sked and Cook hope that the one British institution to survive intact is the monarchy. Time to start writing the fifth edition.

*Alan Harding*

**To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for the New World Order**, Thomas J Knock, Oxford University Press, £27.50 hbk

Woodrow Wilson was the US president who took America into the First World War and sought to shape the new order which emerged from it. In the preface to this book, Thomas Knock, an associate professor of history at the Southern Methodist University, argues that with the end of the Cold War and the talk of a New World Order, 'Wilson's message still awaits its realisation by the makers of American foreign policy.' (px) As far as Knock is concerned, Wilson's message, his 'progressive internationalism' with its central appeal for collective cooperation and disarmament institutionalised through a League of Nations, can act as a point of departure for American foreign policy today.

Knock's thesis is that Wilson's ideas have become more relevant today. George Bush's proposed New World Order, for example, with its emphasis upon international cooperation through the United Nations, suggests that Wilson's time may have, belatedly, arrived. There are other apparent parallels. At the end of the First World War, Wilson's America had to renegotiate its role in the international capitalist system; today Bill Clinton's USA faces a similar problem, albeit in very different circumstances.

Knock's concern is to celebrate how he believes history has vindicated Wilson and condemned his critics and detractors. The Wilsonian project, as Knock says, is apparently still before us (p275).

The enthusiastic endorsement of Wilson today by those who criticised him in the past suggests that this renewed debate has been motivated, not by historical interest, but by the changing contemporary situation—the quest for a coherent US foreign policy with which to negotiate the post-Cold War world. And if there is one lesson to remember about Woodrow Wilson, it is that his quest for a new world order founded on the rock of rivalries among the Western powers—the same tensions that the end of the Cold War has revealed.

*Charles Longford*

**Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Relations**, Daniel P Moynihan, Oxford University Press, £17.95 hbk

Democratic senator Moynihan argues that ethnicity has always been the driving force in international politics, and, until Washington accepts this, it will be unable to construct a viable foreign policy. To substantiate his case, Moynihan claims that as far back as the seventies, he predicted that the Soviet Union would collapse into the current ethnic cauldron (p23).

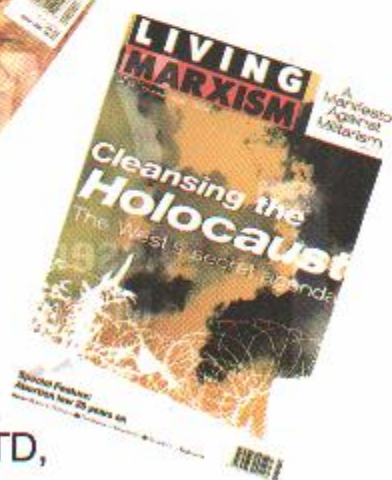
Moynihan's more perceptive foreign policy colleague, Stanley Hoffman, in his kind review of *Pandaemonium* in the *New York Times*, correctly points out that ethnic conflicts resulted from Soviet disintegration but were not the principal cause of it (4 April 1993). In any case, Western ethnologists like Moynihan, Richard Pipes and Hélène Carrère d'Encausse had always placed their hopes on a Soviet Muslim uprising against the Kremlin, whereas in fact the central Asian republics have proved even more loyal to Moscow than most Muscovites.

The interesting aspect of *Pandaemonium* is the fear of nationalism that Moynihan betrays. This represents a trend that until recently was well hidden in the West, where nationalists used to be held to be good or evil depending on which side they took in the Cold War. *Pandaemonium* by contrast locates the source of modern barbarism in ethnicity. Looking for villains in the past, Moynihan castigates both the First World War US president Woodrow Wilson and the Bolsheviks for unleashing the Pandora's box of nationalist emotions with their slogans for self-determination. Wilson may be forgiven for his 'fit of absent-mindedness' but 'from the outset communist politics were the politics of ethnicity' (p110). With his crusade for self-determination for the Sudeten Germans, Hitler apparently merely carried on where Wilson and Lenin left off.

Today, Moynihan finds his nationalist scapegoats mainly in the third world and Eastern Europe. To impose some order in an age of chaos, the newer nations of Africa and Asia may have to be deprived of fuller political rights like self-determination and democracy: 'It will be necessary for the United States and the democracies of Western Europe to reconsider...the idea that democracy is a universal option for all nations.' (pp168-9) With ideas like these abroad in the American senate, Lenin's support for the right of nations to self-determination is more apposite than ever.

*Andy Clarkson*

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