

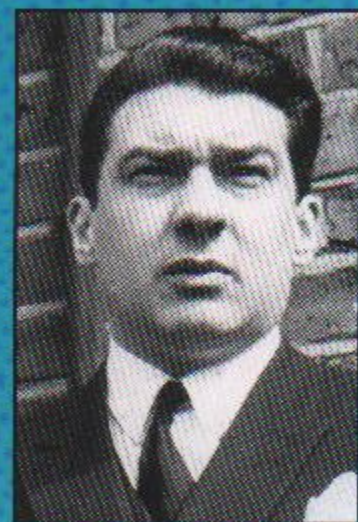
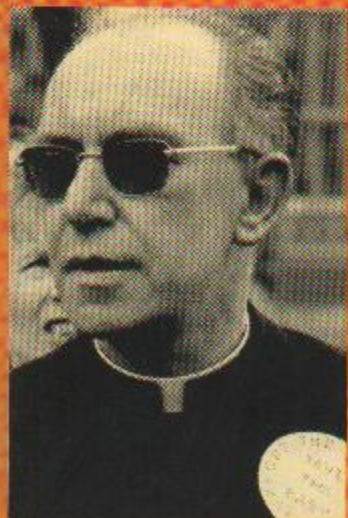
LIVING MARXISM

November 1989 No13 £1.50



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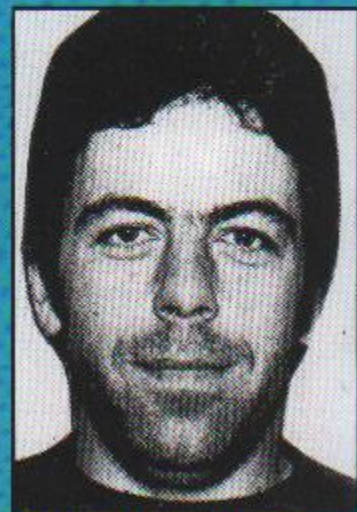
**The RU486
scandal: the
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want to ban**



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Hated: Myra Hindley



Forgotten: Lenny Murphy-
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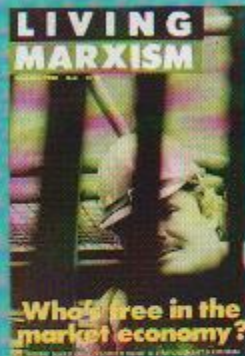
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in Blackburn

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acid house parties!



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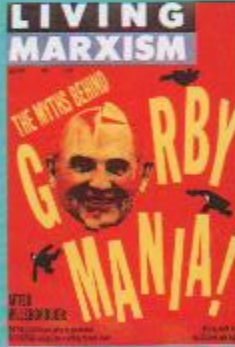
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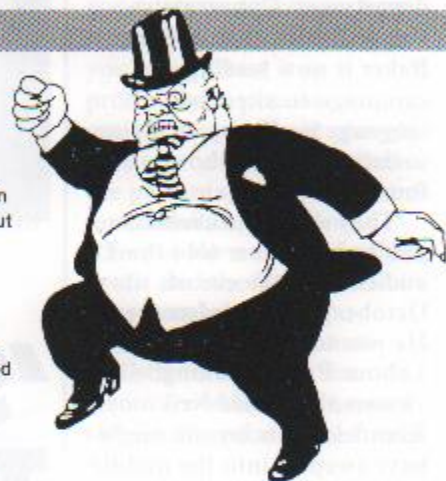
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LIVING MARXISM

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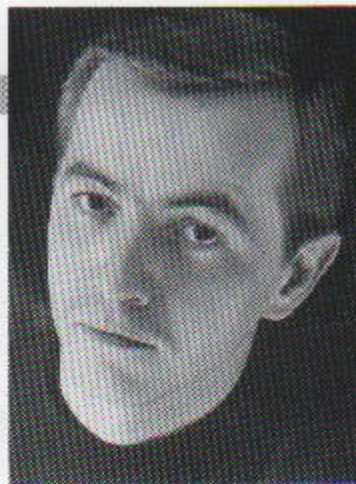
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After rewriting the school curriculum and the history of imperial Britain while in charge of the education department, Conservative Party chairman Kenneth Baker is now leading a campaign to alter the language itself—by changing socialism into a four-letter word.

'They are still *socialists*, you know', Baker told the TV audience on the eve of October's Tory conference. He was talking about the Labour Party, warning viewers that while Neil Kinnock's new broom might have swept it into the middle ground and polished up its support for the market economy, Labour was still not a proper respectable party. It was irresponsible, spendthrift, and not fit to govern; or socialist, for short.

The Tories would now like to create an environment in which, simply by labelling your opponents as socialists, you are guaranteed occupancy of the moral high ground. It is reminiscent of the way in which George Bush repeatedly called Michael Dukakis 'a liberal' during last year's US presidential election, as if that were enough to brand the Democratic Party candidate as the political equivalent of a cocaine trafficker.

The 'liberal' trick (and Dukakis' defensive response to it) helped to turn the opinion polls around for Bush at a time when he clearly had no policies to deal with America's escalating economic problems. Now, in times of even worse economic trouble, the Tories hope that they can pull off the same stunt. No doubt this explains their appointment of a new adviser: Richard Wirthlin, the American inventor of the 'power phrase' (there liberal, here socialist) and the man who masterminded Bush's campaign of religious and



MICK HUME
EDITOR

'SOCIALIST'- THE NEW ALL-PURPOSE INSULT

racist slurs against Dukakis. As the Thatcher/Lawson economic miracle sinks into the mire, British politics look set to get very dirty indeed.

What does the word socialist mean in Baker's lexicon? It is supposed to conjure up images of spend, spend, spend policies, of government on the never-never, building up foolish debts today that will ruin the country tomorrow.

For example, Tory pretender Michael Heseltine wants to embarrass the government at a conference fringe meeting, over its claim that record trade deficits don't much matter. So he says that any small shopkeeper (like Thatcher's father) would recognise the notion that he could trade at a loss and make up the shortfall by borrowing as 'socialist naivety'. The power phrase is applied, and the argument is supposedly settled.

The use of socialist as a swear-word may well prove

quite effective in unnerving Kinnock and his moderate machine men. After all, Labour leaders are almost as keen as the Stalinists of the Hungarian ex-Communist Party to distance themselves from any trace of anti-capitalism. Labour can probably be relied upon to respond to the assault by restating its faith in free enterprise, strong armed forces and so on, confirming Thatcher's assertion that there is no alternative to her policies, whatever you think of her party.

But then, the Labour Party's socialism never meant much more than a few pence on income tax and a few nationalised industries anyway. Those of us who believe in the thoroughgoing transformation of society have a very different response to the Tory accusation that socialism is a naive approach based on the wasteful use of resources and consequent indebtedness.

First, if 'spend, spend, spend' and 'on the never-never' are the slogans of

socialism, then Thatcher, Lawson, Heseltine and the rest are Red in tooth and claw. Because Britain's capitalists are the ones who have built an economy based on massive borrowing and the shuffling of paper money, rather than the creation of genuine new wealth.

Credit has been the key to the prominent economic features of the late Thatcher years, such as the strength of share prices, house prices and the pound. Borrowing by the billion, the capitalists pushed market price-tags way beyond the real value of the assets involved. That is how fortunes could be made and lost in an afternoon, all by the flick of a dealer's keyboard, without any alteration in the resources available in the real world outside.

It is indeed naive to imagine that such a game of Monopoly could go on indefinitely. The crisis in the currency, stock and housing markets which began to

develop in October suggests that the game is just about up, and that the treasury and businessmen are about to be called to account for the borrowed time and money on which they have been living.

As for waste, that is another subject on which the Tories and their friends need no lessons from any socialist. In pursuit of short-term personal gain, the capitalists have squandered the potential that exists for developing the world's wealth.

All of the Conservatives' sophisticated figure-fiddling cannot disguise the fact that investment in industry and in research and development have dropped through the floor while Britain was supposedly booming. Why? You do not have to be a treasury economist to see that our society is far from overstocked with basic goods, let alone high technology. Yet in a system where profit is king, those few who control the capital prefer to tie it up in an inflated art market and make millions out of the movement of an auctioneer's gavel-arm than to invest it in a less profitable working economy where it could create what we need.

Contrary to the Conservative view, waste and inefficiency are built into the enterprise economy. 'The market' is an anarchic mechanism through which different companies produce the same shoddy goods, wrap them in different shades of expensive packaging, throw them into the ring and hope some of them sell. They would rather destroy what's left than give it away.

As Tony Kennedy points out in this issue, the housing market looks set to become a grotesque example of the system in operation, with the numbers of homeless and of empty houses reaching new highs at the same time. The supposed first law of

capitalist economics, 'supply and demand', is in practice strictly limited; we can demand all we want, but so long as they are in control they will only supply it if they smell profit.

And it's not just consumer goods; medical and other scientific advances are also restrained and destroyed by the profiteers. Ann Bradley's account of how a simple abortion pill is being effectively banned from Britain, because the drug barons fear moral boycotts of their other products, is bad enough. Then there is the

sordid saga of research into a cure for Aids in America. Some drug corporations refuse to make it a priority because it's not as lucrative as asthma (ie, Aids patients die too quickly to buy many drugs); others hold back the release of new drugs while they fight court battles over the profitable patent.

None of this is natural or inevitable. It is the product of a system of paper money and criminal waste. The alternative, of progress through the unrestrained development of society's material, scientific and intellectual resources, is far from a naive vision. Indeed, the potential is already given in the industries, research centres, etc, which exist today, but which are distorted and even destroyed by the dictates of private profit.

Take the current issue of imports, exports and trade deficits. We live in a world divided among rival capitalist nations, each striving for

success at the expense of its competitors. The growth of productivity and technological know-how in one, such as Japan or Germany, is paralleled by decline in another, such as America or Britain. The response of the weaker capitalists is to invest abroad and demand import controls at home, thus keeping wealth out of the country and closing down domestic industries.

Yet in a unified world economy, where nations were not competing for market shares, it would make sense

for different quantities of different goods to be produced in different parts of the globe according to ability, and distributed according to need. An advance by one would be a gain for all. And its use could quickly be generalised, rather than hoarded as a business secret. The close-knit character of the modern international economy, in which a market move in New York makes waves in Tokyo, Frankfurt and London within minutes, demonstrates that world planning is now more practicable than ever before. The barrier remains the profit law, and the rival states which protect it.

Nor need the alternative simply be a matter of redistributing existing resources and sharing out the misery. Without the restraining hand of profitability, the productive capacities of the world economy could be increased beyond recognition.

Today it is hard to get

resources for investment, because governments and financiers keep interest rates high to ensure they get a good return. Once you have secured an expensive loan, you must invest it as profitably as possible to survive. You will not plough it into productive sectors if the percentages are better in junk bonds or jewellery. Remove the motive of private profit and the lender-borrower relationship, however, and it becomes realistic to draw on the resources of society in order to raise the productive forces

for the good of society.

Removing the profit barrier so as to realise society's potential is not, of course, an economic matter. It is a question of politics, of a struggle to decide who is to be in control. Capitalism is not a policy or an idea. It is an entire mode of production, based on private property and exploitation, reflected in the division between social classes. Removing the profit barrier will require removing the class which built it from power.

There is no call for being defensive in response to Tory attacks on socialism. People can take their futures into their own hands, if we set about getting our hands on the wealth and the power in the present. The starting point for *Living Marxism* is to popularise the cause of efficient growth and social progress, by spreading the message that capitalism is the dirtiest word in the English language.

If 'spend, spend, spend' and 'on the never-never' are the slogans of socialism, then Thatcher, Lawson and the rest are Red in tooth and claw

The RU486 scandal

The abortion pill they want to ban

Ann Bradley explains why a new pill that could make abortion safer and easier may never be available in Britain—not for medical reasons, but because of concerns about morality and money

For more than a year, women's magazines and medical journals have heralded the arrival of a new abortion pill. RU486, or Mifegyne to use its brand name, was launched last year in France, making it possible for over 30 000 French women to have an abortion without surgery. The manufacturer, Roussel Uclaf, claims that already a quarter of early abortions are carried out by RU486. Yet despite extensive trials in British hospitals, where both doctors and patients were enthusiastic about the drug, it may never be made available to British women.

Roussel Uclaf has not even applied for a licence to market its discovery in Britain. The official reason given by its British spokesman, Tony Eton, is 'the need to assess the marketing experience in France', but he admits there are other factors to consider. The main other factor that the company is considering is the strength of the international anti-abortion campaigns, which have condemned RU486 as 'an anti-human pesticide to be used in a chemical warfare against women and children'.

The drug is remarkable, but not particularly controversial in medical terms. It was developed by Dr Etienne-Emile Baulieu, a consultant for Roussel and an expert in hormones at France's National Institute of Health and Medical Research. Baulieu's road to the abortion pill began back in 1970, when he became the first scientist to identify the cells of the uterus (womb) that receive messages from the hormone progesterone. Progesterone gives signals to the uterus to hold the fertilised egg. Without it a woman cannot get pregnant.

Baulieu realised that the knowledge of progesterone receptors might make it possible to devise a method to block or terminate a pregnancy. The aim was to find a substance that would prevent the uterus from receiving progesterone and thus stop it holding the fertilised egg. He explored chemicals that might serve as progesterone impostors. These, Baulieu hoped, would latch on to the receptors and occupy them, but they would not deliver the correct messages to the

uterus and so the egg would be lost. He called these impostor chemicals 'anti-hormones'.

It took 10 years for chemists at Roussel's laboratories to adapt this process to make an abortion pill. In 1980 Roussel's chief chemist, George Teutsch, managed to graft a complex atom cluster on to a progesterone-like molecule, to make it chemically different from progesterone, yet similar enough to fool the human body. RU486 was born, and after a further eight years of refinements and tests it was ready for use.

Take three

This complex scientific operation made abortion potentially simple for women. RU486 is a very straightforward method from a woman's point of view. Rather than having to undergo invasive surgery, with the small but real physical risks and the psychological trauma that it entails, she simply takes three pills. Two days later she returns to the hospital and is given an injection or a suppository of prostaglandin, which promotes contractions. These expel

PHOTO: Laurie Haskell



the fertilised egg. After seven days she goes back again for a check-up to ensure that the abortion is complete. RU486 is 90 to 95 per cent effective in the early weeks of pregnancy, and 80 per cent effective at two months. In France the drug is administered by doctors in specialised family planning clinics.

'A normal period'

Most of the women involved in British RU486 trials at Withington Hospital in Manchester gave the method an unequivocal thumbs up. A few found the method very painful, but Dr Peter Macrow, who led the trials, told the medical magazine *General Practitioner* that in his experience 'the whole process is far less physically and psychologically traumatic for women'. Most of the women described it as 'more natural' and 'more like having a normal period'. In fact Dr Baulieu has been so pleased with the response that he has suggested that it might be possible to develop RU486 as a once-a-month contraceptive pill.

But while the arrival of RU486 has made abortion less traumatic for women, it has introduced considerable trauma into the lives of

many businessmen, some of whom must be wishing that Dr Baulieu himself had never been born. The French launch of RU486 in September 1988 sparked off a national controversy, and the controversy has been exported before the product.

It takes a lot to come between a capitalist and the source of his profits, but within a month of potentially lucrative RU486 going on to the market the manufacturers withdrew it. Company chairman Dr Edouard Sakiz issued this statement:

'Faced with the emotional response from parts of French and foreign public opinion provoked by the possibility of using the drug for aborting pregnancies, the Roussel Uclaf group has decided to suspend immediately its availability in France and abroad.'

In this case 'emotional response' is a euphemism for death threats, furious demonstrations and boycotts.

After it announced the intended launch of RU486, Roussel found itself under siege from anti-abortion campaigners. Families of company officials received death threats. Sakiz claimed to be receiving up to 25 threatening letters a day. Most were unsigned but sinister: 'Assassins, stop

your work of death', written in red ink, 'Your pill kills babies and you will suffer the consequences'. Hundreds of anti-abortion demonstrators rallied outside the company headquarters in the Boulevard des Invalides, Paris, and handed out leaflets accusing the company of genocide.

Roussel directors had good reason to take the situation seriously. Catholic fundamentalists had already demonstrated their ability to carry out direct action by burning down a Paris cinema showing Martin Scorsese's *Last Temptation of Christ*. One man had been seriously injured in the attack.

The company also faced a call for an international boycott of its products. Roussel Uclaf cancelled production of RU486.

Events then took a curious turn. With an uncharacteristic display of concern for the rights of women, the French government stepped in. Health minister Claude Evin insisted that Roussel resume distribution. At noon on Friday 28 October 1988, Evin issued a communiqué explaining that, under the law passed in 1975, 'voluntary pregnancy termination is a right for the women of France' and that the new pill constituted a medical advance in so far as it enabled women to have abortions without having to undergo an operation under anaesthetic. 'Once this new discovery existed for the women of this country', declared Evin, 'the product virtually became the moral property of women'.

As owner of more than a third of Roussel Uclaf shares, the French government was in a strong bargaining position. Less than one month after it had been withdrawn, RU486 was back on the market. With the moral responsibility shifted on to the shoulders of the government Roussel was more than happy to continue production. Tony Eton claims that once the 'fuss had died down' the company was 'not too worried about a commercial boycott as most of their products are sold to GPs who are less likely to be swayed by anti-abortion hysteria'.

The French government's enthusiasm for the abortion pill was not entirely motivated by concern for the rights of women. The government has been legally committed to abortion on request during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy since 1975, and since 1982 it has been obliged to cover abortion costs on the national health service. RU486 would have considerable cost advantages in keeping the government's bills down, since there is no need for surgeons, anaesthetists and theatre staff.

Aside from the attractiveness of providing abortion on the cheap, the French government's defence of RU486 was also prompted by the

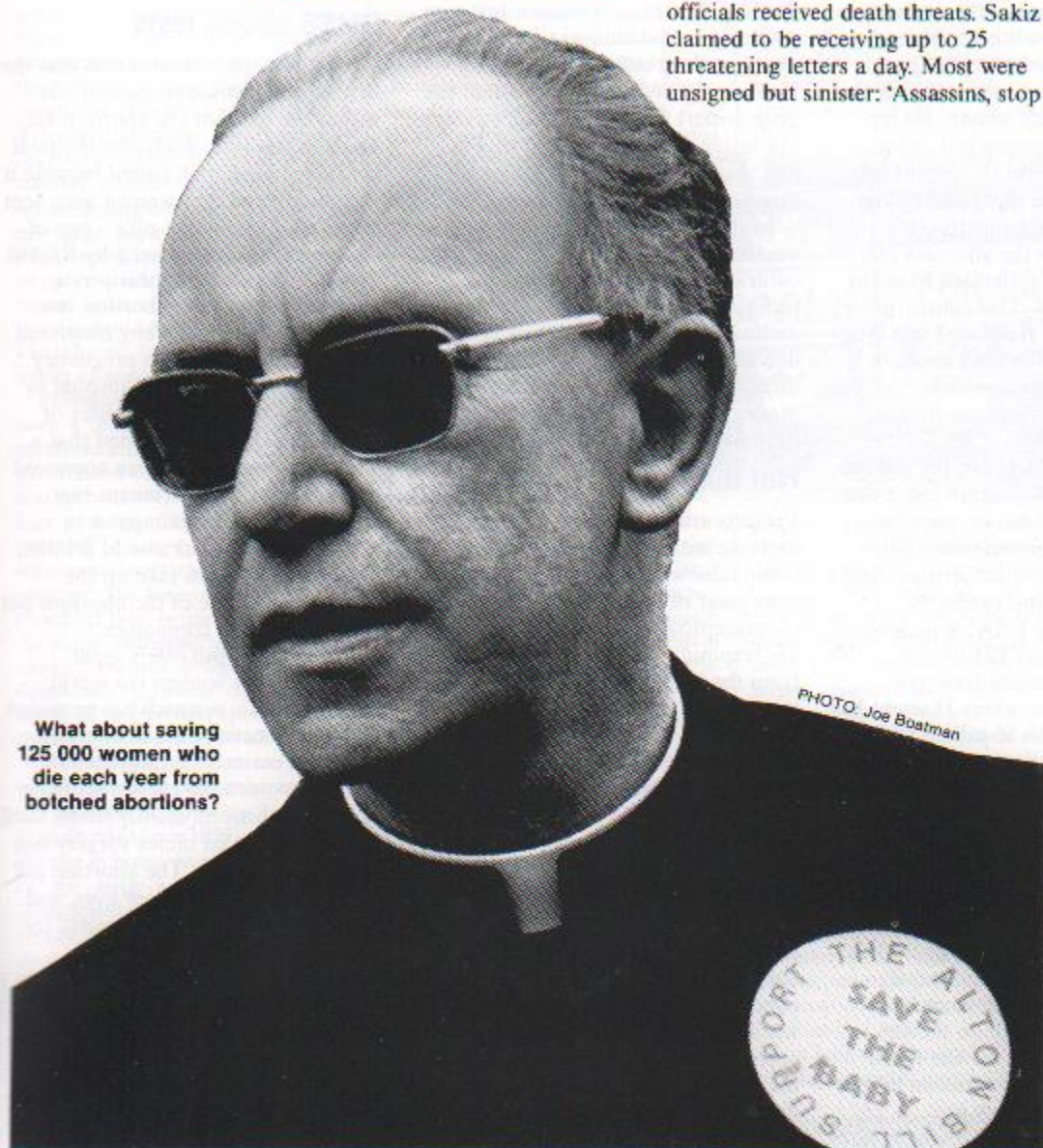


PHOTO: Joe Boatman

What about saving 125 000 women who die each year from botched abortions?

Since the British government has already restricted the potential uses of RU486, it is hardly likely to defend the abortion pill against the drug companies

need to maintain firm control in face of action by 'agitators'. Shortly after distribution of RU486 had resumed, minister Evin explained that he had wanted 'to make sure France did not surrender to pressure groups animated by archaic ideologies'. In fact Evin's government has shown itself quite willing to accommodate 'archaic ideologies' on many issues. But it drew the line at bigoted 'pressure groups' defying its authority and threatening violent disorder.

Whatever the motivation, the government's actions were in the interests of French women. Unfortunately for the rest of us the story does not end there. The majority shareholder in Roussel is German agro-chemical giant Hoechst AG. And Hoechst has taken the cause of the anti-abortion groups to its bosom.

Fear of farmers

Hoechst has had an ambivalent attitude to the abortion pill from the start. In January, the *United States News and World Report* reported 'company insiders' suggesting that Hoechst directors allowed Roussel to develop RU486 only because they never expected it to succeed. Consequently, the bosses were now 'torn between pride in the discovery and their own pro-life sentiments'. Hoechst chief executive Wolfgang Hilger has gone on record saying that abortion is morally wrong. He has stated that an abortion pill violates the company's credo to support life, and claimed to be distressed by the accusation that, through their involvement with the abortion pill, Hoechst is doing to fetuses what the Nazis did to Jews. This contemporary concern with the Holocaust is a little ironic as it was Hoechst's ancestor company, IG Farben, which manufactured cyanide gas for the Nazi death camps.

In the case of Hoechst, the sudden outburst of moral concern has a clear economic basis. The company faces pressure from a considerable anti-abortion movement in Germany and it is particularly susceptible to pressure from the USA. A quarter of the chemical giant's \$23 billion annual revenue comes from the American market, where Hoescht has a subsidiary worth \$6 billion. While Roussel tends to deal with medically minded doctors who can see advantages in a safe and easy method of abortion, Hoechst deals with farmers from the American Mid-West, not known for their enlightened views on these matters. The company fears boycotts in these areas. Tony Eton admits that, if Hoechst caves in to pressure from America to hold back on RU486, Roussel will have to toe the line.

The powerful anti-abortion lobby in the USA has already put considerable pressure on American

drug companies. Pressure from the 'right to life' movement, combined with the recent product-liability claims in relation to IUDs, have led to a swing away from investment in contraceptives and abortifacients. In 1970, 20 US companies had large programmes researching human reproduction. Today there is only one. Allan G Rosenfeld, the Dean of Columbia University's School of Public Health, says that anti-abortionists 'have put a whole class of valuable drugs in question and stifled contraceptive research'.

'Right to lifers' caused particular concern to the American medical profession when they tried to block the food and drug administration's approval of Cytotec. Cytotec is a hormone marketed by GD Searle & Co in 43 countries to prevent ulcers in arthritis patients. As a side effect the drug causes uterine contractions; anti-abortionists claimed that unscrupulous doctors could prescribe it for 'do-it-yourself abortions'. Four years ago Upjohn Co also pulled its abortion drug off the market and shut down its contraceptive unit in response to boycotts organised by anti-abortion campaigns.

The impact of this backlash has already hit Britain. Three years ago Sterling Winthrop Research Institute suddenly halted clinical trials of an abortion drug called Epostane. Publicly the company claims that the drug doesn't fit its marketing strategy, but inside rumours claimed that 'it just wasn't worth the risk' of upsetting influential customers.

In short, there is an increasing tendency to withhold improved contraceptive and abortion technology. And now a safer, easy method of inducing abortion is being denied to us because company directors are worried about losing money if they take their discovery to market.

Not the sixties

Protests and campaigns by a few extreme anti-abortion groups provide companies with a dramatic excuse to steer clear of abortifacients and contraceptives. In reality, these firms are responding not just to threats from the fringe, but to the widespread anti-abortion climate in mainstream Western politics today. After all, in the past drug companies continued profitable production despite more forceful opposition.

In the fifties and sixties the pharmaceutical industry was prepared to shrug off accusations of barbaric testing of the contraceptive pill on third world women, in a commercial race to develop an effective oral contraceptive. But that was in the liberal sixties, when the authorities were more willing to accommodate the groundswell of demand for better contraceptives and companies stood to make big bucks

from winning the race. In the conservative eighties, when the moral reactionaries have moved centre stage and most Western governments are looking for ways to restrict abortion, manufacturers feel an abortion pill may be a commercial albatross.

Theoretically there are ways of getting around corporate reluctance. Britain has compulsory licensing laws which allow the authorities to give away unused patents if a product is in the public interest. But the Thatcher government is unlikely to leap to the defence of RU486. The current mood in British politics is one of imposing further restrictions on access to abortion—not making it more readily available.

When news about the success of RU486 first broke in Britain three years ago, the discussion in parliament was more suspicious than celebratory. Labour MP Dale Campbell-Savours called for a statement from the attorney general on 'the medical, moral and social implications of a pill of this nature'. MPs expressed concern that the availability of an abortion pill might make it easier to carry out or obtain an abortion outside the strict conditions imposed by the 1967 Abortion Act.

DHSS aborts tests

The official reply emphasised that the British trials would be carried out within the letter of the abortion act. Trials at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford were then halted because it was discovered that women were sent home after taking the pills—one of the big advantages offered by RU486. The DHSS ruled that this was a contravention of the abortion law, which lays down that 'any treatment for the termination of a pregnancy must be carried out in a hospital or place approved by the minister of state'. The DHSS concluded that a woman's home was not an approved place. Since the government has already shown its willingness to restrict the potential uses of RU486, it is hardly likely to take up the cudgels in defence of the abortion pill against the drug companies.

An abortion pill offers great advantages for women the world over. Scientific research has provided us with a means to make abortion safer and easier. It is estimated that 125 000 women die every year from botched abortions, mostly in the third world where even minor surgery can be life-threatening. The abortion pill could save many of those lives, and make abortion more convenient for Western women. Dr Baulieu is confident that his pill will eventually be marketed worldwide. 'You can't hold back scientific progress', he says, 'you can't put it in a back drawer'. But capitalists can and do. And that is the most bitter pill to swallow.

The mortgage crisis

AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOME IS HIS HEADACHE

Mortgage rate rises mean more homelessness alongside more empty homes.
Tony Kennedy on the anarchy of the housing market

The naive might think that houses are for living in. But the hike in mortgage payments which has sent the housing market reeling suggests otherwise.

For the construction companies, estate agents and building societies, houses are for making a profit. As mortgage payments go up, forcing the numbers of prospective buyers down, the criterion of profitability means that construction companies are abandoning plans to build places to live in. Those unable to meet the new mortgage payments could have their homes repossessed to protect their profits. Many more will manage to cling on only by taking the *Sun's* advice to give up cars and holidays.

How can it be, as the building societies insist, that there is a glut of housing with the number of unwanted properties growing by the day? Is it because supply exceeds the number of people who need one? According to the housing charity Shelter 364 000 people are registered as homeless in Britain. Estimates for those not registered range from 200 000 to 400 000. Clearly supply is far from outstripping demand. Rather, the mortgage payments demanded are outstripping the amount of money in people's pockets. The result is a record level of homelessness, while thousands of houses stand empty. The anarchy of the market economy works its magic once more.

Promoting home ownership has been a central plank of the Tories' enterprise culture in the eighties. The government claimed that the housing market could deliver security for life, free you from the anonymity of council tenancy, and provide a wholesome environment for your children. The Tories ordered councils to sell off their better housing stock. As home ownership grew, ministers spoke of a new property owning democracy in which the universal class of owner-occupiers would replace the old social divisions.

The fact that millions are now in hock to financial companies and that the number of homeless has more than doubled since 1979 suggests that the rise in home ownership had little to do with any democratising inclinations in the market. In fact, the house market boom was a self-destructive result of the government's willingness to put its faith in market forces.

The southern-based boom in home ownership and house prices in recent years reflected the peculiar course of

economic developments in Britain. Since the mid-eighties, economic growth has focused on the liberalised financial sector concentrated in London. The City became a prime site for the global expansion of financial business. Overseas bankers and money-men set up shop in London, and homegrown businesses expanded. The growth of the financial sector created a great many white-collar jobs, and had a knock-on effect in areas such as retailing, and business and consumer-oriented services. The south became the place to be for people seeking highly paid professional jobs—or just jobs.

The government, holding by its free market principles, refused to invest in the infrastructure on the scale required to accommodate an expanding workforce. The London transport system—roads, rail and underground—has come close to collapse as a consequence. Nor did the government build housing for the new workforce. Here, however, the private sector stepped in. The labour market pressures coincided

the ratio had reached four and a half times in London, indicating a significant increase in the debt burden of mortgage holders.

Consumers found compelling incentives for entering the housing market. Prices were rising rapidly as demand boomed. But a mortgage was still the favoured option for many. The Tories claimed that this demonstrated an ideological commitment to property ownership. In fact it demonstrated a pragmatic choice based on the lack of alternatives.

It is bizarre to argue that people desperately wanted to get a mortgage millstone around their necks. What they wanted was somewhere decent to live. With virtually no council housing having been built and a lot of it sold off since 1979, the remaining estates going to rack and ruin under the pressure of spending cuts, and private landlords often charging rents the equivalent of mortgage repayments, it is hardly surprising that so many people plumped for buying a place of their own.



with the extension of easy credit to the housing market. Cash-rich institutions were able to offer large mortgages to meet rising prices, thus attracting both buyers and sellers into the market and fuelling the boom. Rising profits in the housing market, and the government's financial reforms, attracted additional money from the high-street banks.

The ensuing competition for business among the banks and building societies meant greater efforts to package mortgages to attract consumers. Apart from schemes allowing deferment of certain payments and savings on interest, the societies and banks informally loosened controls on the ratio between the size of mortgages and the annual income of mortgage holders. The average mortgage in the early eighties was around three times the size of the holder's annual income. By last year

From the start the invigorated housing market was highly speculative. The key players were not builders creating new assets, but financiers and estate agents trying to get rich quick by pushing up the prices of old ones. The property price boom was largely restricted to London and the surrounding regions and was based on the simple fact that there was not enough housing stock to meet the growing needs. With the market failing to provide enough new housing, mortgage companies were making big profits from scarcity—a sharp practice which used to be the preserve of spivs. Where new building did take place, it simply confirmed the speculative character of the market. The most graphic examples of excess were the construction schemes in the London Docklands.

Not long ago London's Docklands were being used as a glowing example

of what Tory-promoted private enterprise can achieve. The derelict docks would be transformed into a bustling residential area like downtown Manhattan, with luxury flats and designer studios set in attractive riverside locations. New road and rail services providing easy access to the City, and customer-friendly shops and recreational facilities, would make the Docklands the weekday living quarters for the young guns of the financial sector. The project was touted as an advert for capitalism; an example to be copied elsewhere.

The Tobacco Dock scheme is now an eighties ghost town, a tribute to where the Tories' property owning revolution has led. In the new shopping complex, dubbed the Covent Garden of the East End, you won't have to contend with the human-jams of the West End. You could play five-a-side football in the main mall without undue interference from passers-by. Pop into one of the retail outlets that break the lines of 'for rent' signs. Staff are ready with a warm welcome for the first customer in two days.

More for less

In the wake of the interest and mortgage rates fiasco, it looks as if other regions of Britain will indeed begin to resemble London's Docklands—but not in the way Tories hoped. The Docklands are sited in some of the poorest boroughs in London—Tower Hamlets, Newham and Southwark—where homelessness runs high. Yet hundreds of the plush new properties are empty. Many more would be if the disillusioned professional could find a reasonable alternative and sell up. But with few buyers willing or able to meet asking prices which go well into six figures, the new Docklanders are left to languish there, watching mortgage repayments rise while house prices fall, paying more and more for something that is worth less and less.

The latest rise in mortgage rates has sent the already teetering housing market crashing into recession. Housing now stands comparison with the stock market as an example of what happens when the speculative excesses intrinsic to the market are allowed to run riot. The fall-out will be yet more homeless at a time when there are more houses, and millions more in the debt trap, their working lives the property of financiers determined to make them pay for the market's failure.

The housing market crisis is a big political embarrassment for the Tories. It is a fitting irony that their promotion of a mythical property owning democracy should have helped to create a new constituency of mortgage-holders which is now turning against the government. Those forced to tighten their belts just to hang on to their homes can be forgiven for not getting the joke.

The view from the establishment and the EastEnders

Twin myths of the Krays

Kirsten Cale examines the appeal of Ronnie and Reggie, with the aid of other famous ex-cons and ordinary EastEnders

In some ways the Krays protected the community, didn't they? You didn't have muggings or anything like that. None of the old-age pensioners suffered because of them. If an old person was short of anything, or walked into the boozers, the Krays would get them a drink. They had respect for the elderly.' (Dave, Whitechapel market barrow boy)

The Kray twins are self-confessed, convicted killers. They are also folk heroes to some, and eminently saleable celebrities. Ronnie and Reggie have been inside for 20 years, yet they never seem to be out of the newspapers (they have an agent who hires out his star clients for £25 000 an interview). The famous David Bailey portrait appears everywhere from teenagers' t-shirts to posters for prestigious photography exhibitions.

Last year the Krays' autobiography, *Our Story* (ghost-written by Fred Dineage, who used to be on ITV's *How?* show), was a best-seller. Now a new film about them is on the way; the fact that it is based on Violet Kray's memories of her sons (lovely boys) and stars the puppy-faced Kemp brothers from Spandau Ballet suggests that it is unlikely to match the brooding menace of *Villain* (Richard Burton as Vic Dakin/Ronnie Kray).

The heady mixture of crime and glamour still fascinates the media. Some newspapers now treat the Krays with the same veneration as the old showbiz stars with whom they used to socialise. They prefer their gangsters to be British, white, besuited and sanitised by a 20-year gap. So at the same time as they rant against the black 'Yardies' and Colombian cartels of today, they turn the Krays into a national institution. If the twins got out tomorrow, they would probably end up on *Wogan*.

Yet the Krays have not always been accorded such soft treatment. When the Krays were convicted of murder in March 1969, the press went out of its way to damn them as psychopaths and a threat to the fabric of society. 'A reign of terror is over', declared the *Daily Mirror*. 'A tyranny founded on the gun, the knife and the british threat—routed and smashed'.

These are the parallel myths of the Krays: as uniquely violent villains and as lovable rogues. Neither has much foundation in the twins' careers. Any dispassionate observer would have to conclude that they were thugs, but pretty small-time thugs compared to the American gangsters on whom they modelled themselves. The popular images of the Krays are the products of their and our times.

Who were the Krays? Reginald and Ronald were born in 1933 in Hoxton in the East End of London. In the fifties they operated as thieves, ponces and small-time protection racketeers. Leslie Payne, the business mind behind some of their later enterprises and key witness against them in court, described the scale of the early Kray extortion operations: 'In those days, if you gave them a fiver or a tenner they'd be well pleased with themselves.' (L. Payne, *The Brotherhood*, 1973, p30)

By the late fifties, the Krays had 'interests' in a billiard hall and a handful of drinking clubs, illicit gambling dens and used car dealers. 'The firm'—fences, con men, villains and tearaways—congregated around the twins as they expanded in the East End. Ronnie Kray, the hard man, was certified criminally insane

while imprisoned for GBH, but released in 1959.

In the early sixties the twins went up-market. They moved in on Esmeralda's Barn, a swish Knightsbridge club enjoying the recent legalisation of gambling. And they opened a new club of their own: the Kentucky. Reggie Kray described the tacky glamour of the new club, and the clientele it attracted:

'By today's standards the Kentucky was probably a bit loud and garish. It was all deep red carpets, mirrors and sprayed-gold "antique" chairs and furniture. But the Kentucky was right for the time and, more especially, right for the toffs who wanted to come over from the West End and see a bit of the scary side of life without having to get themselves dirty or put themselves in any danger. They loved it. It was exciting, it was exhilarating. They could kid themselves it was dangerous because there was plenty of evil-looking gangsters around. But they were actually as safe as houses.' (*Our Story*, 1988, pp36-7)

The Krays had always courted showbusiness and boxing personalities, but now they were becoming celebrities themselves. Barbara Windsor and Queenie Watts

Buster Edwards, former Great Train Robber

'I knew the Krays before they went into prison. They got 30 years when murderers were getting seven and a half for killing children, women. But the twins never hurt anyone. They looked after the East End. They weren't saints but they got this silly sentence. They wanted to make examples of the twins the same as they made examples of us. Every now and again justice feels they've got to jump on people.

The twins had always been with showbusiness people. It's not that they went to showbusiness people. Those people went to them. And the twins were heavy. But there was a fascination with someone who was doing something criminal. The naughty boy thing—"I'd like to do this". So many people would love to

commit crimes, but they haven't got the bottle.

'Everyone says "The good old days", and I do feel the sixties were good days. Now there's no honour among thieves. There was no grasses then. Now everyone wants to save their own skin. And there's a law for whites and a law for blacks. They get away with murder, and I mean murder. They go out with shooters now, it was unheard of in those days. Oh yes, obviously Ronnie shot Cornell and they stabbed Jack the Hat. After the twins, that was the end of the traditional gangs. The Old Bill stamped them out and that brought in what we've got today.'

(Interview by Christine Kelly)



The Kray twins at home in Vallance Road with their mother, Violet, and grandfather, Jimmy Lee

were early friends; later stars like Judy Garland, Diana Dors and George Raft, and boxers like Sonny Liston and Joe Louis, socialised with the twins. Bailey photographed them, Lord Effingham was on the payroll at Esmeralda's Barn, and Lord Boothby, an ex-Tory MP, defended them in the house of lords when the twins were remanded without bail on a charge of demanding money with menaces.

In 1966 the Krays graduated from violent intimidation to murder. George Cornell, from the south London-based Richardson gang, had been 'taking liberties'—including calling Ronnie a 'fat poof' in public. The twins relied on the fear which

they called 'respect', and which would be undermined if Cornell got away with it. On the night of 9 March, Ronnie Kray walked into the Blind Beggar, a pub on Whitechapel Road, and blew Cornell's brains out with a Luger in front of a barmaid and her startled customers.

In 1967 it was Reggie's turn. A member of the Kray gang, Jack 'the Hat' McVitie, was said to have conned the twins out of some money and boasted about it. Again, vengeance was required to save face. So on 28 October, McVitie was lured to a flat in Stoke Newington: there Ronnie and another man held him up while Reggie stabbed him repeatedly in the face, throat and stomach.

In 1969, largely on the evidence of their former firm members, the twins were convicted of murder and sent down for 30 years each. Reggie is a category A prisoner in Parkhurst, and Ronnie is in Broadmoor hospital for the criminally insane.

When the Krays were convicted, the media portrayed them as among the most savage criminals ever apprehended. The *Daily Mail* dubbed them 'The Brotherhood of Evil: Their business: mass extortion, violence unlimited, organised deaths'. The *Mirror* dug up a Mrs Styles, who had billeted the seven-year old twins when they were evacuated from London during the war: 'My first thought was: what horrible little boys, and so they were. They were full of rough and tumble and quite unlike my own children.... I insisted they learnt the Lord's Prayer.' Was she surprised that, despite her Christian efforts, they had ended up in the Old Bailey? 'Not in the least!'

There is no doubt that the Krays were murderers and racketeers. But their power and influence was vastly exaggerated by the police and the press. Their operations barely extended outside the East End; their bid to become a British mafia faltered at the first hurdle, when Manchester police sent them back on the first train to London. Nor was the firm a professional crime 'family'; at their trial, all but two of the gang members gave evidence against the Krays.

The Kray's big-time gangster image was and is just that; an image, and a largely self-promoted one. The natty suits, the Capone-style contributions to charity, the ornate politeness to

John McVicar, author and former armed robber

'The Krays have become part of the symbolism of counter-culture. Why do these killer gangsters keep the headlines? They are anti-authority figures. There was a theatricality to the Krays when they were around and operating—they cultivated publicity—very few gangsters do that because it's one way to get yourself put in prison. They were a kind of parody of gangsters: they drew their imagery, style, the way they dressed and acted, from Hollywood films of the Prohibition gangsters.

'Ronnie wasn't a gangster for money, he was a gangster because he wanted to be a gangster. Because of that there was a distillation, an essence of gangsterism in his manner, in his look, and the way he behaved. And that's very powerful. Those

Bailey photographs and some of the other memorabilia of the Krays, they are very potent. Particularly Ronnie with his doppelgänger in the background, the twin brother. Ronnie comes over as a fairy-tale—he represents the underworld. And part of the reason for their popularity, the continuing interest, the consumption of the Kray product, is that they're *banal*. That, banality neutralises the threat at this fairy-tale level. And these fairy-tales serve a function, the underworld figure is like the Wicked Witch and the Dragon. In contemporary folk mythology, the Krays stand alongside the Queen Mother, Cilla Black and Cliff Richard.'

'The Krays were supposed to be seen. And the establishment had to be seen to be putting a stop to it'

women and the elderly, the spending sprees, were all based on Hollywood's portrayal of American gangsters. Ronnie paid a barber to shave him at home in his mother's tiny house in Vallance Road after hearing it was a habit of Mafia bosses.

The Krays cashed in on the celebrity culture that took off in the swinging sixties. Both twins made themselves highly visible on the social circuit, drinking champagne and carousing with the famous. The frisson of criminality only added to their stature among members of high society who found the low life exciting. In the age of the Beatles, George Best, Twiggy and Warhol, they became the pop stars of the British underworld. But in the end, the Krays' flaunting of their illegal activities brought the wrath of the rich down on their heads.

In the business world, the line between legality and illegality is very finely drawn: dull, respectable bankers, stockbrokers, chairmen and lawyers cross it every day. This is accepted by the authorities. So long as these gentlemen commit their crimes discreetly, behind boardroom doors, they do not undermine the all-important public authority of the state's law and order machinery. The Krays' business, however, was not conducted in the closed world of corporate capitalism.

The twins' gauche indiscretion about their own crimes became an embarrassment to the establishment. They were not only involved in extortion and violence, but they had the audacity to show off their exploits in the company of peers, MPs and debutantes. Ronnie Kray's brazen shooting of George Cornell in a saloon bar was like a B-movie scene, a public statement that he believed his own publicity and considered himself above the law. Such affronts to the authorities, coming from men in the media eye, could not go unpunished. The Krays were made an example of, their 30-year sentences a warning of what happens to those who don't play by the rules when they infringe the law.

'A bit OTT'

In the context of widespread disenchantment with an increasingly corrupt police force, the Kray trial presented the authorities with a timely pretext to restore the image of the police and launch a law and order crusade. Thus was born the myth of the Krays as an unprecedented menace to civilisation, tamed by the boys in blue on behalf of the great British public.

Walk around Bethnal Green and Whitechapel today, and many who remember the Krays will echo this view of their downfall. 'In the end I suppose they went a bit OTT', says Eric, 'they got involved with politicians and certain dirty deeds

and scandals. So they were getting dangerous to the powers that be'. Another EastEnders, Cheryl, agrees: 'What the twins were doing was so outrageous, justice had to be seen to be done. They were making an example of them. These days society will not put up with people walking the streets with shotguns. But in the sixties the high-profile stuff of the Richardsons and the Krays was fashionable. They were supposed to be seen. And the establishment had to be seen to be putting a stop to it.'

Yet many EastEnders have created their own, alternative, Krays myth, that has grown stronger as the years pass. This too is a product of the times. The twins have been incorporated into the nostalgic image of the good old days, when the East End was a 'proper community' and people were poor but happy, before the bulldozers moved in to flatten slums around Whitechapel and Bethnal Green and the Asians moved in to occupy many of those that were left.

Time and again, the Krays' former neighbours will tell you that things were better back then. The Krays only used violence on other gangsters, and looked after 'their own people'. 'They never raped any girls and that,

says Derek, 'at the time they were bad boys, but they were angels compared to these terrorists nowadays'. There is a heavy undercurrent of racism in much of this talk, as the Krays are frequently compared favourably with 'all these racial crimes' today. Reggie Kray himself has said he couldn't live in London now: 'there's too much mugging.'

Buried beneath the prejudice and the parochialism, the EastEnders' fondness for the Krays also reflects a basic 'us and them' attitude towards the rich and powerful and the police. This is probably also what makes the Krays attractive to younger people today. Many would agree, for example, with Ronnie's sentiments about the police: 'I hate uniforms. I've always hated them. I hate them for what they stand for. And I hate the people who wear them. Without their uniforms they're usually nothing. Nobodies.' It would be a lot better if people could share those sentiments without admiring the man who expressed them. After all, without their 'uniforms' of smart suits and rich friends and media hangers-on, who would the Krays have been?

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Myra Hindley is the most evil woman in Britain' proclaimed the *Sun* in September. 'We cannot say what is waiting for her beyond the grave', concluded its hard-hitting editorial, 'but on this side she must rot in jail for the rest of her days'.

This was the *Sun's* response to Hindley's letter to the *Guardian* the previous day denouncing the publication of the memoirs of Manchester police chief Peter Topping. Hindley threatened legal action against Topping, who was responsible for reopening the moors case in 1986, when his interrogations of Hindley led to new confessions and provided further details on the location of moorland graves. The revelations resulted in highly publicised excavations on Saddleworth moor and the discovery of another body.

Sadistic duo

Topping's account, subtitled 'the autobiography of the police chief in the moors murders case', was published by the Murdoch-owned firm Angus & Robertson and serialised in the *Sun*. Hindley suggested bitterly that the official police caution could be amended to read 'anything you say may be taken down and used in evidence...or may appear in the *Sun* or in my memoirs'. Hugely relishing its position at the centre of this controversy, the *Sun's* rejoinder was 'why should not the public know the truth, however vile?'

It is nearly 25 years since Hindley and her accomplice Ian Brady were convicted of the murders of three children—Lesley Ann Downey, aged 10, John Kilbride, aged 12, and Edward Evans, aged 17. Killed in 1963 and 1964, their bodies were discovered in shallow graves on the desolate moors north of Manchester. Hindley further confessed to the murders of Pauline Reade, aged 16, and Keith Bennett, aged 12, in 1987; Reade's body was subsequently found, but Bennett's has never been discovered.

In 1966 Hindley and Brady received life sentences. Yet, after all these years it seems that these cases rarely depart from the headlines of the popular press for more than a few months. Why are the moors murderers constantly at the centre of national attention?

There is no doubt that the moors murders were particularly sadistic and gruesome. The court cases against Brady and Hindley featured tape recordings they made of their victims' final agonies and macabre photographs revealing their full brutality. The murders shattered all the families involved, not least those of other children who disappeared at around the same time and whose bodies have never been discovered. The involvement of a young woman in the violent and sexual abuse of children, the pathological relationship between Hindley and her lover Brady, Brady's morbid personality—all these factors gave the case a peculiar fascination.

The moors murders and their perpetrators have long commanded great interest from ghouls and voyeurs.

Moors murderers

A TOUCH OF EVIL

Linda Ryan on why Myra Hindley and Ian Brady still make headlines

Topping's recycling of every detail of the earlier investigation makes a direct pitch for this lucrative market. Another retired Manchester detective involved in the case—Derek Leighton—recently had his grisly collection of 'scene-of-the-crime' slides confiscated after years of exclusive showings. Yet there have been hundreds of child murders since the early sixties and many more tales of

human depravity. There are, however, two reasons why the moors murders have remained such a prominent public preoccupation.

First, as the *Sun* forcefully reminds us, Hindley and Brady play a powerful symbolic role as the living incarnations of human evil. They appear periodically in the national press as a sort of modern re-enactment of a medieval mystery

play in which the forces of darkness are paraded so that they can be vanquished by a public display of faith in virtue and goodness. The gutter press thus hopes to exorcise the demons so close to the surface of life in modern Britain.

No liberal sentiment can be allowed to blur the moral certitudes proclaimed by the *Sun* or allow any grey areas to intrude between the stark polarities of good and evil. Nor can there be any question of mitigating the punishment demanded by society for such heinous crimes: 'Belt up and rot in jail, Myra' is the *Sun's* unequivocal headline. The invective of the tabloid press is scarcely less strident against aristocratic dogooders like Lord Longford, who has long been campaigning for Hindley's release, or David Astor, who has offered to finance her legal action against Topping.

Abuse is news

The second reason for the recent revival of public interest in the moors murderers is the emergence of child abuse, particularly child sexual abuse, as a modern moral panic. From Esther Rantzen's television launch of Child-Line through the Cleveland controversy to more recent highly publicised cases on both sides of the Atlantic, the media have played a major role in defining child sexual abuse as a central public concern.

Hindley and Brady provide a convenient image of the child sexual abuser as monster to be treated with the utmost severity in penal institutions. Keeping public outrage against the moors murderers at fever pitch helps to justify more intensive state surveillance of 'at risk' families, and more repressive measures against those convicted. It does nothing to protect children who are much more likely to be molested by intimate relations in the secrecy of the home than they are by monsters prowling on the moors.

The real threats to our society come, not from the evil and deranged, but from people who, while claiming to be good and sane, preside over a system which destroys the lives of millions. Brady and Hindley will be locked away in perpetuity, but the editor and proprietor of the *Sun* are free to use their case to spread bigotry and justify harsher state repression.



Lenny Murphy and the Shankill Butchers

The mass murderer nobody mentions

Bob Hughes looks at a new book on the Shankill Butchers, and examines why the blood-hungry media have been strangely silent on the greatest mass murderers in British criminal history

Thomas Madden was abducted on his way to work one night in August 1972 and taken to a lock-up garage.

'Between the hours of 10pm and 4am he was tortured. He was suspended by a rope from a wooden beam and stripped of his clothing. A knife was used on his body much in the manner a sculptor would chip away at a piece of wood or stone. Long cuts were made down his back and thighs and in all there were 147 stab wounds on his body.'

At 4am a woman heard Madden screaming 'kill me, kill me'. He died from gradual strangulation by a slowly tightening noose.

Madden was killed because he was a Catholic in Northern Ireland. He was an early victim of Lenny Murphy, leader of the Shankill Butchers, a Loyalist murder gang operating in the seventies from the Protestant working class heartland of the Shankill Road in West Belfast. The Butchers belonged to the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force, and their aim was to kill as many 'taigs' as they could, the most brutal way possible.

Martin Dillon's new book, *The Shankill Butchers*, is subtitled 'a case study in mass murder'. Some of the Butchers were eventually tried in 1979, and convicted of 19 murders. Dillon calculates that the Butchers were involved in at least 13 other killings for which nobody was charged. At least 17 people involved in the Butcher killings were never brought to trial.

In researching his book, Dillon consulted people who had studied the cases of Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe and the Moors Murderers, Hindley and Brady; but, as he points out, 'most...had never heard of the Shankill Butchers, even though they killed more people than any other mass murderers in British criminal history'. The reason why Lenny Murphy is not a household name like Sutcliffe or Denis Nilsen is simple. Lifting the lid on cases like the Shankill Butchers threatens to expose the sordid consequences of British influence in Ireland.

Dillon gives three reasons for his own interest in the Butchers: their macabre method of killing and torture; the fact that they evaded capture for so long; and curiosity about what created the potential for such mass murder.

The Butchers were certainly sadistic. In his foreword to Dillon's book, Conor Cruise O'Brien is at pains to give his usual pasting to the IRA. Yet even he has to concede that 'the Shankill Butchers remain unique in the sadistic ferocity of their modus operandi. The Provisional IRA...never unleashed on society anyone quite like Lenny Murphy'.

Murphy and his gang prowled the Belfast streets at night, hunting for Catholics going to work, walking home from the pub or just nipping out for some cigarettes. Their victims were bundled into a car and beaten on the way to the chosen place of execution. They were often tortured with butchers' knives, then killed by having their throats hacked back to the spine. The Butchers tried to decapitate some with meat cleavers. Joseph Donegan was beaten so badly that his blood covered not only the taxi in which he was abducted, but several rooms of the house where he was tortured and killed. All but three of his teeth were ripped out with a pair of pliers and scattered about the house. Donegan was finally killed by repeated blows from a spade, which was used with such force that the handle broke.

Dillon has done a good job of cataloguing the chilling facts about the Butchers' handiwork. Yet he goes too far in singling out the Butchers for their casual use of savagery and ritualistic torture. This sort of violence has been a common feature of many Loyalist killings in Northern Ireland. Murphy and his cronies simply took one more step down the descent to barbarism.

How did the Butchers evade arrest for years? Dillon believes that the police involved in the case have been 'denigrated for political reasons' and sets out to defend them. He argues that the Butchers were exceptionally cunning in their planning and that none brought themselves to the

attention of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, apart from Murphy who was a well-known thug fond of strutting around in a white suit. This is nonsense.

The Butchers were anything but security-conscious. They regularly followed the same routine. In the early killings, they used a highly conspicuous black taxi. They would tour the city centre in search of a suitable Catholic. With their victim on board, bloodied from a beating, they would cross Belfast to the Shankill, risking interception by Army and police patrols, to pick up knives. Then they would set off again, with a mutilated man in the car, repeatedly returning to the same killing ground in the Glencairn estate, where they dumped their victims' corpses. Why did they feel able to



take such risks (and get away with it) in an area of dense Army/RUC activity? 'The question', observes Dillon weakly, 'is seemingly unanswerable'.

The Butchers spent much of their time in the well-known Loyalist paramilitary pubs and clubs of the Shankill, boasting of their prowess in 'doing taigs' and planning their next murder missions. It is inconceivable that the RUC was unaware of the rumours that were rife on the Shankill; as Jimmy Nesbitt, chief of the team of detectives hunting the Butchers, said, 'we knew a lot about

everybody'. After years of doing as they pleased, some of the Butchers were finally arrested when 20-year old Gerard McLaverty survived an attack (the Labour government offered him £700 compensation). Driven down the Shankill Road by the RUC, it took only minutes for McLaverty to spot his attackers. The RUC was hardly looking for a needle in a haystack.

When Murphy was jailed for possession of a firearm in 1976 (charges of attempted murder were dropped in a plea bargain), Dillon says that Nesbitt thought he had the Butcher behind bars. When the cut-throat killings continued, 'it did not occur to Nesbitt that Murphy's associates might be responsible!'

Dillon's main defence of the police is their lack of resources. He points out that a team of just 11 detectives hunted the Butchers, whereas the squad pursuing the Yorkshire Ripper was 304-strong. But this is an accurate reflection of the priorities of the British state in Northern Ireland. The security forces had massive resources—but these were for waging war on Irish republicans, not pursuing the side issue of Loyalists slaughtering Catholics. Indeed state agents were not averse to colluding with the sectarian gangs. Edward McIlwaine was a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and a part-time member of the Shankill

was 'primarily a sadist and only secondarily a hater of Catholics'. Dillon believes that Murphy would have been a murderer even without the troubles.

But people like Murphy were not isolated psychopaths in the Protestant community of Northern Ireland. The Loyalist paramilitaries have enjoyed widespread working class support. Dillon himself noted as much in an earlier work.

'By 1972 it had become clear to many of these [Protestant] people—not criminals or psychopaths but good, decent people who had only asked to be left in peace to go about their everyday lives—that Gusty Spence had been right in 1966.' (M Dillon and D Lehane, *Political Murder in Northern Ireland*, Penguin Special, 1973, p267)

Spence was the Ulster Volunteer Force leader whose gang murdered Catholic civilians in 1966—usually recognised as the first killings in the current phase of the Irish conflict. Dillon and Lehane also reprinted a letter from a Protestant woman to the February 1972 edition of the Ulster Defence Association Bulletin:

'Why have they [the Loyalist paramilitaries] not started to hit back in the only way these nationalist

of the new 'province' of Northern Ireland to ensure a permanent majority of Protestants. The British have kept the Protestants loyal by guaranteeing them political, social and economic privileges over their Catholic nationalist neighbours; today Catholics are still three times as likely to be unemployed as Protestants.

Within the sectarian state, Protestants are first class citizens; Catholics are seen as 'slimy excreta'. Every Irish Catholic is viewed as a threat to the Protestant ascendancy, to be kept under the heel. The recent revelations of collusion between Loyalist paramilitaries, the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Ulster Constabulary in targeting republican suspects confirm that sectarianism and brutality are built into the official structures of Northern Ireland. Lenny Murphy was an unofficial extension of this repressive machinery. So long as there is British rule in Ireland, there will be Butchers to defend it through terror.

Lenny Murphy, the mass murderer whom the media never mention, and who the courts failed to convict of any killing, served six years for possession of weapons. On his release in July 1982, he celebrated by drinking in a UVF bar and beating a

Lenny Murphy (left) and some of his unlovely assistants



Butchers. John McFarland Fletcher was a sergeant in the UDR. He supplied the gun that the Butchers used in the killing of Ted McQuaid. Fletcher alleged that his gun had been stolen; 13 years later he was convicted of stealing weapons for Loyalist paramilitaries from the Holywood UDR base in County Down.

And so to the crux of Dillon's thesis: what created the potential for the Shankill Butchers? Dillon depicts Murphy as a 'psychopathic genius' whose childhood experience of ostracism because of his 'Catholic' surname made him hate 'taigs'. Conor Cruise O'Brien argues that Murphy

bastards understand? That is ruthless, indiscriminate killing...If I had a flamethrower I would roast the slimy excreta that pass for human beings.'

Violent anti-Catholic bigotry is clearly not the exclusive property of the Shankill Butchers, nor the product of a bad childhood experience with surnames. It is a widespread result of the peculiar position of Loyalists in Northern Ireland, and the way that the British state maintains that artificial status.

The Protestant community acts as the local agent of British rule in Ireland. When Britain divided the Irish nation by imposing partition in 1920-21, it drew the phoney Border

man to death. Months later, at 6.40pm on 16 November, Murphy parked outside his girlfriend's house on the Glencairn estate, his old haunting ground. A Morris Marina van pulled up, the back doors swung open, and two men came out blazing at him with a revolver and a submachine gun. Murphy was hit 26 times in the head and body and died instantly. It was perhaps the most popular piece of rough justice that the IRA ever delivered.

• Martin Dillon, *The Shankill Butchers: A Case Study of Mass Murder*, Hutchinson, hbk, £14.95

The burning of Blackburn housing benefit office

Death on the dole

Why did a Blackburn man torch a housing benefit office, killing a housing officer, and then jump to his own death off a sixth-floor balcony? Andrew Calcutt unearths the story behind the 'fire maniac' headlines

At 10am on Friday 8 September, 20-year old Michael Rostron, unemployed, walked into Blackburn housing benefit office and asked for personal issue of a housing benefit cheque worth £22.03. He didn't get it. A housing assistant told Rostron he would receive the cheque in the post. Two hours later, Rostron came back carrying a red plastic can of petrol. He poured petrol over the office floor, then put a match to it. Three housing officers were injured in the ensuing fire. Less than 24 hours later, Rostron jumped to his death after police cornered him on a sixth-floor balcony. Two weeks later, principal housing officer David Riley died from the 70 per cent burns he suffered in the housing benefit blaze.

When Riley lay unconscious in Blackburn infirmary, local press carried daily reports on his condition. When Riley died, the town hall flew the Union Jack at half-mast. Local Labour MP Jack Straw spoke of 'a fine public servant', and the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* gave over its lead story to Riley's son, Ian, thanking the people of Blackburn for their support.

Two victims

When Rostron died, the press vilified him as a 'fire maniac' who should have been satisfied with the £54 fortnightly income support he was said to have received a few hours before attacking the housing benefit office. 'The only person responsible for his death', stated east Lancashire coroner George Graham, 'was himself'.

Yet Rostron was as much a tragic victim as Riley. Driven over the edge by the strain of living on the dole, then unable to face the awful consequences, he chose an escape route—suicide—which has become the biggest killer of young people in Thatcher's Britain apart from road and other accidents. Last year, 442 males aged 15 to 24 killed themselves. The suicide rate among young men has risen 70 per cent since 1982, reaching record levels. Rostron was no isolated, crazy freak. The pressures which broke him are felt by thousands of young people today. Many must have come close to reacting as Rostron did.



...or £54 and clear off

Rostron didn't have much of a chance. He was brought up in a shabby house in the south end of Blackburn, a Lancashire city which stopped growing a century ago when the bottom fell out of the British cotton industry. His parents, Samuel and Christine, did their best for Michael and his brother Colin. But Samuel has been unemployed for years, and the only reason he wears Elvis Costello specs is because the frames have always been the cheapest in the shop. Michael's younger brother Colin is thin and pasty-faced, and that's the way he is likely to stay.

Michael Rostron grew to adulthood during the Thatcher decade of industrial decline and social security cuts. He went from school to the dole, and looked set to follow his parents into a lifetime of scrimping and making do. In the year before his death, he stared at the dead-end before him and twice tried to commit suicide. Then, four months ago, something changed; 19-year old Sandra Smith gave birth to Rostron's son, and they made plans to marry.

'We were saving up', says Sandra, 'I have a three-year old son who is not Michael's, but he treated him like his own and he was going to adopt him and change his name to Rostron'. Michael Rostron and Sandra Smith wanted to live together with their children, but 'couldn't', for fear of losing income support. Under social security rules, 'cohabiting' would reduce their meagre benefits still

further. So, in an effort to get the money to furnish a family home, they forced themselves to live apart. Sandra and the two children moved into a rundown house on the north side of Blackburn, and Rostron found himself a flat.

On that fateful Friday morning, Rostron needed money to pay rent for a room he didn't want to live in. With £54 income support to last him a fortnight, he could just about afford to stay alive, so long as he disowned the one thing that made his life worth living—his girlfriend and their children. When his life was made even more difficult by the sort of petty bureaucracy that will be familiar to anybody who has had to deal with the British benefits system, Rostron began to crack.

What was Rostron thinking about in the two hours before he came back and torched the housing benefit office? Did he window-shop around Blackburn's white-tile, seventies-style shopping centre? Child's bed, £54.95; Schreiber fitted kitchens, 'our designers at your service'; Dralon three-piece suites, £399. Leeds Building Society advertises special mortgage deals for first-time buyers, Debenham's offer 'up to £5000 personal credit'—but young men who have never had a full-time job need not apply. Blackburn was a town that liked to say 'no' to Michael Rostron. On 8 September he heard it once too often. Twenty-four hours later he was dead and David Riley was dying.

PHOTO: Andrew Calcutt

The local papers printed letters demanding hanging for arsonists, as if Michael Rostron wasn't dead already

At the inquest, coroner George Graham spoke of clearing the air of unwarranted speculation about the circumstances of Rostron's death. Superintendent Sandy Robson, head of Blackburn CID, insisted that the police as an organisation behaved very professionally. But Michael Rostron's brother Colin is 'not happy' with the professionalism of the police and the coroner, and neither is Sandra Smith.

Forty detectives were deployed in the hunt for 'the town hall arsonist'. At 11am on Saturday 9 September they tracked him down to a flat on the twelfth floor of Livesey Court, Mill Hill. Detective constable Alan Procter burst in through the front door. Rostron climbed over the balcony wall at the rear of the flat. He made it down to the sixth floor, where he jumped on to a balcony and tried to hide. Up to this point, he showed no intention of killing himself.

Detective sergeant David Huxley located Rostron on the sixth floor: 'As I approached him', Huxley told the inquest, 'he said "Go away or I'll jump". I was afraid he would jump. He was mentally unbalanced. I went back into the flat and locked the balcony'. Rostron was now imprisoned on the balcony. He went over the top. His father and brother

arrived just in time to see his plunge. He died two hours later from multiple injuries.

'It was quite apparent he did not intend to be arrested', said superintendent Robson, 'we tried to arrest a man we suspected of committing serious arson. There was no way we could have allowed him to escape'. How could Rostron have escaped? By fighting his way through all the police officers in the flats? By skipping over the sixth-floor balcony and sprinting away? Robson could have backed off and still made his arrest. Instead, the police chose to corner and cage a man whom they themselves described as 'mentally unbalanced'. The result was predictable.

The inquest ignored the background to Rostron's attack and the circumstances of his death. Nobody was to take any responsibility for the tragedy except Michael Rostron the 'fire maniac'. For a few days, Rostron provided a convenient whipping-boy for national and local newspapers which are hungry for hate figures. He joined the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph's* list of public enemies, alongside a motorist whose car was blown up by the army in Blackburn town centre, because it displayed a Sinn Fein sticker.

Having milked the Rostron story

for outrage value, the local press and politicians now want to forget that he and his family ever existed. 'You can have her' said a *Telegraph* reporter when I asked to be put in touch with Sandra Smith. The council arranged counselling sessions for housing workers who witnessed the benefit office fire. Sandra Smith has been left to cope on her own with two children and no money, frightened to talk about her fiancé after the *Sun* printed lies about him and the local papers printed letters demanding hanging for arsonists—as if Michael Rostron wasn't dead already. If she can afford it, she would like to take the children away, to avoid the disturbing effects which the death has had on her eldest son. 'He's only three but they know more than you think.' Nobody has offered to counsel them.

Four days after Michael Rostron's death, Lancashire's Labour council complained that 'around £33m a year goes unclaimed by Lancashire people. A lot of people simply do not realise they are entitled to income support'. Trying to claim the few pounds due to him drove Michael Rostron to distraction, to arson, and to his death off a sixth-floor balcony. In Britain on the brink of the nineties, there is no safety net for the likes of him.



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An interview with Boris Kagarlitsky

'It doesn't matter whether Gorbachev goes'

PHOTO: Joe Boatman



Not all Soviet oppositionists are fans of the West and the free market. Boris Kagarlitsky, leading Soviet left winger, spoke to Rob Knight about the prospects for rebuilding Marxism from the rubble of perestroika

Rob Knight: One thing that interests me very much is the resurgence of a left-wing movement in the Soviet Union, which you represent. However, it is puzzling to outsiders that when the discussions in the Soviet Union are characterised, the use of left and right is very confused. So for example Gorbachev refers to conservative people like Yegor Ligachev as the right, and yet there are some in the opposition who favour a return of the market in an extended form, and they are called the left.

Boris Kagarlitsky: I understand the question, there is some confusion. And now we always—when I say 'we' I mean me and my comrades of the Moscow Socialist Committee of the Popular Front—always point to the difference between two terms, 'radical' and 'the left'. Being 'radical' doesn't mean necessarily to belong to 'the left'. Mrs Thatcher was and is a radical of her own kind. 'Radical' means some kind of political behaviour. A readiness to overcome obstacles to your project and to go as far as your ideological identity is pushing you to go, to keep your ideological identity more or less intact, if possible. That's characteristic of radicalism of any kind. There could be left-wing radicalism and right-wing radicalism and paradoxically there could be also some radicalism of the centre, if you have for example the idea of consensus as a central value to preserve at any price. I know of people both in the West and the Soviet Union who are very much radicals of the centre.

The quantity of Soviet people that call themselves Marxist is quite large if you take into account all the things that Stalinism did to discredit socialism'

Rob Knight: How would you characterise the left?

Boris Kagarlitsky: The left means a whole set of values, one, and a whole set of commitments, two.

So about values, first. Values are of course social justice, democracy—mass democracy, not just a set of liberal institutions, but participation of the masses in the democracy which is really controlled by the people. Democracy in the pure sense of the word—*demos*—rule of the people. So social justice, social welfare and the right of all the people for human dignity and for the human conditions of their life. The right to education, healthcare, childcare, those are the values.

And commitments. I think there are only two commitments. One is to be on the side of the masses, to defend the interests of labour, of the majority of the working population. And not to be on the side of the ruling strata, or some kind of elite and so on. The second commitment is to get in reality a society which would make your values realisable. That is the key commitment because you could have a lot of very good values but if we're not interested in creating the structures which would realise those values in practice, which would create the conditions for the realisation of those values, I think that would mean that we are not a left winger, simply not a political person.

The society which is to realise those values is a socialist society, a democratic socialist society. And it cannot exist without socialised property, without the responsibility of society to keep some sectors of human activity on behalf of society as a whole, paid for by society as a whole. Without real socialised property in many sectors of the economy you can't have efficient and stable systems of social security, because you have to have money for it. You have to have self-management of the enterprises to make a programme of social property really democratic, really serving the people.

You also have to have different forms of socialist property to reflect different levels of collective interest. That's why for us it's important not just to advocate social property, but to advocate adequate forms of social property which can be democratically managed. You can democratically control the biggest industrial enterprises of the country but you can't control—in the form of a state co-operative—the small workshops. Which doesn't mean that you have to privatise them. It just means that you have to find adequate forms of social property.

Rob Knight: The lecture you gave on Monday was called 'The importance of being Marxist', and you put

forward a left-wing view of the necessity of change in Soviet society. Would you say that Marx was still a source of inspiration for the left in the Soviet Union?

Boris Kagarlitsky: Very much so, and of course not Marx alone but the whole Marxist tradition. The Western left must avoid two parallel illusions. One is the illusion which is spread by the right-wing media, the right-wing émigrés, that Marxism is dead, that in the Soviet Union there is no socialist ideology. It is simply not true, you find more and more people interested in socialist ideology, interested in Marxist theory and so on.

On the other hand of course one should avoid another oversimplification, where everything is OK, the idea that socialist ideology is overwhelmingly dominant in the Soviet Union, spreading among the youth. That is also not so. We have a lot of problems with a regime which called itself socialist and that discredited socialism very much. I think what is really important is that the quantity of the people that call themselves Marxist is quite large if you take into account all the things Stalinism did to discredit socialism and Marxism.

People who are trying to get not just slogans or one-sided solutions to our problems, but some kind of complex project of Soviet society, are very much interested in Marxism.

Rob Knight: Do you think that this attempt to recreate Marxism has any effect on the working class in the Soviet Union?

Boris Kagarlitsky: We have to see, because now the mass of the workers are not interested in either Marxism or anti-Marxism or anything like that. We are passing through the first initial stages of a working class movement, and it's very much like the working class movement of the nineteenth century in Britain. As you know there was no Marxism there at that time but at the same time you can't say that the movement was hostile to Marxism.

Rob Knight: Looking at the recent miners' strike in Siberia and the Ukraine, how would you see those struggles as being different from the struggles in the republics?

Boris Kagarlitsky: Because the miners' strikes are social struggles, while in the republics everybody's interested first of all in their national rights. And even when the forms of protest are traditionally working class, their essence is not the working class. For example in Estonia you can see a situation where the industrial workers in the majority are Russians, while the bureaucrats in

the majority are Estonian, and the intellectuals and peasants are Estonians. So of course you have a social dimension of a national conflict. But at the same time unfortunately, even when Russian workers are going on strike there, those strikes are not really working class strikes because they are organised by the Russian management of the enterprises, and very often the strike committees are just led by enterprise directors or deputy directors. So there is a lot of solidarity between the workers and managers, if the managers are of their own nation, on both sides of those national conflicts. That we consider to be one of the most worrying things.

In the Kuzbas miners' case there was of course some kind of conflict between the local management and the workforce, but at the same time the main target was the central ministry. In many cases the management was just neutral. The workers were protesting not only against the ministry or something like that, but people first went on strike then they organised the community and then they discussed their demands.

Rob Knight: What you say seems to bear out my impression of the miners' strikes: the workers were pushed into taking action without a clear idea of what direction they wanted to go in, and their demands escalated into political demands on the central government in a very short period of time. Do you think that this is symptomatic of a loss of faith in perestroika amongst the Soviet people? Is there still a constituency for perestroika?

Boris Kagarlitsky: Well, if you mean by perestroika something done by Gorbachev it never had any strong constituency. In a sense it was always a kind of compromise between different factions of the bureaucracy. It could be more or less efficient while other actors didn't take part in the play. But where there were more and more new actors entering into the play it became more and more difficult, even technically, to reach those compromises and almost impossible to realise them in practice. Now, for example, district-level bureaucracy is trying to formulate politics of its own, and their interests are not necessarily corresponding to the *oblast*/regional level of bureaucratic interests and republican-level bureaucratic interests and so forth. And then there are people other than the bureaucracy, the intellectuals have their interests, working class people are beginning to say what they want, and national communities are becoming more organised, so they're getting more and more trouble on each level.

Rob Knight: Certainly since 1985-86 the intelligentsia has openly identified with the process of glasnost and perestroika, and is often the most vocal supporter of Gorbachev's reforms if not of the man himself. Do you think that is an obstacle to the development of a relationship between the intelligentsia and the working class?

Boris Kagarlitsky: It is and it is very visible that many intellectuals who were very popular about three or four years ago are now losing their popularity. For example a year ago it would have been unthinkable to see a publication like *Novy Mir* being sold in the kiosk in Moscow because everything was immediately bought. We always have a shortage of paper so the quantities of print runs are always limited. It's becoming much easier to get *Moscow News* for example. It is now possible to buy *Novy Mir* on the street, which means that people are buying less of those journals and magazines and newspapers, because they are frustrated by the lack of progress.

Rob Knight: As for the most recent developments, the September purge in the politburo, how would you assess its significance?

Boris Kagarlitsky: There were a lot of purges already and all of them led to nothing because they only showed the inability of Gorbachev to solve the political problems. And each time there is a purge the Western press say 'now finally Gorbachev wins a majority' or 'almost a majority is

won'. Then in a month or two the newspapers say 'Gorbachev has troubles or resistance, he has to get rid of his enemies'. The supposed enemies are sacked and then the story begins from the beginning once again. How many times have I seen that, I don't remember, but each time that will be repeated the Western media will say the same thing.

Rob Knight: So you would see this as yet another in the long series of these purges that do nothing to confront real problems. Is it reaching a critical stage yet?

Boris Kagarlitsky: Well it is reaching a critical stage, but it's oversimplifying things, like Yeltsin says 'Oh, Gorbachev has six months' or he has to go. The most important question is whether anybody has an interest in removing him. There is absolutely nobody in the ruling strata who has an interest in removing Gorbachev. You can find people with interests in different political alliances but they always existed and Gorbachev always expressed the will of the majority in the bureaucracy, he pronounces the final judgement, which is adopted by all the sides involved as a kind of necessary compromise.

All the forces in the bureaucracy want to have that compromise closer to their position, conservatives have their priorities, liberals their priorities. They have different ideas about the compromise, but all need the compromise. Nobody wants just to destroy the system and fighting openly between themselves means

destroying the system. They need that compromise, an essential element of their rule, and Gorbachev is the man who symbolises the compromise between the factions and continuity and stability of the regime and the bureaucracy, who symbolises the reform and the limitations of the reform, and who at the same time symbolises the readiness of the regime to keep many of its essential elements in place. So he's milked by any faction of the bureaucracy. That is why the deeper we go into crisis, the more the interest of all the factions is to keep Gorbachev in.

Rob Knight: That's true for the bureaucracy but do you think it's important that Gorbachev stays in control or do you think that this is irrelevant?

Boris Kagarlitsky: We're not interested. That doesn't matter. For us the face which is looking at us from the walls of the official offices is not the key issue. I don't see there's real importance for English socialists to be republican because you can have the face of the Queen or some other faces on the wall, it's not the key issue. I understand that probably you are a republican but at the same time if you were to say that the key issue for a socialist in Britain is to be a republican I would not agree with you. The same thing with Gorbachev.

We can say that probably there are some nicer guys on the politburo. And probably it is better to do without personal leadership at all. Now that's a secondary issue, the key issue is to change the structure, and to get the real power to the people in the sense that we must create the institutions adequately reflecting the will of the masses. And the only institutions which can now do that could be local soviets if they were to be freely elected. So now our key concern is to get the local soviets as free as possible, representing the will of those people voting, and then to achieve a coordination on the first level possible between those democratically elected local soviets. That is to form the core of alternative power.

Rob Knight: Lastly, because we have run out of time, are you more hopeful about the course of events in the Soviet Union than when you wrote *The Thinking Reed*?

Boris Kagarlitsky: Well I think I was not too much optimistic by that time, I was sure that there would be a lot of difficulties and problems ahead and so that's exactly what I think now. But I'm still optimistic I think. How could we live without having a bit of optimism?

• Boris Kagarlitsky, *The Thinking Reed: Intellectuals and the Soviet State from 1917 to the Present*, Verso, pbk, 1989, £9.95

Confrontation 5

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CONFRONTATION



Don Milligan

HANDS OFF ACID HOUSE PARTIES

Any gathering of young people out to have a good time should be banned. Dancing to loud music in aircraft hangars, warehouses and fields is just a riot in disguise.

When 10 000 typists, bank clerks, salesmen, shop assistants, technicians and sixth-formers descend on any rural community they bring disruption and threaten disaster. Their cars jam country roads and block the hard shoulders of motorways. They keep sleepy village stockbrokers, investment analysts and consultants awake. They disturb the bucolic peace of our market towns. Acid house one-nighters are striking at the very heart of Albion.

You think I'm exaggerating? Go and talk to Mr Brian Hayes, chief constable of Surrey. He has called for jail sentences for acid house promoters and party-goers who contravene environmental health injunctions. Environment minister Virginia Bottomley wants to impose a ban on unauthorised gatherings of more than 500 people—as part of the government's 'Green Bill'.

Police inspector Andrew Nielson has even called for party organisers to be banned from using telephone numbers with an 0898 prefix—this would stop telephone information services giving out the venues of parties. 'Our policy on acid house parties is very simple', says the deputy chief constable of Surrey, David Williams: 'It is to stop them occurring whenever we can.'

Throughout the summer and autumn the police have done exactly that. Using dogs, helicopters, riot gear and hundreds of vehicles, thousands of police have set out to crush festive gatherings of young people from Bristol to Kent, from Hampshire to Lancashire. They have closed motorways, established road blocks, seized equipment and invaded service stations. They have raided and disrupted one-night discos whenever they could. At least 300 people have been arrested; add on the county-wide raids ordered by the Staffordshire chief constable in July, and the numbers arrested in connection with acid house come close to 400. Charges have ranged from anything to everything. The prize for the most imaginative desk sergeant must go to the officer who dreamed up the offence of 'conspiracy to cause a public nuisance'.

All of this was supposed to have started as another crackdown on the use of 'certain substances'. But police have been unable to make much use of drugs charges. As deputy chief constable Williams rather ruefully told the press, 'There is not much evidence of drugs, to be fair. No way do I paint them all as drug users. There's a lot of evidence that they are very well-behaved in lots of ways'. The party-goers are not 'football hooligans' or 'hippies', and do not hail from seditious inner cities or support radical causes. They are, by and large, employed, white heterosexuals from places like Benfleet, Purley, South Mimms and Croydon. I fear that, after all, even this section of solid citizens has proved a grave disappointment to the government and the police. They seem to feel that the country is entirely populated by villains who want to 'ruin it for the rest of us'.

The prize for the most imaginative desk sergeant must go to the officer who dreamed up the offence of 'conspiracy to cause a public nuisance'

Life in Britain is beginning to resemble a TV police series; people are broadly divided into warm human beings (the cops, their children, friends and spouses), and the rest (thieves, psychotics, degenerates and batty old people who waste police time). The attitude of the authorities is becoming more bizarre by the minute. At least when they started handcuffing pickets to railings and preventing workers from travelling from Kent to Yorkshire they were confronted by the miners' strike. When the police make wholesale attacks on the civil rights of football fans I suppose they can claim that there is a history of trouble on the terraces. But smashing up 'hippie convoys' and invading acid house parties?

The excuses for sealing motorways, aerial reconnaissance, house raids at dawn and at teatime, and video surveillance have become progressively flimsier, 'incident' by 'incident'. Now, the organisation of impromptu dancing is enough to bring out the riot squads of four counties.

The government has not just got it in for acid house punters, it seems to think that even the promoters have joined the conspiracy against 'the warm human beings'. In the absence of any other pretext police have had to bad-mouth promoters; attacking them for charging £15 for tickets and falsely accusing organisers of defrauding the public. I am sure that the entrepreneurial spirit of the rogues who finance and put on these events is indistinguishable from that of Richard Branson or Alan Sugar. I doubt that they are any more concerned for the welfare and liberty of their customers than the owners of Bass Charrington

or the management of London Underground Ltd. But the irony of Thatcher's police crushing their enterprise cannot be lost on them. Service sector expansion is supposed to be the name of the game, but not for them. Euro-Disneyland, yes, acid house no!

Why is all this happening? The most consistent police complaint has been that acid house events are 'secret'. This is how the police and the press describe events attracting thousands of young people with the prospect of dancing for hours in tightly packed spaces. 'Police foil plans for secret acid house bash.' How, secret? I couldn't work it out. But now it is clear: 'secret' means any activity or event that takes place without police permission.

Undoubtedly, Virginia Bottomley has got a point. Young people in large crowds are intensely irritating. They are energetic, glamorous, sexy. As if this wasn't enough the acid house lot seem to have cars, credit cards and glorious sun tans. Could it be that envy is forcing the boring old bastards to destroy their rights? It's a thought. So too is the fact that the British countryside is the last bolthole of the upper middle class. Driven to living in well-manicured hamlets surrounded by clumps of pampas grass, the green welly brigade hide from the decay of Britain, holding garden parties in aid of Oxfam when they're not supping real ale in pubs festooned with horse brasses. The last thing the country life set want is thousands of working class youth marauding up and down rustic lanes looking for a wicked night out.

However, I don't believe that a combination of envy of the young, and distaste at the antics of the *hoi polloi*, is sufficient to mobilise entire police forces, and the legislative programme of the government. The authorities are doing all in their power to strengthen the police in readiness for the interesting times that lie ahead; they know that the disintegration of the economy is likely to provoke rather more liveliness in the young than amphetamines or ecstasy.

The home office and the department of the environment, working hand in glove with chief constables throughout the country, are out to abolish the freedom of assembly. In practice this has not existed for black youth, homosexuals, pickets, hippies and football fans for some time; now they want to deny it to everybody, starting with an entire generation of party-goers. People will shortly require the sanction of the police before they are allowed to gather anywhere, for any purpose.

Mind-blowing

It's true acid house parties are a bit naff. But, then, I'm very liberal. I believe that people should be allowed to have parties. I don't think that they should be beaten up, fined and jailed just for being naff. So I was grabbed by a recent headline: 'Devil Dogs Fight Acid Raid Cops.' At last, I thought, somebody has put their foot down. Armed with baseball bats, rottweilers and tear gas, the stewards at an acid house party near Reigate repelled police equipped with riot gear and dogs. Of course, the police brought in massive reinforcements, but they were given a bloody good shock, if not a bloody good hiding. They are not all-powerful. If former champion pugilist Horace Notice and a few stewards can stop them in their tracks, what would happen if thousands-strong crowds fought back? The possibilities are truly mind-blowing.

The prostitutes' tale

On the game

Selling sex is one of the few real boom sectors of the British economy. We asked a legal expert and the working women themselves about the pressures that lead them into prostitution, and the perils they face

Prostitution is the secret side of the market economy: women selling sex as a commodity. Few of them match the image of fur-coated call-girls in Mayfair suites. Most tout for trade from dirty pavements in the big British cities. They are housewives trying to keep up the mortgage or buy the children shoes that a part-time job and child benefit won't pay for. They are jobless teenagers for whom the fast money of prostitution seems an attractive alternative to two years on the YTS. Led into it by economic insecurity, these women enter a profession that is far from safe. Apart from unappetising sex and social stigma, they risk violence from punters and pimps, police harassment, losing their children, court fines and imprisonment. Being on the game is no game.

Prostitution brings out the worst in the hypocrites of the British establishment. Privately, the powers that be recognise that it provides a safety valve for unsatisfactory relationships within the family unit which they are determined to preserve. But publicly, the mock-puritan morality of the British authorities demands that they condemn prostitution and criminalise the women who take part in it. This has been more true than ever through the Thatcher years.

As the worse-off sections of society have got poorer over the past decade, more women have been pressurised into prostitution. At the same time, the government's crusade to promote Victorian values has involved a sharp increase in the prosecution of prostitutes. There are more women on the streets; and more police with more powers to harass them.

Doctor Susan Edwards is a lecturer in criminal justice at Buckingham University. She has written extensively on prostitution and the law, and catalogued the advance of repression in recent years. 'The knee-jerk response of the Thatcher government has been a "get

tough" policy of policing prostitutes', she says: 'We've seen a 300 per cent increase in prosecutions—from 3500 in 1979 to over 10 000 in 1983. In that year the "get tough" policy in King's Cross resulted in 1000 arrests in a couple of weeks. Police pressure has not relaxed, and more women are going to prison than ever before.'

Britain has the toughest anti-prostitute laws in the EEC. The 1959 Street Offences Act makes loitering and soliciting 'for the purpose of prostitution' a crime. Indeed, even within British law, the act is unique, as Edwards explains: 'Streetwalking is the only offence in the whole of the law where your previous convictions are announced in court: "You, so-and-so, being a common prostitute...." In any other case your antecedents are not announced: for example, you wouldn't say to a defendant: "You, being a common child molester...." The fundamental tenet of the legal system is that you are innocent until proven guilty—except for prostitutes.'

The official figures for loitering and soliciting prosecutions last year are due out this month; Edwards expects the total to be about 9000 for England and Wales. It is common for known prostitutes to be arrested several times a week; some have been picked up by the police several times in one day. Once arrested, the police and magistrates continue to single them out for special treatment.

'The police in London routinely keep prostitutes overnight in police cells pending their appearance in the morning', says Edwards: 'When the custody officers are asked why they do this they say, "Well, these girls don't live in London so we can't be sure they will answer bail". It's appalling that women are kept in custody for what is a nuisance offence. This is yet another civil liberties question.' The legal system's distinction between prostitutes and the rest of the population holds good even when the women are the victims

of crime; on countless occasions, the courts have emphasised that violence or rape against 'innocent' women is a more serious offence than that against prostitutes.

The authorities are developing new techniques for pressurising prostitutes. Councils in Westminster, Bristol, Balsall Heath in Birmingham and Southampton have instituted traffic schemes around red light districts which make it difficult for women to tout for business from passing cars. But these serve only to satisfy NIMBY complaints from residents. 'These schemes just move the prostitutes on to somebody else's patch', says Edwards: 'When they set up a scheme around King's Cross the women moved up to Finsbury Park, but now they're moving back to King's Cross.' An 'industry' sustained by the subordinate position of women in society cannot be abolished through legal repression or by moving a few traffic signs.

The crackdown on prostitution has also provided a pretext for Britain's increasingly strongarm police forces to raise their public profiles further still, and stamp their authority on inner-city streets. 'The superintendent in Liverpool 8 decided it was better to give the patrol of prostitution high visibility', says Susan Edwards, 'so the flavour of the day is having police tramping round Toxteth on horseback. In London they favour the vans. In Paddington they used to go around in vehicles called the Brothel Creeper and the Pimpmobile'.

Some women working in Park Lane and Mayfair might earn £1000 for a few nights in the Hilton Hotel. But, as Edwards argues, they are the top one per cent of the capital's prostitute population. The majority work in a seedy world, threatened by pimps, degraded by clients, criminalised by the police and courts, spied on by the social services, shunned by their neighbours.

Interviews by
Joe Boatman,
Mary McCaughey,
Kirsten Cale and
Penny Robson



JULIE, aged 35, from London, has worked in King's Cross for two years. She has a husband and two children.

I got involved because of money problems. My husband is in prison and I didn't know what to do. Then a girlfriend who was working said: 'Why don't you come out with me?' That first night I got tanked up before I could do anything. King's Cross is grotty but it's anonymous. I don't want my husband to find out.

With the other girls it's the same reason—money. The really young ones come from the north—there's no work up there, and they want to buy clothes and get flats. With some of the others it's drugs as well. Most of the girls have boyfriends and husbands who know what they do, they live off the money as well. A lot of girls from up north are prey to pimps. I don't know why, they must be terrified and don't know how to get out of it.

Girls just want to find good punters and avoid the bad. But it's all money, a meal ticket. It's not as if there's any emotion there. The men should realise that we're just working, there's no feelings towards them. That's why everybody takes drink or drugs, to block out what they're doing. Your feelings aren't there, your mind's not there. It's like mechanical sex. It's not like having it with your husband.

There are more girls on the game now—a lot come into London because there's more money here. Here, the cheapest you get is £25, in the north it's £10, £15; £25 is bad enough. If they're a pleasant sort of client they'll give you £75 or £100. I've never been attacked by a client, touch wood, but I've heard of lots of girls who have. You always worry about meeting someone potty. But I worry more about the police than the clients.

The police can arrest you every day if they want. By law you're supposed to approach somebody or be with somebody before they arrest you. But if they see you on your own in a red light area, they'll pull you in. Last week I got picked up three times, once when I was on my way out of hospital! The minute I put my head above the stairs at the Cross I was lifted. The police are a way of life for us. The man will never get arrested.

They'll usually keep you in until the next morning, when you appear before the magistrate. You could drop dead in the cells at night and they couldn't give a damn. Sometimes the police try and do deals with you in exchange for 'favours'. One policeman brought me cigarettes and said he could help me if I went with him but I wouldn't. They're a bunch of bastards.

These days the magistrates want you to pay the fine straight away or

they send you to prison. This happened to me last week, they knew I had no money. You get sent to Holloway, usually for 10 days. It isn't as bad as being in holding cells. In the holding cells there's no facilities to wash, there's no toilet. They're awful. After being in holding cells, Holloway seems pretty nice—for a while. But it's not pleasant being locked up 23 hours a day. And the food in Holloway looks like somebody's puked on the plate.

This is the only way I pay the rent. Before my husband went to prison, he was looking after me. The last job I had was as a film editor. I gave it up after my son was born. I can earn £150-£200 a night. That's when I'm not sitting in a cell somewhere. I just want my husband back, to get back to a normal way of living. To me, my husband's such a fantastic person, such a good heart. I just want to get a home back together for him.

EILEEN, aged 24, works in Newcastle. She has two children aged three and six. Her boyfriend, father of the youngest child, is in prison.

I'm on the game for the bairns. He'd kill me if he found out. He should understand why I'm doing it. I'm not having my daughter sent to school with tatty clothes from the jumbles. I won't have any snobs pointing the finger at me or my kids.

The last time I was on the game nearly five years. I stopped when I started living with him. This time I've been doing it nearly a year. I worry about somebody telling him or being caught by the police. That would mean the kids gone. That's definitely my biggest worry—my kids being taken off us.

You worry about the clients at first but that soon wears off. I've been lucky—you get a lot of the same men around here and most of them just want it because they can't get it at home. I'm not too bothered about violence from the punters. I was beaten up a lot by my daughter's father—a real pig. I've got a good fist myself so if things turned nasty I think I'd be alright.

MICHELLE, aged 29, works in Newcastle. She has four children aged from two to 15. After leaving a husband who abused her and the children, she now lives with a friend of his, who forced her on to the game.

I've been on the game for six weeks. He forced me into doing it. He says we need the money to get new things for the house. That's his house. I think he's just spending it all on himself. He gives me money but that's just to buy food, and it's not enough. I keep telling myself I shouldn't be doing this. If the kids

found out or if they got taken away from me I'd kill myself. Some days I just want to walk out in front of a car with all the kids. I can't look our eldest lass in the face sometimes.

I worry about the punters sometimes, but the social workers, the police catching me and my kids finding out, that's on my mind all the time. I can't sleep because of worrying about that. I'm not bringing my kids up in a battered women's home but I don't know what to do. I don't know what's best for the bairns.

CAROL, aged 39, has worked in Birmingham for 18 years.

Being on the game is not for everybody, but still, it's the money, isn't it? I started when I was about 17. I used to charge one pound and 10 shillings. Now it's about £15. Women do it for different reasons. If you see a woman in her thirties doing it, it's to pay the bills. And you get women of 45 going out now. If I go out now it's just to pay my electricity. Years ago I had to do it because my boyfriend walked out on me. One day his wife came to the door and that was the end of it. So I was left with two young children who weren't even at school.

I've never liked being on the game. I think it's very degrading to have to sell yourself. You see a girl of 17—she could go to a college or something, couldn't she? But once they get known as a prostitute, they're ruined for life. I'd love to have been one of those air hostesses and travelled the world, but with kids you can't. I met a decent bloke a few months ago and he asks: 'Where do you work?' So I thought of a factory where I used to work and he waited for me outside the gates. You know if you meet somebody decent and they find out what you are they're not going to want to know you.

MITRA, aged 30, runs an escort agency in Birmingham.

My parents are Indian. They arranged a marriage for me at 16 and I had a daughter at 17. I worked as a nanny—no social life, sexual harassment from the man I worked for, I was desperate to get out. I replied to a newspaper advert for escorts. A woman interviewed me and told me what the job entailed. It was a way of earning money to be independent and have my daughter with me.

I'm not a prostitute any more but I do run an escort agency. Without putting any airs and graces on it, it's purely money. When I was working, I became aware of the problems of uncontrolled prostitution. We didn't know if we were going to wake up in the morning or be murdered. There's no protection for women and they



were selling themselves very cheaply. I'd seen the faults and I hoped to put them right.

The clients see our advertising; they phone us up and we ask them to come into the office. We ask them for ID and once we've actually checked them out, they can then just phone up and say: 'I'm booked into such and such a hotel', and we send a girl. I've known people to be charged for managing brothels. A friend of mine has been to court and she was actually sentenced by a man who uses the services that she provides. The women in the agency earn up to £500 a week. I'll definitely get busted for telling you this! The minimum fee they charge a client is £100.

Most of the girls are housewives, most of them have got children and mortgages. They do other jobs as well: we have girls who work in offices and in shops. There are more women going into prostitution every day. They come in to see us all the time. Interviewing someone is like interviewing for any job.

There are prostitutes on the streets, in escort agencies and in massage parlours. And there are women who don't want to be identified as prostitutes, but they go out looking for men who can buy them things that they could never afford. It's very easy to become financially addicted to the game. It's easy money—especially if you're 16 and you've never had £50 before. When I say the

money's easy, it's very hard to earn, but it's there in cash. If you need it you can go out and earn it tomorrow. Unfortunately, a lot of prostitutes live from day to day. If you earn £100 today you spend it and hope to earn £200 tomorrow.

You can see the weaknesses of men but it might be a way to ease our conscience when we say that we're getting one over on the men. We are still relying on men for finance, to get a better standard of living we still have to sell our bodies.

I hate the day I ever ventured into prostitution. I'm out of it now, but it's been hard sometimes to put up with the idea that you are a worthless woman as far as society is concerned. Every woman is capable of being a prostitute. I would have liked to get involved in politics. But I've gained an insight into society which is probably just as educating as going to college. If you didn't need a degree to be a psychiatrist, I think prostitutes would make some of the best.

SUE worked as a prostitute on and off for eight years. She is now 37, with one child.

I came down to London thinking I could get a decent job but I couldn't. I was working as a switchboard operator for a temp agency. I met someone who was working in a hostess nightclub and getting about

'It's hard to put up with the idea that you are a worthless woman as far as society is concerned'



nation. As 'the building block of society' the family must be strengthened and, in the schools, children should be taught 'traditional moral values' and made to understand 'our religious heritage' (Christianity) (*Times*, 26 May 1988). The government should promote 'our Conservative values', 'the traditional values of British life', 'self reliance, personal responsibility, good neighbourliness and generosity to others'. Thatcher and her ministers have been alert to any opportunity to preach these values.

Three examples immediately come to mind. In September the prime minister cancelled a proposed major official survey of sexual behaviour as part of research into the Aids epidemic, claiming that it would invade the privacy of family life. Tory advisers feared that it would reveal a pattern of family life in Britain that is far removed from the cosy image promoted at the Conservative women's conference.

Last month the government hinted that it was seriously considering following up former social security minister John Moore's offensive on single parents by targeting fathers to pay child maintenance to their estranged partners. Scarcely a week passes without some new contribution to the great public debate on the evils of divorce and pornography. These are simply the most recent illustrations of the determination of Tory politicians to seize on moral issues to promote the Thatcher message.

Censorious on sex

The Thatcher moral crusade raises a number of important questions. How successful has it been in swinging public opinion behind the government? Is it true that the source of the problems of modern Britain is human nature? Is it possible to advance an alternative morality to that promoted by the Tories? Let's take these questions in turn.

The advance of the much vaunted 'moral majority' has been highly uneven. The most striking result of a number of recent opinion surveys is the contrast between the relative success of the Thatcher government in changing the climate of opinion on matters of sexual morality and its relative failure in the sphere of social and political values.

The government's most successful moral panic has undoubtedly been its Aids campaign. The authors of the *British Social Attitudes* survey note a 'growth in censoriousness' towards both extra-marital sex and towards homosexuality between 1983 and 1987, which they consider is linked to Aids propaganda (*British Social Attitudes: The Fifth Report 1988-89*, p72).

By 1987 some 89 per cent of men and 88 per cent of women considered

that extra-marital sex was 'always or mostly' wrong; for men between the ages of 18 and 54 there was a 10 per cent increase on 1983. Again by 1987 some 77 per cent of men considered homosexual relationships 'always or mostly' wrong, a 10 per cent increase on 1983; some 72 per cent of women took a similar view, 15 per cent up on four years previously. The only consolation was that there was no increase in the proportion favouring more job discrimination against gay men. However, as the authors note, 'it remains the case that half the population regards it as unacceptable for homosexuals to teach in schools, and not far short of that would bar them from teaching at colleges or universities and from positions in public life' (p74).

In broader areas of sexual morality, including attitudes to contraception and pornography, the *British Social Attitudes* survey concludes that 'permissiveness on most issues seems, for the moment at least, to be somewhat in decline' and that 'such changes in attitudes to sexual issues that have occurred have been consistently in the direction of increased censoriousness' (p45). The authors conclude that 'the message of those advocating a return to "traditional values" seems thus to have found a sympathetic audience'.

But not abortion

On one important moral issue, however, popular opinion has failed to respond to the appeal of reaction—abortion. In 1983 less than half the population was in favour of abortion on social grounds; by 1987 a majority supported abortion on social grounds (p41). More than 90 per cent approved abortion on medical grounds (fetal abnormality, rape, threat to maternal health). Increases in approval of abortion in all circumstances between 1983 and 1987 varied between 10 per cent among 18 to 34 year olds and 18 per cent in the over-54s. The swing towards a more permissive attitude towards abortion is all the more significant given the high-profile activities of the anti-abortion campaigns and their parliamentary supporters over the same period.

The resilience of public approval for abortion is paralleled by the continuing appeal of traditional 'socialist' values despite the efforts of Thatcherite propagandists to promote the ideals of 'popular capitalism'. Given a choice in a June 1988 Mori poll between a 'Thatcherite' and a 'socialist' model for society, the public opted for Thatcherism on only two out of five features, and then only by slender majorities (I Crewe, 'Values: The crusade that failed', in D Kavanagh and A Seldon (eds), *The Thatcher Effect: A Decade Of Change*, 1989, p243). People preferred a 'free society'

to an 'egalitarian society' and chose 'efficiency' over 'keeping people in work'. Yet a small majority preferred a 'mainly socialist society' to a 'mainly capitalist society' and a larger majority opted for social welfare before self reliance. A majority of five to one put 'caring' before 'the creation of wealth'.

Crewe concludes that 'after nine years of Thatcherism the public remained wedded to the collectivist, welfare ethic of social democracy' and insists that 'quite simply, there has been no Thatcherite transformation of attitudes or behaviour among the British public'.

An ICM poll conducted in September confirms the earlier Mori findings. This survey reveals that 62 per cent of voters and 39 per cent of Conservatives are against the privatisation of profitable state industries (*Guardian*, 18 September). 'Socialist planning' is favoured by 38 per cent, even by 16 per cent of Tories. Fifty-eight per cent of all voters (and the same proportion of Conservative voters) prefer better public services and higher taxes to worse services and tax cuts.

Public and private

How can we explain the uneven impact of Thatcher's ideological crusade? It certainly has little to do with the differential effectiveness of the opposition's counter-attack: from Aids, through abortion to privatisation, its capitulation has been consistent across the board. Confronted with a new Tory offensive Labour's instinctive response has been to retreat and slowly modify its own policies to bring them into line with Thatcherite orthodoxy. Neil Kinnock's recent reassurance to shareholders in privatised companies that Labour would guarantee their dividends and Frank Field's suggestion that single mothers should be obliged to name the fathers of their children to remain eligible for social security benefits—these are typical Labour responses to Thatcherite pressure.

The Thatcherite crusade has proved most influential on the more purely ideological issues. It seems likely that panics around issues such as child abuse, drugs, terrorism and football hooliganism have been as successful as that around Aids in changing the climate of public opinion on issues that, in practice, have little immediate consequence for the vast majority of people. However, when it comes to issues of which many people have direct personal experience, it is much more difficult to shift attitudes.

Over the 20 years in which the 1967 Abortion Act has been in operation millions of women have had abortions and millions more men and women have been in close contact with women in this

predicament. It will take more than homilies about the sanctity of family life and pictures of fetuses to persuade people that women's limited capacity to end unwanted pregnancies should be restricted still further. It is striking that a similar pattern is also evident in the USA where, contrary to expectations, anti-abortionist candidates have performed poorly in recent polls, even in conservative Mid-Western areas.

People might agree that enterprise and efficiency are noble concepts in the abstract, but they have learned the hard way that the pursuit of higher profits and streamlined public services makes life more difficult for most of society.

Surveys of changes of public opinion over the past decade suggest that there is little basis for the sort of grandiose claims about the hegemonic appeal of the ideology of Thatcherism that have long been popular on the British left. Crewe concludes that 'the Conservatives owe their three election wins not to ideology but to much more pragmatic causes—their economic record, Mrs Thatcher's leadership, and the electoral system' (p250). We should also emphasise the important contribution of a weak and divided opposition.

Who shalt not kill?

The opinion polls also, however, show that there is no place for complacency and underestimating the impact of Thatcher's moral crusades on public attitudes. The very fact that the government and its ideologues have been more successful in areas of private morality confirms the success of official propaganda in reinforcing the atomisation and demoralisation of a society racked by economic and social insecurity. This brings us to the question of 'human nature'.

Of all the moral panics promoted through the Thatcher years the issue of terrorism has been most consistently and most intensively promoted. The IRA at home and Libya and the Palestinians abroad have been the continual focus of government and media attention as a menace to the British way of life.

The evil and psychopathic terrorist is the ideal personification of the malignant forces of human nature that haunt the prime minister's vision of social and moral advance for British society. The IRA's September bomb attack on the Royal Marines barracks at Deal in Kent which killed 10 soldiers provided yet another opportunity for an outpouring of public outrage and condemnation of terrorism and those who carry it out.

The Queen and Prince Philip, the prime minister, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the leader of the opposition and the whole of the British establishment united to

denounce such a use of violence for political ends. All commentators dwelled on the combination of moral defects in the nature of the IRA men suspected of carrying out the operation, their callousness, cowardice and cold brutality. All were agreed that there could be no possible justification for such an act. In the common view promoted by the British establishment the fifth commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' is a universal principle of human behaviour only violated by the subhuman monsters of the IRA.

Yet reality is not so simple: the British establishment's practice is at some variance with its moral precepts. Only a few weeks before the Deal bombing a Loyalist death squad in Northern Ireland assassinated Loughlin Maginn, a Catholic. It has subsequently become clear that the Loyalists selected their target according to intelligence provided by

group of men' who had done 'remarkable work' (*Guardian*, 13 September).

Nor is the ambivalence of the British establishment on matters of terror and violence confined to Ireland. At the beginning of the Falklands War in 1982 the British navy sank the Argentine warship the *Belgrano*, killing all on board. The *Sun*, shocked and horrified by the deaths of 10 men in Deal last month, was exultant at the slaughter of 300 in the South Atlantic: 'Gotcha' was its infamous headline. While most of the authorities took a slightly more sober view, few in Britain questioned the morality of their actions, though some radicals quibbled about their methods. Clergymen blessed the task force leaving harbour and bishops welcomed the triumphant fleet back to the City of London. Meanwhile the main preoccupation of ministers concerned in quieter times with

RIGHT:
Surveys confirm that
Britain is still not a
nation of Billy
Graham fans



the Ulster Defence Regiment, a regiment of the British Army. In other words Maginn was killed by the British state, just as surely as the British soldiers in Deal were killed by the IRA—with the significant difference that they chose to join the British Army whereas he was born a Catholic. Maginn is only the latest of a large number of people killed by British-sponsored death squads in Northern Ireland, either because they were on leaked hit-lists or simply because they were the wrong religion at a time when the authorities wanted to intensify the sectarian tension (for a more detailed account and a body count, see the Irish Freedom Movement Handbook, *The Irish War*, 1987).

It seems that the commitment of the British authorities to the sanctity of life is not absolute after all, and that its hostility to the use of violence to achieve political ends depends on the ends not the means. Whereas the prime minister denounced the IRA as monsters and cowards, she made a special trip to a UDR barracks in Northern Ireland only days after Maginn's murder to congratulate the regiment as 'a very, very, very brave

preaching traditional moral values to the nation was to lie and deceive the public about the position of the *Belgrano* in an attempt to justify Britain's belligerent action.

All this is not merely a matter of hypocrisy, though that is a commodity in abundant supply in the British establishment. The inconsistent attitude of the British authorities to matters of violence and terror reveals that their objection is not to violence itself, to its nature or scale. For them it is always a question of who is doing it to whom, a question of taking sides. When the British state is the target of violent attack, from within or without, violence is illegitimate and immoral, the work of evil terrorists (IRA) or psychopathic politicians (Gadafi, Galtieri). When the British state is directing the death squads as in Northern Ireland or despatching the task force to the South Atlantic, violence is either ignored or celebrated.

The more intense the conflict, the greater the scale of the threat to British interests, the greater is the carnage that can be justified to public opinion. After its record of savagely

Sanctioned
by religion,
official
morality
denies the
legitimacy of
popular
resistance and
persuades the
masses to
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order

suppressing colonial revolts and participating in two rounds of genocidal world war this century, it takes a remarkable face to tell the public and the world that the British ruling class upholds the sanctity of life and abhors the use of violence for political ends.

A closer look at the role of morality today reveals that the problem lies not in human nature but in human society. Morality is not a set of transcendent principles handed down on tablets of stone from some deity, governing the behaviour of all individuals in society. The morality of the capitalist class is a code of principles that is entirely subordinate to the exigencies of the class struggle. Whenever their class interests demand the suspension of some universal principle—such as 'Thou shalt not kill'—it is readily suspended. Yet morality serves as a powerful ideological weapon against the oppressed. Sanctioned by religion, official morality denies the legitimacy of popular resistance and persuades the masses to acquiesce to the established order.

Capitalist society has no laws against exploitation and oppression, and when the capitalist class is threatened the judges and the priests waive any rules that interfere with the drastic measures necessary to safeguard the system. But if ordinary

people fight back against capitalist tyranny—that is immoral, criminal, at worst, 'terrorism'.

What is our alternative to Thatcherite morality? We must begin from the recognition that in a deeply divided society there can be no common code of values. In a society polarised between the exploiters and the exploited, between the oppressors and the oppressed, it is impossible to have a set of shared principles. Our morality, our code of acceptable behaviour in society, must be derived from the recognition of social conflict and our objective of social liberation.

Class values

From a Marxist point of view, which expresses the movement of society from capitalism to a higher form of social organisation, behaviour is right if it contributes to the abolition of capitalism and the construction of a more just and equitable society. Does that mean that anything can be justified to get rid of capitalism? No, actions are legitimate only if, in the particular circumstances in which they are undertaken, they really advance the cause of social liberation.

The capitalist class pretends to derive its moral precepts from God, but in practice works them out pragmatically according to its class interests. By contrast we explicitly

reject any divine origin of our morality, and consciously derive it from the laws of the development of society, from the class struggle.

Are we not then just as bad as the bourgeoisie, if not worse? No, the working class is different from the capitalist class in that it constitutes the majority, rather than a small minority of society. Furthermore, unlike the capitalist class, the working class has no special interests or privileges to protect and hence can represent the interests of society as a whole. It aims not only to abolish exploitation but to abolish itself in the process of liberating society from the domination of capital.

Whereas the morality of the capitalist class justifies the tyranny of the minority, the morality of the working class expresses the aspirations of the majority for liberation. From this perspective any particular method or tactic is right if, in the particular situation, it helps to unite the working class, it rallies resistance to any form of oppression, it encourages suspicion and contempt for all forms of official moralising and it promotes a wider awareness of the historic destiny of the class struggle.

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Confidential reports reveal council impotence

Camden: the year of the racist attack

Confidential documents obtained by Living Marxism confirm increasing racist violence in trendy Camden—and reveal the failure of the Labour council's anti-racist policies. Keith Tompson reports

The London borough of Camden is better known for the fashionable Lock market, antique shops, boat rides, Regent's Park and *TV-am* than for squalor and racist violence. Yet behind the expensive façade Camden is also home to the grey Somers Town and Regent's Park estates, and to a fair-sized Bangladeshi community.

This has been the year of the racist attack on Camden's rundown estates. The number of attacks reported has risen sharply, and that gives only a glimpse of the real situation; the experience of police hostility means that many black people don't report attacks.

Living Marxism has obtained some confidential council papers which give a picture of life for the immigrant community in Camden,

and reveal the Labour council's inability to deal with the growing problem of racism. The papers include details of 31 racist attacks carried out between March and July, supplied to the council by police:

- 'On Monday 27 March 1989, 9.10pm, lighted pieces of paper were put through the letter-box at XXXX NW1. A net curtain was set alight but fortunately was extinguished by members of the X family.'
- 'Car smashed up at XXXX on 9 May 1989 in a racially motivated attack.'
- 'Petrol bomb made from milk bottle thrown at XXXX on 15 May 1989 in a racist attack.'
- 'On Sunday 21 May at 18.50 outside XXXX NW1, Mr X, aged 20, was approached by two white men

aged about 20 years, verbally abused and then chased, caught and hit on the head with a lump of concrete which necessitated hospital treatment.'

- 'On Wednesday 31 May 1989 at 16.00 outside XXXX Mr X of NW1 was racially abused and assaulted, whereby he sustained a suspected fractured skull, by four white youths.'
- 'On Tuesday 20 June 1989 at 5.30pm at XXXX NW1, the Bengali workshop was besieged by a large group of white youths carrying sticks. Later that night a group of white youths chased some Bengali men in XXXX NW1, threw a bottle and then racially abused Miss X who happened to be passing.'

The council's own documents reveal that, in the first six months of the year, 84 racist attacks were reported to either the social services or housing departments—up from 37 in the previous six months. Of these 84 attacks, 36 were on Asians, 30 were on Africans, five on Jewish people, three on Afro-Caribbeans and 10 on 'others'. 33 involved abuse or threatening behaviour, 21 involved physical attack, 16 involved broken windows and other damage to property, six were abusive phone calls and 11 involved putting 'items' through letter-boxes and banging on doors.

The confidential reports go on to detail Camden council's response to attacks on black people living on its estates. In 90 per cent of the cases mentioned, the council's only advice to the victims has been to uproot themselves and move home. But it can take two years to be offered alternative council accommodation. Even then, the family concerned will only be offered one transfer. Many of them turn down the alternative flats they are offered as unsuitable, and so are left to sit it out in their present vulnerable accommodation.

Camden's transfer policy is a shambles. A supplementary report concedes that 'only one request for transfer had been agreed'. The confidential report concludes that 'in the present circumstances of housing shortage and limitations imposed on local authorities, housing transfers



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Bright Adu-Baah with three of his children and the racists' calling-card

may not be a possible action or solution to help the families in need'. In other words, the only policy which the council has adopted is a self-confessed non-starter.

The report proposes another solution, suggesting that the council employ a full-time solicitor to begin taking legal action against racist attackers, including injunctions and evictions.

These documents clearly illustrate that it is impossible to combat racist attacks through the bureaucratic machinery of a local council. The operative policy is to move the victims. In the first place, this is sidestepping the issue; there is no guarantee that it will protect the family concerned, and it risks turning estates into 'no-go' areas for immigrants, with the council telling black people that they cannot live there. In the second place, the transfer policy does not even work.

Camden's fall-back option is to

prosecute the attackers. This presupposes that the police can and will arrest the racists (something that they have been none too keen to do in the past, even when evidence was available), and that the courts will convict them (again, the record gives little encouragement). If the council claims that it cannot afford to make transfer flats fit to live in, it is unlikely to make funds available for legal action on the hundred-plus cases reported already this year. And threatening to evict racist tenants is of little use to people like the Adu-Baah family (see below), whose anonymous persecutors don't even live on the estate.

Injunctions, eviction notices and other formal procedures are of little or no use. Even if there were successful prosecutions (which there have not been), the most likely reaction would be a backlash and an increase in tensions as racists rallied behind a martyr. The alternative is to

try to organise local people against the racists, to isolate the attackers. However, that would require a political challenge to racism in the community. Far from launching any such challenge, Camden council's policies have added to the anti-immigrant climate.

The council claims that its housing problems restrict its ability to help tenants under attack. In fact it has used the same arguments to justify attacks on immigrants. Along with other London councils, Labour in Camden has used the 'intentionally homeless' clause of the Tory Local Government Act to refuse to house Bangladeshi and Irish immigrants. This amounts to repatriation, telling immigrants to go back where they came from. By thus branding immigrants as an alien drain on resources, Camden has encouraged locals to see them as a cause of the decline in council services.

Three sleepless years

The Adu-Baah family, who live in north Camden, are thinking of patenting their new invention. It is a bolt which pushes upwards to prevent a letter-box being opened from the outside. Most Camden residents could use it only to keep out junk mail and mortgage reminders. The Adu-Baahs use it to keep themselves alive. There has already been one recent arson attack on a black family and Bright Adu-Baah, a trainee accountant, is not about to let his family be number two.

The Rowley Way estate is no racist stronghold. It would be easy for the tenants who live on this sprawling and claustrophobic prison replica to take out their frustrations on black residents. But that hasn't happened. The Adu-Baah family are under attack from outside the estate.

Bright and Elisabeth Adu-Baah have lived on Rowley Way for more than 10 years, and are now the proud parents of four children aged between one and 13. They had little trouble until three years ago, when Bright was leaving for work and collided with three youths about to put National Front 'niggers go home' leaflets through his letter-box. When he confronted the youths they ran away. Days later, at 2am, the 'fuck off back to Africa' phone calls started. When they continued, the Adu-Baahs switched to an ex-directory phone number.

The new phone number made a big difference to their lives. Now the racists made direct attacks on their home, shoving garbage, rotting meat

bones and dog dirt through the letter box. When the bolt was fitted, the attackers took to throwing eggs at the windows and hammering on doors and windows in the early hours. They have never been seen, sneaking about under cover of night. 'We really don't sleep at all now', says Bright, 'you have to keep partly conscious in case they come. After three years it's really wearing us down'. Elisabeth now leaves the flat only to take the children to school, and that petrifies her.

The Adu-Baahs have had no help from the authorities. In September, Bright was woken by a louder than usual crash. The glass on his front security door had been smashed, and a brick heaved through another window. Fearing the worst, he fetched a bread knife from the kitchen and called the police.

Accused, abandoned

'They came about an hour later. I still had the knife when he banged on the door and he started shouting at me. He said he could arrest me for holding it. I mean, what did he expect, we had just been attacked, I have got four kids and my wife. I got the impression that he thought I was the cause of the problem. He even told me I would have to pay for my window. If I hadn't been in control I would have hit him, and I almost thought he was trying to provoke me.' The policeman left, muttering about making further inquiries into the attack. He has not been back.

Camden council has been no better. Bright approached it more

than two years ago, asking to be transferred to a safer area. He heard nothing until the end of September, when he was offered a flat on the Primrose Hill estate. Having learned to be cautious about these things, Bright went to check it out. He discovered that, in a block of 11 flats, 10 of the residents wanted to leave because it was unsafe. The eleventh resident is an unstable woman who has twice recently set fire to the block and has two bulldogs which roam loose and like to attack children. Bright told the council he could not take his family there. The council told him to take it or leave it. He left it, and the family remains under siege on the Rowley Way estate.

The experience of the Adu-Baahs confirms that there is no point looking to British officialdom to fight racism, be it the police or a Labour council. Local anti-racists have to get organised to confront these problems, through such mechanisms as a telephone network, to ensure an instant response to an attack. The Adu-Baahs remain cynical about the prospects for getting others to help them deal with their assailants. 'If this happened in Ghana everybody would come and help', says Elisabeth, 'but here only you and one other white man came. I think the English are probably the most unfriendly lot in the world'. After three years of waiting for a few Englishmen to stick something else through her letter-box, that's an understandable response. It is up to the rest of us to prove her wrong.

'If this happened in Ghana everybody would come and help'

How the CIA, MI6 and the Queen's man staged a coup

'A sophisticated Chile'

John Pilger's new book on Australia, *A Secret Country*, includes a detailed account of the 1974-75 'coup' in which Western secret services and the governor general brought down Gough Whitlam's Labor government. We reprint edited extracts, with the author's permission, as a reminder of the limits of parliamentary democracy and the class power invested in 'symbolic' institutions like the monarchy

[Australia had been run by the conservative Liberal Party since the fifties. On 2 December 1972, the first Labor government for 23 years was elected, led by Gough Whitlam.]

The events that followed rapidly Whitlam's election caught much of the world unaware. Whitlam had a 'period of grace' before the party caucus elected the cabinet. Working only with his deputy, Lance Barnard, he began to honour his campaign promises in a series of edicts, many of which led to historic legislation.

Conscription was ended immediately and the last Australian troops ordered home from Vietnam. Young men imprisoned for draft evasion were freed unconditionally. The government assumed responsibility for Aboriginal health, education and welfare and drafted the first land rights legislation. Equal pay for women was introduced. Wages, pensions and unemployment benefits rose. A national health service was established. Spending on education was doubled and university and college fees abolished. Censorship was ended and the divorce laws reformed. Legal aid became a universal right. Royal patronage was scrapped. An Australian anthem replaced 'God save the Queen'. The 'Commonwealth government' was renamed the Australian government.

Not only did Australia finally withdraw from the Vietnam War, but Australian ministers publicly condemned American conduct of the war. The Nixon/Kissinger bombing of Hanoi during Christmas 1972 was called the work of 'maniacs' and 'mass murderers'. A senior minister, Dr Jim Cairns, called for public rallies to condemn the bombing and for boycotts on American goods. In response Australian dockers refused to unload American ships.

Australia moved toward the Non-Aligned Movement, expressing support for the Indian Ocean Zone for Peace, which the USA opposed. The French were condemned for testing nuclear weapons in the South Pacific, and refugees fleeing the

Washington-inspired coup in Chile were welcomed into Australia: an irony later savoured by Whitlam.

The day after his election, Whitlam announced that he did not want his staff vetted or harassed by the security organisation, ASIO, because he knew and trusted them. Frank Snepp, a CIA officer stationed in Saigon at the time, said later, 'We were told that the Australians might as well be regarded as North Vietnamese collaborators'. Since its inception in 1949, ASIO had distinguished itself by not uncovering a single spy or traitor (this is still the case); yet it had become almost as powerful in Australia as the CIA was under William Casey during the Reagan years. ASIO's speciality was, and is, the pursuit of paranoia.

For example, in 1970 the South Australian Labor premier Don Dunstan discovered that his state had a 'Special Branch' whose existence he had known nothing about, even though he had been the state's attorney general. ASIO had helped set up and maintain a secret police organisation within his bureaucracy and had kept files on all Labor candidates and members, union leaders and anyone holding an opinion 'to the left of an arbitrary centre point fixed by someone in Special Branch'.

When Whitlam was elected, ASIO's real power derived from the spirit of the UKUSA treaty with its secret pact of loyalty to foreign intelligence organisations. To many in the ASIO bureaucracy, 'headquarters' was not in Canberra but in Langley, Virginia, home of the CIA. While ASIO is run as an internal organisation, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, ASIS, operates abroad. As opposition leader, Whitlam was never briefed on ASIS, and knew nothing about it until told by the Malaysian deputy prime minister. The most secretive intelligence organisation is the Defence Signals Directorate, DSD.

The question begs: why should a relatively small country find itself with such a plethora of spies and hi-tech dirty tricksters? The answer is

surely that Australia is important to the United States and has become even more so since Washington was forced to abandon Indo-China. In 1973, as the last American regular troops were withdrawn from Vietnam, American planners sought to 'contain' the region by linking Japan, Australia and the American-supported Association of South-East Asian Nations, ASEAN. Of these, Australia was the only Western nation and 'traditional ally' with a record of 'political stability'. This stability was now crucial. What had been regarded by some US strategic planners as a backwater was now, in the words of one CIA executive, 'the big jewel of South-East Asia'.



[A central US concern was over the future of their military bases in Australia, especially the top-secret satellite installations at Pine Gap and Nurrungar. The leases on these bases were coming up for renewal.]

During the first months of the new Labour government, in spite of Whitlam's implied threat to the bases if the Americans 'try to screw us or bounce us', the bases probably were as safe as they had been under the conservatives. Whitlam wanted to reform the alliance with the United States, not destroy it. In March 1973 Whitlam himself said, incredibly to some ears, that he would not reveal any of the secrets of Pine Gap or Nurrungar 'because they are not our secrets. [They are] other peoples' secrets.'

Whitlam's tolerance of 'other peoples' secrets' was soon put to the test. Leaked Australian defence department documents disclosed that in 1972 high-frequency transmitters at North West Cape had helped the United States to mine Haiphong and other North Vietnamese harbours; and that satellites controlled from Pine Gap and Nurrungar were being used to pinpoint targets for the American bombing of Cambodia—a bombing so intense that during one six-month

period in 1973 American B52s dropped the equivalent of five Hiroshimas. These actions were undertaken without the consent or knowledge of the Australian government.

Then in October 1973, during the Middle East War, president Nixon put US forces on nuclear 'Level Three Alert', through the base at North West Cape. When Whitlam found out, he was furious and said that the Third World War could have begun in Australia without the government knowing. On April 4 1974 Whitlam told parliament, 'The Australian government takes the attitude that there should not be foreign military bases, stations, installations in Australia. We honour agreements covering existing stations...but there will not be extensions or proliferations' (emphasis added). For Washington further proof of the 'instability' of the Australian government was hardly needed. Yet further proof would be forthcoming.

[In April 1974, Labor was re-elected with a slightly reduced majority. Two months later, the parliamentary party elected Jim Cairns deputy premier.]

Cairns was the leader of Labor's left wing. He had been a highly effective opponent of the American war in Vietnam. Whitlam described 'American terror' at the thought that Cairns would have to be briefed on Pine Gap and the other 'joint facilities'. The unthinkable was that Cairns might end up running the country. The discrediting of Cairns became urgent.

In the wake of the Middle East War the cost of energy rose as never before and the Australian economy fell into extreme difficulties. By the end of 1974 inflation and the money supply were rising at an alarming rate. Whitlam instructed two of his ministers to scour the Middle East for what would have been the largest loan in history: \$A4 billion.

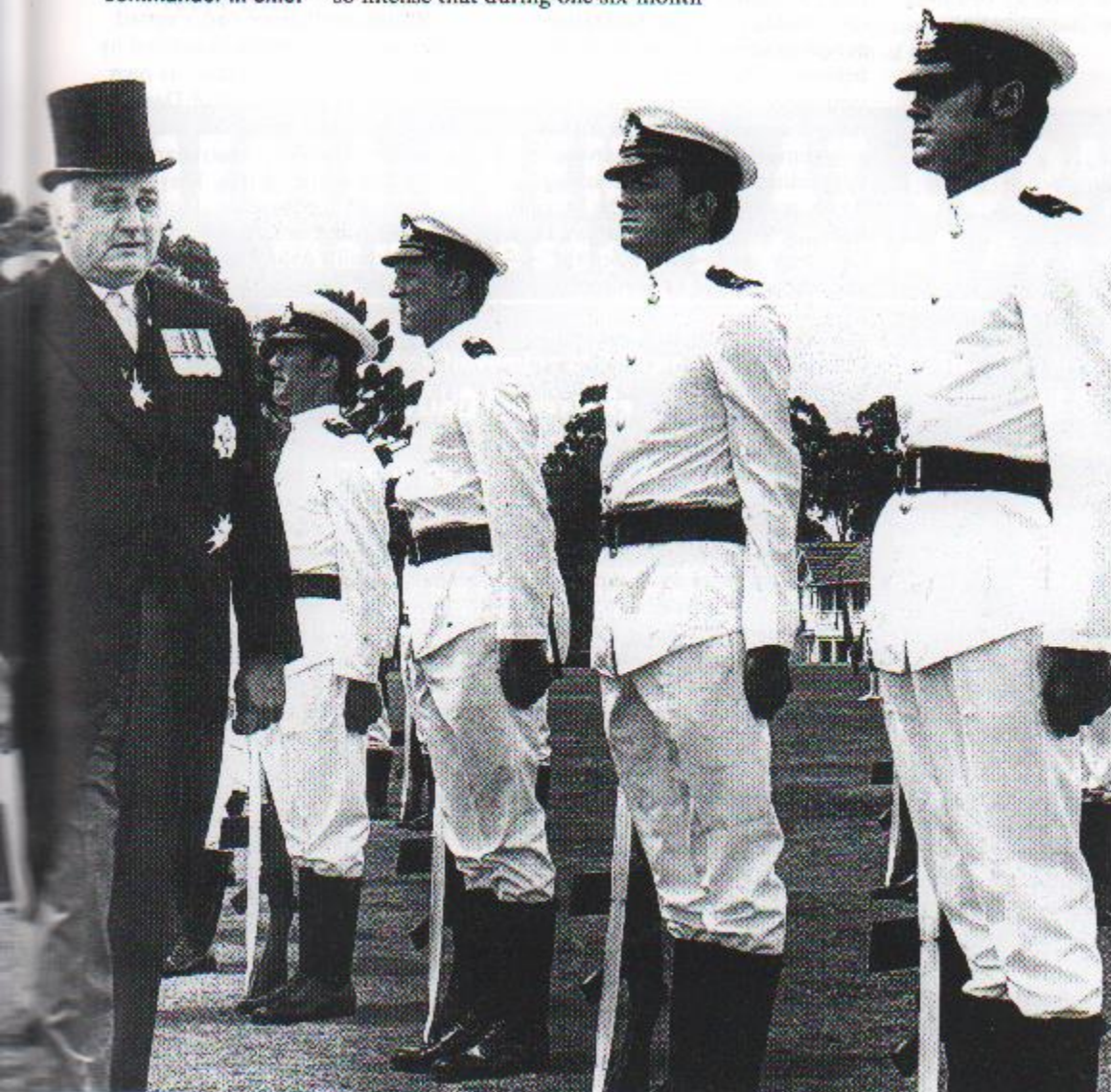
Enter Tirath Khemlani, a Pakistani 'commodities merchant' who, with others, succeeded in preparing a government for destruction. Khemlani was a con man, who had been sent to approach [Labor energy minister Rex] Connor by a Hongkong arms firm closely associated with Commerce International, a Brussels-based armaments company with widespread links with the CIA.

In March 1975, Jim Cairns, who was federal treasurer as well as deputy prime minister, was introduced to a businessman, George Harris, who had close connections with the Melbourne establishment. According to Cairns, Harris told him that a \$A4 billion loan was available 'with a once-only brokerage fee of 2.5 per cent'. Harris showed Cairns a letter confirming the offer. It had come from the New York office of Commerce International. Leslie Nagy was also at the meeting. He later made a sworn statement that Cairns had described the terms as 'unbelievable' and the letter as a 'fairy-tale' and had rejected the deal.

When they left the minister's office, according to Nagy, Harris produced, to Nagy's surprise, a letter signed by Cairns, agreeing to the 'brokerage fee' of 2.5 per cent. Why and when did Cairns change his mind? Or *did* he change his mind? Did he sign letters without checking them as ministers often do? Or was there another explanation? Harris denied setting Cairns up. However Cairns steadfastly maintained that he never agreed to or put his name to such an outrageous and incriminating letter.

Two months later Harris was seen with Philip Lynch, deputy leader of the opposition Liberal Party. When Lynch raised the question of the brokerage fee in parliament, Cairns denied any agreement existed. Within days, a letter with Cairns' signature was reproduced on the front pages of the nation's newspapers, and Cairns was forced to resign from the ministry for 'misleading parliament'. Neither Harris or Khemlani raised a

Governor general Sir John Kerr inspects the troops of which, he boasted, he was commander in chief



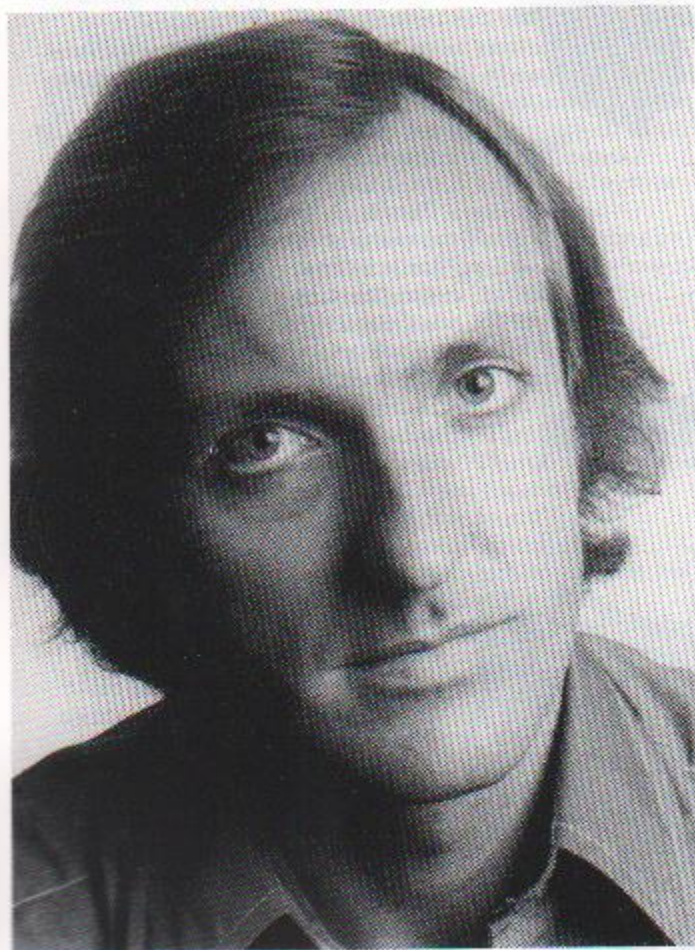
cent of the loan. The effect of their actions was to produce the 'scandal' and relentless publicity that consumed the government.

On July 3, 1975 the *National Intelligence Daily*, a top-secret CIA briefing document for the president, reported that Jim Cairns had been sacked 'even though some of the evidence had been fabricated'. Much later an ASIO officer speculated publicly that 'some of the documents which helped discredit the Labour government...were forgeries planted by the CIA'.

As the loans affair reached its climax in the spring of 1975, a 'blizzard' of documents descended on the Australian media from as far afield as the USA. Whitlam himself received a copy of a message found in a Hawaii hotel room, said to be the draft of a telex message sent to Malcolm Fraser, leader of the opposition. It gave details of the 'chaos' which Khemlani was being 'funded' to cause, to bring about the 'capitulation' of the government. The message included the instruction that it should be coded before transmission, by calling a Honolulu phone number; it was the Hawaiian headquarters of the CIA.

The height of the farce was reached when Khemlani himself arrived in Australia weighed under by two bags bulging with more 'incriminating

John Pilger



documentation'. He was accompanied by bodyguards provided by the opposition parties, and all his expenses were paid. He made outrageous claims: Labor ministers were to receive 'kick-backs' from the loans; documents proving corruption were soon to be made public, and so on. None of his documents added up to or proved anything. Not a penny was paid by anyone to the government. In 1981 a CIA 'contract employee', Joseph Flynn, claimed he had forged some of the loans affair cables.

[In February 1974, Whitlam appointed Sir John Kerr as governor general of Australia. Kerr was a Labor Party member but, says Pilger, was well-known as a pompous conservative with a history of involvement with the CIA.]

[Kerr's CIA connection] was on record when in February 1974 Whitlam selected Kerr as governor general of Australia. The governor general is, or ought to be, a living anachronism. He (never a she) represents the nominal head of state, the English monarch, who is also 'King or Queen of Australia'. He is not elected; the job was once a sinecure for lesser breeds of the English aristocracy, and the duties are ceremonial; or so the Australian people believed. Certainly Whitlam believed it. For a man who supposedly understood the forces ranged against a reformist Labor government, Whitlam's naivety in appointing Kerr was astonishing. Kerr's associations with the far right, with intelligence operations and the CIA were not at issue when the appointment was announced.

[In October 1974, with the loans scandal at its height, Connor was forced to resign from the government after being accused of misleading parliament over his relationship with Khemlani and the 'loan'.]

Connor's sacking had a disastrous effect on the government's ratings in the opinion polls. Malcolm Fraser called it a 'reprehensible circumstance' and made his move. The next day the opposition used its slender senate majority to defer a vote on the Budget Appropriation Bills, thus blocking money supply indefinitely. The clear implication was that when the money ran out essential public services would cease to function.

Fraser warned that the bills would not be passed until Whitlam agreed an early election—in spite of the fact that Whitlam had won two elections in less than three years. Within two weeks the opinion polls showed 70 per cent disapproved of the opposition tactic and substantial support was returned to the

beleaguered government. Why did the conservatives attempt such a high-risk action when all they had to do was wait for the government to fall apart under the strains of the loans affair, and an election within six months might well have seen them in power?

Six months was too long to wait; notice of the renewal of the Pine Gap treaty, which would determine the future of the CIA's most valuable overseas base, was due in less than two months, on December 9. William Colby, the CIA director, later wrote that the 'threat' posed by the Whitlam government was comparable with the 1973 Middle East War, when the United States considered using nuclear weapons.

During 1974 the CIA station chief in London, Dr John Proctor, got in touch with the British security organisation, MI6, and asked for help with 'the Whitlam problem'. In early 1975 William Colby himself approached his opposite number, the head of MI6, Sir Maurice Oldfield. Later the CIA sought assistance from MI5 and MI6 liaison officers based in Washington. The CIA emphasised to the British that 'if this intelligence capacity was lost, then the alliance would be...blinded strategically'. Australia, it was argued, was 'traditionally Britain's domain'.

British intelligence had a vested interest in the concern expressed by Washington. MI6 operates its own base at Kowandi, south of Darwin, where its highly secret activities are concealed from the Australian government and people. They include widespread intervention in other people's communications and covert operations in Asia. The Australian Secret Intelligence Service, ASIS, also operates from this base, and is so integrated with MI6 that London is still referred to as 'head office'. In approaching MI6 about Whitlam, the Americans wanted to invoke the British/Australian old-boy network.

In the latter part of 1975 Whitlam began to grasp what was being done to him. 'The Brits were actually decoding secret messages coming into the foreign affairs office', he said later, '...they hope I will crack'. Having already removed the heads of both ASIO and ASIS, Whitlam was now moving against the CIA. When he heard that a CIA officer, Richard Stallings, was a friend of National Country Party leader, Doug Anthony, Whitlam called for a list of all 'declared' CIA officers who had served in Australia during the previous 10 years. Stallings' name was not on the list. He then learned that another, 'confidential' list of CIA officers was held by the permanent head of the Australian defence department, Sir Arthur Tange. He demanded to see this list and found Stallings' name on it.

Tange effectively ran Australian

On the day Whitlam was to inform parliament fully about the CIA and American bases in Australia, he was summoned by Kerr and sacked

intelligence and was its principal contact with the CIA and MI6. He was enraged by Whitlam's outspokenness. On November 2 1975 Whitlam accused the opposition of being 'subsidised by the CIA'. In parliament Doug Anthony confirmed that Stallings was his friend and challenged Whitlam to provide evidence that Stallings belonged to the CIA. Whitlam prepared a reply which he intended to give when parliament resumed on the following Tuesday, November 11. Tange was now frantic. Not only was the prime minister about to 'blow' the cover of a man who had set up Pine Gap, proving that the 'joint facility' was a CIA charade, but the future of the base itself was to be subjected to parliamentary debate.

On November 11, the very day Whitlam was to inform parliament fully about the CIA and American bases in Australia, he was summoned by Kerr from parliament house and, without warning, sacked. Kerr's cunning was such that at the moment he was dismissing the prime minister, he had Malcolm Fraser hiding in another room. With Whitlam off the premises, Fraser emerged and was made caretaker prime minister.

Whitlam returned immediately to parliament and moved a motion 'that this house expresses its want of confidence in the prime minister and requests Mr Speaker to advise his

excellency the governor general to call on me to form a government'. This vote of confidence in a twice-elected prime minister was approved by an overwhelming majority.

Parliament's clear message of confidence in the Whitlam government was delivered personally to the governor general by the speaker of the house. Kerr refused to accept it, although he did accept the Supply Bills, which were also passed after he had dismissed the government. Thus, an unelected official made his arbitrary decision and the legitimate acts of a democracy amounted to nothing. In modern Australia democracy had been usurped, said the Melbourne Age, by 'the right of Kings and Queens to unilaterally appoint governments'.

There are no Kings and Queens in Washington.

'The CIA's aim', said former CIA officer Victor Marchetti, 'was to get rid of a government they did not like and that was not cooperative...it's a Chile, but in a much more sophisticated and subtle form'.

During the first week of the coup the Australian army was recalled to barracks and there are unconfirmed reports that units were issued with live ammunition. Army brass insisted that their 'experts' ride in the engine cabs of New South Wales 'to observe the condition of the tracks'.

According to Whitlam, Kerr was prepared to call out the army, of which, he had once boasted, he was the commander in chief.

[Australians demonstrated against the coup, and the unions planned a general strike, but the president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions called for restraint; his name was Bob Hawke, today the Thatcherite Labor prime minister. An election was called for 13 December. The election campaign was marked by black propaganda, as Labor left wingers were accused of sending letter-bombs to Kerr and conservative leaders, and opposition spokesmen promised more 'dramatic revelations' of corruption, which they failed ever to produce. Whitlam lost the election.]

There remains an exquisite irony to all this. On August 21 1975, Whitlam, in a parliamentary reply, said that his government had no intention of terminating the Pine Gap agreement: his warnings and strictures about the bases were proper, if unfamiliar responses to the arrogance of American imperial assumptions. That is beside the point now; how an elected Australian government fell is the point.

• John Pilger, *A Secret Country*, Jonathan Cape, hbk £13.95

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November 1969: Labour creates the UDR

DEATH SQUADS DON'T CHANGE THEIR SPOTS

Andy Clarkson has been listening to official assurances that the Ulster Defence Regiment's crimes are the work of a few 'bad apples', and suffering déjà vu

Twenty years ago this month the Labour government secured parliament's approval to create the Ulster Defence Regiment. Unique in the British Army for operating only in Northern Ireland, it has the longest record of continual mobilisation of any regiment since Napoleonic times. Since its formal establishment in April 1970, however, a hundred UDR members have been charged with sectarian murder and over a thousand have reported their weapons 'lost' or 'stolen'. To many, the UDR is the British Army's own death squad.

The latest furor is over UDR members leaking information on republican suspects to Loyalist paramilitaries, who used it to commit murder. Nationalists have long claimed such collusion between the British Army regiment and Loyalist gangs. They should know. They have had ample opportunity to get acquainted with the sectarian activities of the UDR and its predecessor, the 'B' Specials, ever since Northern Ireland was founded in 1920.

Labour's spokesman on Northern Ireland, Kevin McNamara, has voiced his concern that 'the unacceptability of the UDR has produced an unusual degree of cross-class consensus within the Catholic community' in the North (*Irish Times*, 22 September). To improve the regiment's reputation, he has produced a list of reforms: vetting procedures for recruits to be 'strengthened'; training to be 'obligatory and continuous'; deployment for riot control to be banned; and UDR patrols to be accompanied by officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary 'when they come into contact with the public'.

McNamara says that these measures are necessary because 'the guarantees given to the Westminster parliament when the Ulster Defence Regiment Bill was debated in November 1969 have not been effective in practice'. But, with the sole exception of the RUC shadow (proposed in the 1985 Anglo-Irish accord), McNamara's reforms simply reiterate the same 'guarantees' that the Labour government gave in 1969.

Why was the Labour government obliged to give these extraordinary guarantees when it proposed the creation of the new Army regiment? Because the UDR was to be chiefly composed of men transferred from the notorious 'B' Specials.

The 'B Force' of the Ulster Special Constabulary was an official part-time Protestant militia, formed in October 1920 out of armed units of the illegal Ulster Volunteer Force which had been founded by Sir Edward Carson to resist home rule in 1913. Mainly based in rural areas, the 'B' Specials were local Loyalist bully-boys, armed and given ill-fitting uniforms by the authorities, and called upon when required to suppress any nationalist resistance to the new Six-county state.

For almost 50 years the 'B' Specials intimidated and harassed any disloyal (ie, Catholic) person unlucky enough to get in their way. Their reputation was reflected in the fact that the civil rights movement of the late sixties made 'disband the "B" Specials' a key demand. During the 1969 disturbances 'B' Specials took part in the ambush of the civil rights march in Burntollet in January, and they were mobilised during the Battle of the Bogside and in Belfast in August. On 19 August Labour premier Harold Wilson announced that the 'B' Specials would be 'phased out'.

Days earlier defence minister Roy Hattersley had signed the order to deploy British troops in Northern Ireland. In November 1969, during the commons' first reading of the UDR Bill, he told the house that the new regiment would be open to all sections of the community in Northern Ireland: 'The force must be judged by its composition and its constitution, which are very different from those of the Ulster Special Constabulary' (*Hansard*, 12 November 1969, col 424).

Yet there had never been any formal bar on Catholics joining the 'B' Specials. In October 1920, chief secretary for Ireland Sir Hamar Greenwood had also told the commons that in the 'B' Specials

there is, of course, no discrimination against Roman Catholics. They will be welcomed to the force. Some, indeed, have already joined' (*Hansard*, 25 October 1920).

Hattersley informed the house that the recruitment of the 'B' Specials into the UDR was essential for two reasons:

'The first is the necessity... that if the force is to become viable in the early months of next year the members of the "B" Specials must be incorporated in the force. The second reason is the fact that, despite the opinion of the house about individual members of the specials, the force is composed of a majority of men who have given good and honourable service to Northern Ireland.' (Col 420)

Nothing much had changed in 50 years. The young nationalist MP Bernadette Devlin hit the nail on the head when she demanded of Hattersley: 'Can the honourable gentleman give me one concrete statement to show that this is not the Ulster Special Constabulary under the guise of the British Army?' (Col 422) The 'B' Specials were not to be 'phased out' after all, but professionalised through their new link with the British Army.

The more far-sighted sections of the British establishment had recognised that, if the existing security forces in the North were unable to cope with the unarmed civil rights movement, then they had to be strengthened to prepare for more forceful nationalist resistance. The proposal for an Ulster Defence Regiment came in the Hunt Report of October 1969, which warned of the need to counter an 'armed guerrilla type of attack'. During the second reading of the UDR Bill later in November, Labour minister of defence Denis Healey commended the UDR Bill to the house on the same grounds: 'This threat, which is unique to Northern Ireland because of its land border and its internal difficulties, must be countered and deterred. I know that some honourable members believe that the threat is exaggerated, but the people of Northern Ireland have seen it repeatedly in the past,

and have regarded the USC as an essential defence against a real threat.' (Col 1322) So, like the Specials, the UDR would be a Protestant force for a Protestant people.

Conservative and Unionist MPs vied with each other in congratulating Labour for enhancing the effectiveness of the old Loyalist militia by bringing it under the auspices of the British Army. Former 'B' Special and Unionist MP for Antrim North Henry Clark wistfully wondered 'why the Ulster Defence Regiment was not created 50 years ago, when Ulster herself was created' (col 1375). Tory defence spokesman Geoffrey Rippon could not resist recalling the regiment's illustrious origins in past Loyalist death squads: 'One thing is certain: no matter how many regular troops are kept in Northern Ireland, no one can doubt the value of, and the immediate need for an Ulster volunteer force.' (Col 1344)

Kevin McNamara, the UDR's present-day reformer, had more modest aims in 1969. He wanted the UDR's name changed to the 'Northern Ireland Defence Regiment' as historical Ulster had nine counties, not the six of Northern Ireland. Hattersley assured doubters that he wanted 'a regiment which in 10 years' time does not result in my honourable friends making the serious accusations against it which they can now make against the special constabulary' (col 425).

Once it became operative in April 1970, the UDR behaved exactly as its predecessors in the UVF and the 'B' Specials had performed. With moderate Catholic politicians like SDLP leader John Hume calling for nationalists to rally to the UDR's colours, it had obtained a 16 per cent Catholic muster by November 1970. Within a year this was down to eight per cent, and it now rests at about two per cent. For years the British have blamed this decline in Catholic membership of the UDR on IRA intimidation. But the recent revelations of collusion with paramilitaries confirm that it would take much more intimidation to persuade a nationalist to join the UDR.

The British Army has repeatedly refused to ban members of the Orange lodges or even the Loyalist paramilitary Ulster Defence Association from joining the UDR on the grounds that they are legal organisations. During the collusion row, Thatcher hurried over to a UDR base in the North to praise the regiment's 'remarkable work'. And next April, on the twentieth anniversary of the UDR's formal inauguration, a member of the royal family is to become commander-in-chief of the regiment, making the UDR a death squad by appointment to the Crown.

After Kinnock's conference

ARE JIM AND ERIC RELICS?

Pat Roberts on what's new about Neil Kinnock's new-look Labour Party

Eric Hammond and Jim Haynes don't seem to have much in common. Hammond is the right-wing general secretary of the electrical union, the EETPU, responsible for organising the infamous scabbing operation against print-workers at Wapping. Hammond regularly mixes in the circles of big business and is regarded by Norman Tebbit as the most sensible of the trade union leaders in Britain. Jim Haynes, by contrast, is a good bloke who lives a few doors away from my house. A mechanic by training, he runs a local community centre. Jim calls himself a socialist and bitterly resents everything that Hammond stands for. Yet, although in many respects they live a world apart, both Eric Hammond and Jim Haynes are members of the same organisation.

A unique feature of the Labour Party is that it is an organisation run by people like Hammond and supported by people like Jim. During September's Labour Party conference, Hammond told delegates who were jeering him: 'I don't know why you are so unhappy...this has been the best week of my life.' Jim Haynes' reaction was very different. He was sickened by the sight of one Labour politician after another climbing to the rostrum to exhibit their conversion to Tory policies.

Jim was genuinely shocked by how right-wing Labour had become and dismayed by the disappearance of the party's left wing. Yet despite the sordid spectacle of a so-called socialist party worshipping at the altar of the Tories, Jim Haynes will continue to support Labour because he believes that it is still 'the only way to change things'.

The irony of the situation is that both Eric Hammond and Jim Haynes are relics of the past. Hammond runs a union that is struggling for survival. Right-wing union bosses like him have traditionally run the Labour Party; now they are a disappearing breed. There is no contemporary equivalent of an Ernest Bevin, or even a Denis Healey in Labour's front ranks. The right-wing union barons and politicians who have managed Labour's fortunes since its inception have been replaced by a band of lightweight ex-student leaders and middle class professionals with few links to the organised labour



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Arthur Scargill: isolated and almost ignored

movement. Today, many unions are run by university graduates whose credentials rest on an industrial relations degree—not the experience of organising workers.

The disintegration of the Labour right has been paralleled by the marginalisation of its left wing. In the past the Labour left represented the promise of change for the party's supporters. The left provided most of the active organisers and kept the party in touch with its working class constituency. Today, the left has no influence in the party. Kinnock and his colleagues no longer feel obliged even to make the old rhetorical gestures to keep the party activists happy. The left is reduced to solitary figures like Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn, whose only role is to remind us how Labour's image has changed in a decade.

Labour remains a significant force in British politics because it can still monopolise anti-Tory sentiment. But as a party it has undergone important changes. It has got rid of all its distinctive policies, loosened its public association with the trade

unions and adopted a centrist image designed to sway the middle classes. And yet despite these changes one fact has remained constant. People like Jim Haynes still look to a party of Tory wet converts to solve the problems of British society.

In the short run Labour can continue to count on the traditions of the past. Kinnock's right-wing transformation of Labour was based on the correct calculation that no matter how far he goes he can rely on the loyalty of left-wing party supporters. Such links with the past, added to Labour's revival in the opinion polls, might seem to suggest that we are set for a re-run of the old patterns of British two-party politics.

Yet things have changed profoundly. It is now clear that whoever wins the next election, the government's policies will be Tory. The success of Labour in the opinion polls has not been matched by mounting enthusiasm for the party. This is no 1945, with expectations of major reform or change. The very fact that Labour relies on public passivity for its success ensures that the anti-Tory

majority remains politically unpredictable, with no clear identity. There is no guarantee that Kinnock will get these votes.

At the same time Labour's old base, people like Eric Hammond and Jim Haynes, are not the force they were. The labour bureaucracy which Hammond represents is uniquely out of touch with society. Union officials have lost the capacity to organise. Labour movement campaigns are now reduced to a few press conferences with glossy leaflets. Union bureaucrats can certainly no longer provide the solid foundation on which Labour's victories have rested in the past.

Not her movement

Jim Haynes belongs to another milieu that is disappearing fast. The world of Labour clubs and trades councils has little meaning in working class life. Jim's affection for 'our movement' is not shared by his daughter Liz. She sees her father's traditions as curiously old-fashioned and irrelevant. Liz still calls herself left-wing, but the only political passion that animates her is her hatred for the Tory government.

Eric Hammond and Jim Haynes personify the Labourist traditions of the past. They must both sense the frustration of knowing that the Labour Party of today is not theirs, in the same way that Kinnock instinctively understands that people like Hammond and Haynes lack the social weight to win elections. So the formula that Kinnock has adopted is to appeal to all and offend no one. The dilemma that he evades is that no party can prosper for long without building a firm base within society.

Of course, the real beneficiaries of Labour's strategy are British capitalists. The tradition of Labourism perpetuates a state of inertia within the working class. While it creates no problems for the establishment and the employers, it can still effectively prevent the emergence of new political forces within the working class. With the Tories facing their worst political crisis since the early eighties, the new-look Labour Party provides comforting reassurance for British capitalism.

Unfortunately, people like Jim Haynes will choose to remain the prisoners of their past. This is beyond our control. However we can choose not to follow their example. Recognising the quality of the changes now taking place in British political life is the first step towards creating a new alternative, a new party.

Hatred of the Tories is not enough. We need to liberate ourselves from the dead weight of the past by projecting a clear vision of the possibilities of the future. There is no point in investing faith in Neil Kinnock or his party. More than ever before, the achievement of any real progress will depend upon what we do ourselves.

The prices paid for the abstract expressionist works of Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline were among over 50 records set in May at the contemporary art sales in New York. Pollock's Number 8, 1950, from his most prolific year and (in)famous drip style, fetched \$11.55m. In the 'blue chip' impressionist and post-impressionist categories, six Renoirs went for \$34.27m and the seven Monets went under the hammer for a total of \$61m.

That's nothing. Picasso's *Acrobate et Jeune Arlequin* sold for \$35m—considered something of a steal—at Christie's last November. Yo, Picasso, an early self-portrait (1902), cost a world record \$5.83m in 1981; on 9 May 1989 it went for \$47.85m. The world's highest auction price for any work of art was Van Gogh's *Irises* which sold at Sotheby's, London, in November 1987 for \$53.9m (£30.2m), or nearly a million bucks a petal. It now seems that this sale was fixed.

Nevertheless, if recent trends are anything to go by, this month's auctions at Christie's and Sotheby's in London and New York are likely to set new records with works by Picasso, Van Gogh, Manet, Renoir and Monet all going under the hammer.

Selling the silver

London has been a centre of the international market, and the Americans have been big buyers, since the sale of fine art took off in the early nineteenth century. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars sent the aristocrats of the ancien regimes scattering across Europe, taking what valuables they could carry, and selling many of these to keep their displaced lordships in the accustomed style. Into London, for knockdown prices, came works by the likes of Rubens, Van Dyck and Rembrandt, nourishing the nineteenth-century taste for Old Masters. The British aristocracy, on their uppers too, also flogged off the family silver, in the form of various art treasures. Added to this was all the plunder from the colonies. The buyers were the new capitalists, particularly the American ones, keen to ape the manners of their aristocratic 'betters'.

Before the 1880s the costliest piece of art that money could buy was a parcel-gilt enamelled standing cup—made in 1550 and sold for £32 000. Painters were regarded as the poor cousins of the silversmiths and craftsmen. Only a few Old Masters and some eighteenth-century English portraits fetched more. But the distinction between skill and genius steadily developed to the advantage of painting.

Prices began to take off in the mid-nineteenth century, with the Louvre in 1852 acquiring Murillo's *The Immaculate Conception* for £24 000 (£1.4m at today's prices). But the really big jumps have taken place only in the last 18 months or so. Before then, once



Monet:
Women in a
Garden
(1866)

Art for investment's sake

MORE FOR YOUR MONET

As London and New York gear up for the art sale of the century, Manjit Singh looks at how paintings make profits

inflation and the relative values of major currencies are taken into account, prices remained remarkably steady. In 1915, for example, Fragonard's *Roman d'Amour de la Jeunesse* sold for £205 000 (£8m today). In 1929, the year of the Crash, Raphael's *Alba Madonna* fetched about £6.2m at current prices (see P Watson, *Spectator*, 20 May).

Business and pleasure

Few artists saw much of the fabulous prices which their work came to fetch. Poor Van Gogh never sold a painting in his lifetime. His *The Tree, Arles* will go for about £19m (\$30.8m) this autumn. In 1900 one would have cost £36.8s. The buyers and sellers have always made the big money. In the late 1950s the market shifted from dealers' galleries to the auction houses, and the high bidding began as a new breed of capitalist buyers entered the market. After two world wars, a global financial crisis and inflation, 'art as investment', offered what appeared to be a safe haven for their money. Previously most buyers had acquired art to decorate their mansions and yachts; now it became a business proposition.

The unlikely connoisseurs who run the British Rail Pension Fund show how investing in art has provided some useful protection against the instability of the financial markets over the past 15 years. In 1974 in the wake of the fall of the Heath government, the fund set about acquiring a large art portfolio, investing nearly \$90m over 10 years. The man behind the move was Christopher Lewin: 'The risk element is not as great as you might think...demand will increase, supply won't....I have good reasons to believe that works of art will be an excellent hedge [against inflation].' (Quoted in N Faith, *Sold*, 1985)

He was right. Last spring British Rail began to off-load its impressionist and post-impressionist paintings, and made some spectacular profits. A dozen bidders chased Renoir's *La Promenade* well beyond its pre-sale estimate of \$6m or \$8m. It achieved a record for a Renoir of \$17.7m; BR had paid \$1.97m in 1976. However, the best investment proved to be Monet's *Santa Maria della Salute et le Grand Canal, Venice*, which at \$11.5m sold at nearly 27 times its 1979 purchase price. According to Sotheby's the return after inflation on BR's collection

was 11.9 per cent per annum; the pension fund would have made an estimated 7.5 per cent a year by investing its assets in the stock exchange.

The British Rail Pension Fund is only one of many financial institutions and corporations to have entered the art market as prices rose. The Chase Manhattan Bank recently announced plans for a \$300m art investment programme. Citibank has offered an art advisory service, for those customers who can afford it, for over 10 years now.

What has made paintings so profitable, especially over the past 18 months? In the first place art, at least great art, is a very unusual commodity; strictly speaking it is not a commodity at all. Each work is unique and non-reproducible, so true competition cannot take place. The rarity factor means that its price is not even indirectly linked to the labour-time which was expended in its production. Art has nevertheless a very special use-value, the satisfaction of the beholder, and by common consensus (heavily policed by educational institutions and experts) there are not many works of great art around. It is scarce. Its price is peculiarly susceptible to the psychology of its buyers but less vulnerable to market forces generally.

The fraud

For all these reasons it is an excellent vehicle for financial speculation. Rich men like it because it massages their aristocratic pretensions, provides a showcase for their wealth, and protects and increases that wealth at the same time. Philistine investors like it for the same reason, especially when there is little else profitably to invest in, which has increasingly been the case over the last hundred years. The absence of productive investment outlets in industry means that capital looking for a profitable home has found its way into the transatlantic art galleries.

Over the last couple of years in particular, the art market has benefited from the crumbling of confidence in the world economy. It has recently been revealed that Sotheby's secretly lent Alan Bond £15m to buy the £30.2m Van Gogh *Irises* in November 1987. After the stock market Crash of the previous month, the dealers wanted to send out a signal to all the wavering capital holders that the art market was strong and just the place for your money if you were feeling insecure. It worked, and the art boom followed. The same thing happened in 1981 when David Bathurst, chairman of Christie's, London, falsely claimed that a Van Gogh and a Gauguin had been sold for high prices. It remains to be seen whether they can continue to get away with the great art fraud as the world financial markets get the jitters again.

London film festival

170 FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS

The biggest ever London Film Festival opens on 10 November. Festival director Sheila Whitaker told John Fitzpatrick about the event and film culture in Britain today

What does it take to be the director of one of the biggest film festivals in the world? 'Stamina. Then a love of film. You can't sit, as I do before a festival, watching films for seven days a week unless you enjoy it. You also have to try to be as open-minded as possible, and listen to what other people say about a film.' So says Sheila Whitaker, head of programming at the National Film Theatre for the past five years, and director of the London Film Festival for the third time this year.

Whitaker hasn't seen every one of the record 170 films which will get their first public screening in Britain over 17 days in November. She has a small team of in-house advisers, and recommendations come in from all corners of the globe. She has seen most of them though, and many others besides. She reckons that one

of every 10 she views will be chosen. 'We only invite the films which are worth having. If it's been a good year, it's a bigger festival. This happens to have been a good year. They aren't necessarily all well-made films but they might be political or raise some other provocative subject. But if you start putting in films which are second best, people start to think: maybe it'll be good, maybe not; let's not bother.'

To impose some order, the films for the first time have been divided into geographical categories: the UK, France, Africa, Asia, Latin America, USA independents and miscellaneous. As in previous years there will also be a junior film festival, special events and space for animation and the work of the London Film-Makers Co-op. In addition to the National Film Theatre and the Museum of the Moving Image the venues now

include the Brixton Village Cultural Centre, Curzon, Dominion, ICA, Lumière, Rio, Ritzy and Screen on the Green. There will also be a 'Festival on the Square' in which all the cinemas of Leicester Square will host the big, mainstream, almost exclusively American movies showing at the festival, including *Parenthood*, the new Steve Martin comedy blockbuster which is the gala opening film.

'The prime purpose so far as I'm concerned is to provide a wide range of good new cinema to give pleasure to audiences but also to encourage them to look at more films and therefore keep film culture alive, and by doing that persuade distributors to buy films. There has been a gradual decline in NFT audiences over the last 10 to 12 years. The whole environment has changed with television, which fortunately is very good in this country, although I don't know for how much longer. There's video too.'

Missing generation

'There does seem to have been a generation which has missed out on film education, solidly going to see movies of all sorts. It's one of life's contradictions that cinema audiences have generally declined throughout the world whether they be commercial or cinemathèque, and yet festivals are proliferating. There is still an audience and it may well go up again. There's still 220 000 attendances a year at the NFT, not counting the festival, at which we expect 55 000 this year.'

Does she have any favourite films this year? With the brochure only just out, she had not had time to get her breath back and survey the finished field. But some came to mind. 'I do like Rob Reiner's *When Harry Met Sally*, there's a wonderful single scene in it; and *The Fabulous Baker Boys* with Michele Pfeiffer and Jeff and Beau Bridges. Among the USA independents *Drugstore Cowboy* is a very interesting film. Perhaps I have looked more actively than some other festival directors or indeed my predecessors for women directors. Last year was a very good year, this year not quite so good; but there's Ulrike Ottinger's *Joan of Arc of Mongolia* from West Germany, Julia Cameron's *God's Will*, a very fun, laid-back film and Maggie Greenwald's *The Kill-Off* which is based on Jim Thompson's novel.'

Of the 18 films in the UK category only four of them appear to have been made without production money from television (mostly Channel 4, but the BBC is getting in on the act now). More political films, like *For Queen and Country*, *Defence of the Realm* or *Ploughman's Lunch* of yesteryear, seem thin on the ground. There are no films about Ireland, for example, which given the media ban is rather disappointing. 'Very few films are made about Ireland. We're a bit like America and Vietnam I'm afraid. It's going to take us a long time to make movies about it. I would hope that the political strand in film-making picks up. There's a shortage of funds for production, perhaps that tends to lead people to make more accessible films which might have a wider audience. It is difficult for people to be provocative when there's not much money around.' Especially if all the money is coming from television, and television is banned from broadcasting films that give Irish republicanism a hearing.

British restraint

Whitaker feels, however, that there could be more vigour among British film-makers. 'In the States, for whatever reason, there is a more get-up-and-go attitude. Film-makers here have rather expected that they can sit there if they've got a good idea and the grants will come in. In the States if film-makers want to make films, they don't let anybody stop them. Take *Roger and Me* in the USA independents section. Michael Moore had never made a film before. He comes from Flint, Michigan. He was enraged with what General Motors did, moving their factory to Mexico leaving 30 000 unemployed. He made a film about it. He did it for nothing. His cameraman and editors did it for nothing. They raised the money for the film stock and made it over three years. It is a very good, very funny documentary—and doesn't lose its message about General Motors. Now I'd like to think that there was somebody here who would make a film about Ireland or Thatcher.'

Role playing

'The role of the NFT is to give entertainment and pleasure, and we show Hollywood musicals, but it's also to put in front of people political and social arguments. Sometimes we feel it is our role to take certain stances. We expanded our gay and lesbian film festival last year quite deliberately in opposition to Clause 28. I got called a radical, feminist, Marxist which is all nonsense, because I'm slightly left of centre. We did a programme of Argentinian film, which people said would get us into trouble as we were still at war. It didn't as it happens, but we are supposed to live in a democracy. It's not for me to say people shouldn't see a certain film. It's up to them to decide.'

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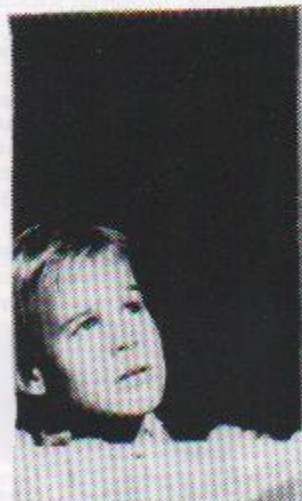
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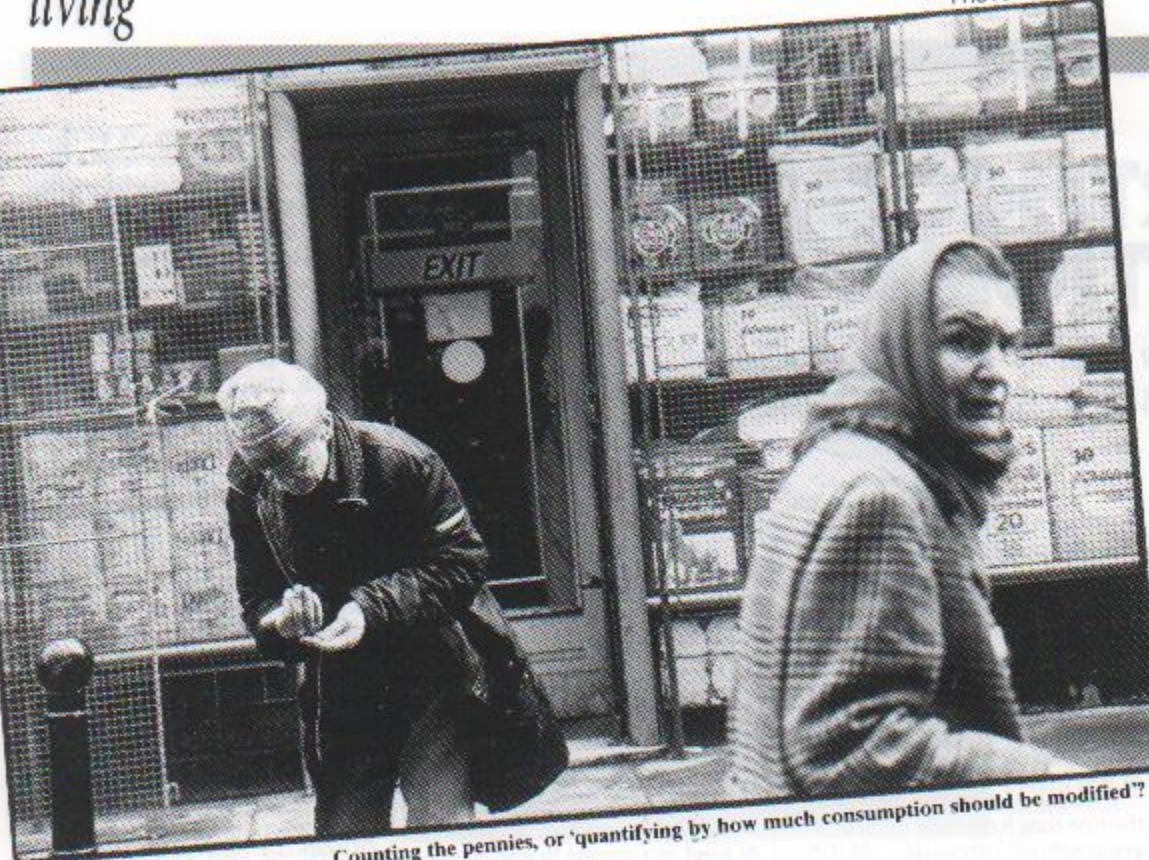
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Counting the pennies, or 'quantifying by how much consumption should be modified'?

Green consumerism

SUBVERSION IN THE SUPERMARKETS

Nigel Lewis sees red when talking to best-selling Green author John Button

Sitting in a Covent Garden café with John Button, author of *How to be Green*, can be a disconcerting experience. Struggling against the din and smog of an afternoon rush hour, he is explaining the significance of the new 'Green consumerism', and its role in averting the ecological crisis that is supposedly threatening to engulf us all. 'Buying recycled, ecologically sound toilet paper', he says, 'is a subversive act'.

The waitress serving our coffee raises her eyebrows and retreats behind her counter. I affect to have misheard him, but it's no good. John Button really does believe that what you buy can alter the world you live in. Jonathon Porritt, in his foreword to the book (a Friends of the Earth production), quotes approvingly the old Quaker adage that 'it is better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness', and Button agrees.

John Button stood in Scotland in the June Euro-elections when the Green Party got 15 per cent. His new book is already set to become a best-seller, having been reprinted twice from a launch date of 21 September. It

aims to be the definitive guide to eating, wearing, travelling, living Green.

Core argument

'The book is meant just as a primer really', says Button. 'Gradually, an understanding of what's wrong with the ecology will seep into people's consciousness. They'll gradually realise the consequences of unlimited consumption and growth, and change their behaviour to avoid catastrophe.' But couldn't it be construed as slightly eccentric to describe buying Green loo-roll as 'subversive' or to advise people to eat their apples right down to the core to conserve nature's resources? 'Well many of the little things that help to save resources may seem a bit eccentric on their own I suppose. But I agree with Jonathon Porritt that "living is polluting". Every little bit helps no matter how insignificant it appears at the time.'

It is without doubt that many of the sections in *How to be Green* are insignificant. The section on consuming television advises consumers to plan their viewing by marking the

TV schedules to save time. The section on household pest control invites us to learn more about the wildlife that shares our homes. Having had some unpleasant encounters with cockroaches and mice in my time, this seems to me to be verging on the illogically compassionate. The book has advice on investing 'ethically' in environment-friendly trusts and banks, to 'starve anti-social and environmentally destructive activities of funds'.

Debunking 'dejunking'

Does the individual really have this power? 'The theme that runs through the book is self-empowerment, the idea that all destructive separations that have intruded into our lives can be countered by a little forethought and planning by groups of individuals. The separation between the land and the people, between people and people, between people and power can be eliminated by a level of grassroots organisation geared to the local community. It's a message that says that a more complex society doesn't necessarily mean a better one.' It is in

this spirit that the book proposes that everyone should embark on a search of their household to eliminate 'clutter'.

British homes apparently are 'stuffed full of things that are rarely or never used, creating vast amounts of anxiety and guilt'. So what level should be set for society's consumption? What is the difference between 'dejunking' a house and imposing austere poverty on the population? 'Well that's a difficult one to answer. We need to redefine consumption and the ideas of personal wealth so that change for the better, or progress, only occurs when the planet can withstand it. Empowering people through the dissemination of information about the ecological crisis is the key thing, actually quantifying by how much and how consumption should be modified will come later.'

Spell it out

This is an evasion, as is much of the book. It is a vague collection of token gestures and moral platitudes with little detail. Talking to Button it becomes clear why: because if the Green approach were spelt out in too much detail, its reactionary consequences would become clear. People might support the general idea of a Greener world; but how many would go for 'dejunking' their homes of video recorders and food mixers, or 'reducing' Britain's population through draconian measures?

How to be Green will not empower people. It can only express the sense of powerlessness and frustration that most feel throughout their lives. It ends up reinforcing those feelings, with its futile emphasis on spending more and more of our time immersed in the minutiae of Green consumerism, and its playing on people's individual fears and prejudices.

Abortion balance

Take biotechnology. Button asserts that it is 'a waste of time, mostly verging on the immoral. We haven't got the right to tinker with life'. Or abortion. Button says it is 'an equivocal issue. One can't just set up one set of rights against another. There has to be a balance'. In denying scientists the right to extend the boundaries of medical research, and telling women to negotiate their rights with those of their fetus, Button the radical Green puts himself in the camp of the conservative anti-abortionists and moral crusaders who deem all interference with nature to be a sin against God.

As we are leaving, Button throws away the remark that 'progress doesn't really mean anything to anyone any more'. To me, it certainly does not mean making friends with spiders, throwing out technological 'junk' or fudging political issues like women's rights.

● John Button, *How to be Green*, Century Hutchinson, £4.99

North Wales sounded great—the beach, the mountains of Cader Idris and a spot of camping. At 6am rain lashed the field, caravan awnings blew away, toilet tents revealed their purpose, and we wondered what to do with a wet and windy Sunday. There are castles, slate caverns, and a tour of a nuclear power station. And there is the Centre for Alternative Technology at Machynlleth, advertised as an educative family day out, with café. No contest.

At the site's entrance a sign read 'No cars past this point, you are now crossing the green line'. A £1.50 charge at the kiosk got you over the green line but didn't cover the guidebook. In front of the centre we found solar panels which you can flip open to read the level of solar energy on a meter. Except on cloudy days. Information panels boasted that the site produces its own energy from sun, wind and water except in emergencies. Lurking behind the rudimentary wooden houses however were bottles of propane gas, with signs which read 'we are trying'. A short walk past noisy windmills lead to the communal garden tunnel. Big barrels of urine were labelled with the dilution necessary for a waste-saving fertiliser, so you can use your own.

The centre itself was crowded with people copying down which plants to grow next to which weeds. More signs.

Alternative technology

'YOU ARE NOW CROSSING THE GREEN LINE'

Kerry Dean drops out for the day

In the workshops: 'Flies are natural pollinators.' On the café bar: 'Only buy what you need.' Oh, alright. We couldn't afford the organic salads (the urine put me off anyway) and settled for a Nicaraguan coffee, chicory free. At the plank tables a Bristol family complained loudly as their youngest threw up over a wholesome bean-stuffed marrow. 'They said this was a family outing, but it is not. They don't cater for families, there's no meat and Sandra's allergic to eggs. What's she supposed to have then?'

Half-baked

We headed for an 'alternative ideal home exhibition', ie, someone's house with the ground floor laid out for the public. The kitchen had an electric cooker with instructions to turn the knobs only halfway to conserve energy. Instructions over the sink read

'Only fill up your washing bowl half-full, it's all you need'. Carefully labelled wooden utensils indicated the type of wood to ask for when buying spoons, to help save the rain forests. In the corner was an Aga cooker of the type my mother had thrown out as soon as she saved enough money. This was a new one and cost only £600 excluding the daily work required to chop the wood, stoke the fire every hour or so and empty the ashes.

We headed for the fish pond. The imported carp were for decoration only, but made me feel hungry. Close by an engineer with a PhD was chopping wood. In the next building a large noticeboard depicted a pentagon notated with earth, fire, wind and water, and a fifth point said to consist of the mystical elements, the magic of nature. Another diagram showed a circle with a big red wedge in it to

signify the damage caused to humanity's harmonious relation with nature by the industrial revolution. Another circle symbolised the centre's aim of spiritual rejoinment and practical harmony. Here you were supposed to reflect on those other forces that help the grass grow—blood, sweat and muck (and definitely no nitrogen).

On the noticeboard at the exit, next to an explanation of why bicycles were better than cars, there was an announcement that interested persons could pay for the privilege of working at the centre. That did it for us. The Mini made record time to the nearest pub in Machynlleth and a superb Sunday lunch, tender Welsh roast lamb and lashings of redcurrant jelly. One of the women from the centre was serving behind the bar. Saving up to work there, I suppose.

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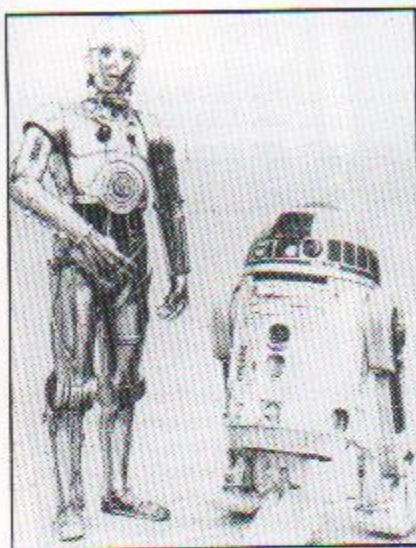


PHOTO: Twentieth Century Fox

Can computers think like us?

AI DON'T THINK SO

Gemma Forest applies her brainpower to artificial intelligence as discussed in *The Emperor's New Mind* by Roger Penrose

What do people mean by artificial intelligence? Proponents of 'strong AI' claim that our thinking is basically the same as the action of a very complicated computer, and that we can therefore progress towards reproducing that intelligence by developing computers. Roger Penrose, a professor of mathematics at Oxford and an associate of Stephen Hawking, is sceptical and has written for the most part a sensible and readable book on the subject.

It seems to me that the intelligence,

if you can call it that, of man-made machines will always be qualitatively different from and inferior to the intelligence of human beings. Why? Because human intelligence is conscious and social. The ability, consciously and in cooperation with other human beings, to transform nature according to preconceived plans, and be transformed ourselves in the process, is what makes us human beings and not animals, or machines. This consciousness cannot be traced to a particular mental procedure which can eventually be copied; but is rather the result of, indeed is part of, a continuous process of interaction between human beings and nature in the specific circumstances of our own history.

Check, but not mates

In his own way Penrose would seem to go along with that. He has certainly

mounted a welcome if rather labyrinthine attack on the 'strong AI' school. He shows that even if a chess-playing computer (and they are now at International Master standard) behind a screen can fool us into thinking it human, that doesn't mean it has any understanding of what's going on. He ridicules the view that the brain is just another digital computer running a complicated algorithm (a calculational procedure or well-defined sequence of operations). The brain is a distinct physical, biological and chemical entity in the process of continuous change: brain cells, Penrose notes, have a rapid turnover. Also, both the Austrian Kurt Godel (1931) and Britain's Alan Turing (1937) discovered that formal algorithms alone could not embrace the full mathematical truth.

So far, so good. But Penrose's science fails fully to convince. He

boldly applies relativity theory to the sub-atomic world of the quantum, arguing that a theory of Correct Quantum Gravity, gravitons and all, might explain human consciousness better than most. He may be right, yet his view that consciousness is about individuals getting into 'direct contact with Plato's world of mathematical concepts' does not inspire confidence, nor does his barely supported contention that 'non-human animals can indeed be conscious'. Finally, Penrose is like Stephen Hawking, a great believer in scientific theories that are simple, 'magic' and of great beauty. This, too, is worrying.

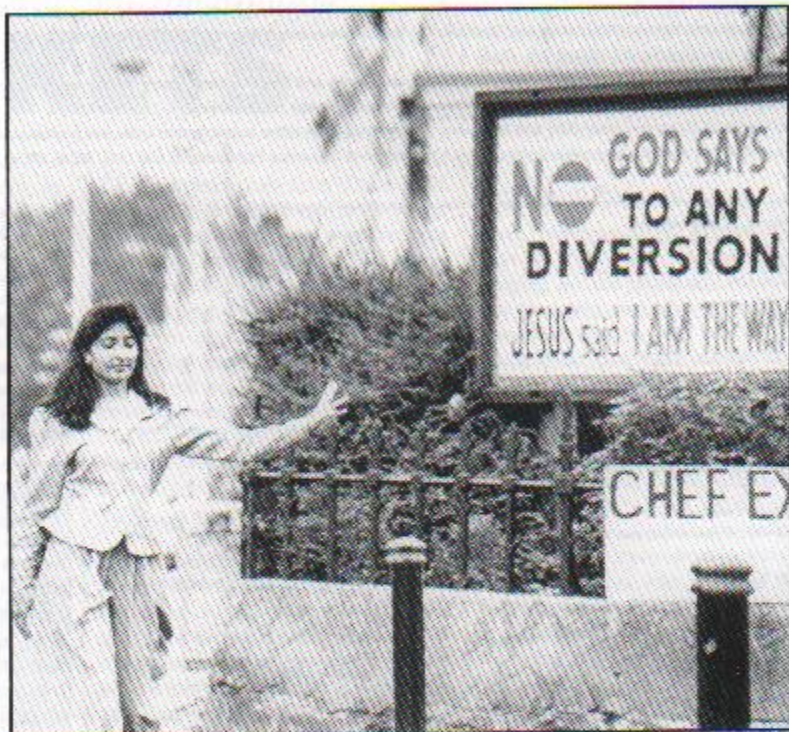
Plato and dolphins

Human consciousness cannot be reduced to individuals, mathematics or the cuter tricks of chimpanzees and dolphins. Human consciousness is realised in collective, premeditated

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actions on the world. Its scientific theories are so defined not, as Penrose and the idealism of Plato (360BC) imagine, because they are aesthetically pleasing, but because they are in some broader sense true. Even maths, as Penrose says, is not all in the mind—it must have some truth to reality in it somewhere.

We live in a world where the mythology of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* still influences debate about computers. Fear of 'human' and possibly evil computers is nearly as

widespread as fear of the consequences of genetic engineering. Stanley Kubric's *2001* (1968) is not alone in suggesting that AI, in Kubric's case the mad spaceship computer Hal, will be possible in our lifetimes, and a potentially dangerous development at that.

Feeding fear

By obscuring the distinctive character of human beings, the proponents of 'strong AI' end up feeding the myths and prejudices which surround and

hamper scientific advancement. One thing is clear: computer technology, man-made and man-controlled, has made tremendous advances and, given the opportunity to develop, promises extraordinary liberation for humanity. Already these computers are doing much more than adding up shopping bills, producing newspapers and making Karpov and Kasparov feel insecure. Since 1973 they have been able to help diagnose salmonella poisoning. Today the Thinking Machines Corporation can undertake

the most effective aerodynamic testing of motor cars, without cars or windtunnels, but by mathematically bombarding windscreens with millions of molecules. Let's forget about Frankenstein, and look forward to the future.

● Roger Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind: Concerning Computers, Minds and the Laws of Physics*, Oxford University Press, £20

After *Spycatcher*, being an espionage expert is a job with prospects. Their ranks are swelling all the time, and almost all of them demand greater freedom of information in Britain and berate the 'obsessive secrecy' of the establishment. These two authors are no exception, although they want to tear the veil for different reasons.

Richard Deacon resents state secrecy because it restricts the freedom of Red-baiting rumour-mongers like him to stir up spicy (and best-selling) spy panics. His book contains numerous unsubstantiated allegations about dead people. Deacon is anxious to be able to finger the living as well.

The Greatest Treason reads like the plot of a Ludlum novel, where the Reds are engaged in an endless scheme to conquer the world. Deacon believes that Gorbachev's Moscow is still out to do serious mischief, albeit under the disguise of glasnost. So the current proposals for European unity are nothing but a cunning Soviet scam: 'Behind the debate on...1992 and plans for European integration lies an attempt gradually to impose a dominant Soviet interest not only in Eastern Europe, but Western Europe too.' Surprisingly Deacon doesn't ask who really paid for Lord Young's 'Europe—open for business' adverts.

The old European Communist parties might have collapsed, but Deacon has no problem dreaming up others who could do Moscow's dirty work in the West. For instance, the KGB can always find recruits by trawling gay bars, since 'homosexuals in particular perhaps tend to have a penchant for the double life and treachery'.

Deacon doesn't let anything as awkward as facts bother him when innuendo will serve. He sails closest to the wind when he identifies the Prince of Wales as a possible Soviet agent. According to Deacon, Charles could have been recruited by his uncle Lord Louis Mountbatten, whom Deacon describes as a long-serving Soviet agent—and a homosexual, of course:

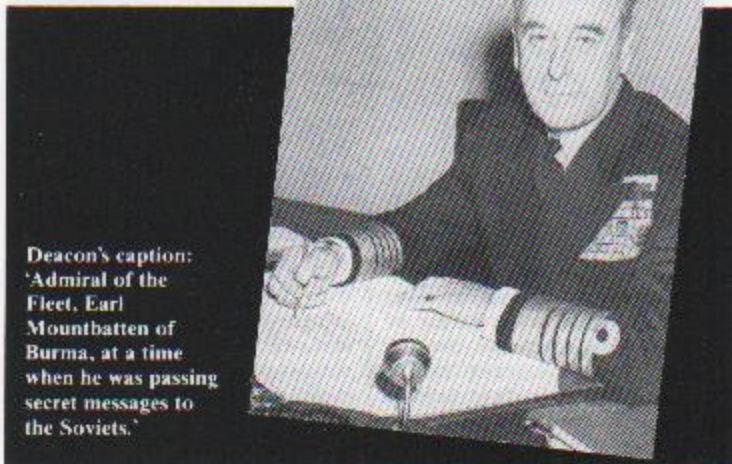
'The Mountbatten influence on the Prince of Wales has frequently been commented upon and indeed as time has passed his influence on the whole of the royal family has grown. What is

Spook books

WAS LORD LOUIS A RED LETTUCE?

Andy Clarkson finds MI5 rabbits and Reds under the Buckingham Palace beds in two new spy exposés:

James Rusbridger's The Intelligence Game, and The Greatest Treason
by Richard Deacon



Deacon's caption: 'Admiral of the Fleet, Earl Mountbatten of Burma, at a time when he was passing secret messages to the Soviets.'

particularly interesting is that as long ago as 1954-55 he was sending confidential messages from himself personally to the Soviet defence chief indicating his fondness for Russia and the Russian people.'

It is hard to say which idea is the more absurd: that the royals are Kremlin spooks, or that Gorbachev is in a position to execute a world domination plan on the Fu Manchu model.

In Wonderland

Deacon's aim is to prove that the 'fifth man' in Britain's most infamous and glamorous spy ring was not ex-MI5 chief Sir Roger Hollis, as suggested in *Spycatcher* and elsewhere, but was one of Hollis' underlings, Guy Liddell, who roped in Mountbatten and other notables. Liddell was apparently related to a girl called Alice, on whom the heroine of Lewis Carroll's psychedelic fantasy *Alice in Wonderland* was based. 'Somehow' Deacon writes

of his investigations, 'I felt as if I was discovering a new version of *Alice in Wonderland* in which all the hidden violence and sexual perversion which some psychoanalysts have discovered in the old version had become terribly explicit'. Keep talking man, and pass the opium pipe.

James Rusbridger thinks that official secrecy is just an old pals' act to cover up the bureaucratic incompetence of the various spy organisations. He is particularly annoyed with Britain's domestic espionage agency: 'Why is MI5 so useless at finding spies and traitors? The reason...is that it wastes far too much time and resources chasing after the wrong sort of people who it believes are subversive, while the real enemies of the state are able to go on spying undetected for decades.' Rusbridger wants MI5 to stop wasting time hounding innocuous CND pacifists and trade union officials and go after real subversives like the IRA.

In *The Intelligence Game* Rusbridger has fun pulling apart many of the tricks and techniques of Britain's security services. He reveals too how politicians from all the mainstream parties have been deeply involved in the dirty tricks machinery. This was one of the conventions which the establishment had to teach the Labour Party.

Not cricket

Rusbridger includes the story (not new but always worth an airing) of how, when he became prime minister of Labour's first majority government in 1945, Clement Attlee refused to have a new-fangled teleprinter installed in Number 10, until he was told that it would relay the cricket scores; he then came close to a heart attack when he discovered 'the cricket machine' churning out details of that morning's cabinet meeting. But once the men-in-suits had a word in Attlee's ear, explaining that leaking edited versions of cabinet business to selected journalists was an important part of protecting real state secrets, he and his party soon got the hang of the game.

Having noted the extent of political involvement in the espionage game, however, Rusbridger retreats into the familiar thesis that mammoth espionage agencies like GCHQ and MI5 are out of control and must be made accountable to parliament. Harking back to a mythical past when there was no spy system because 'gentlemen don't open each other's mail', Rusbridger misses the point that the dirty tricks brigade is now just as integral a part of the British system of government as is the parliamentary window-dressing.

Rusbridger is well-known for his repeated dismissals of the idea that the security services should be allowed to investigate themselves, a naive notion which he calls 'sending a rabbit to fetch a lettuce'. But in demanding that parliament, another arm of the same state machine, should do the investigating, he entrusts a fox with fetching the rabbit.

● Richard Deacon, *The Greatest Treason*, Century, £12.95

● James Rusbridger, *The Intelligence Game*, Bodley Head, £12.95

AMATEUR DRAMATICS ON QUALITY STREET

Frank Cottrell-Boyce reviews television coverage of the Broadwater Farm raid and the media debate about 'quality' TV

There's a surprise newcomer on the television drama scene; the Metropolitan Police. September brought the premier of their new movie—*Down On the Farm*. It was shot by about half the 'news' crews in Europe who provided their services free, or rather in return for some good footage (it didn't matter that there was no real story—no drugs for instance—as long as the pictures were good).

In fact, the film companies were conned. The scenes were carefully staged but they were all cliché—the briefing session was a straight lift from *Hill Street Blues*; the shot of the boys piling out of the back of their vans on to the mean streets was from *The Bill*, as was the dramatic use of hand-held cameras; the shots of policemen 'taking' the decks recalled *Saracen*; the community leaders in orange 'observer' jackets were from *Peter Pan*.

These ridiculous amateur dramatics reminded me just how important television drama is. Without it this raid would never have taken place. The briefing for instance: can you imagine trying to run a serious meeting with a bunch of hairy technicians crawling round your ankles, a phallic boom mike swinging round your head and the hot lights beating down? Yet this scene—obviously staged for the cameras—was accepted as news footage. Why? Because *Hill Street* briefings are so familiar, and so authentic, that we didn't stop for a moment to wonder how the Farm pictures were obtained. The dramatic illusion has allowed the machinery of the medium itself to become invisible.

Faking pilferers

It was interesting that when they interviewed the one dissenting voice—Bernie Grant—the mike and the reporter were suddenly back in shot. During the raid TV was a medium, a window that allowed you an uninterrupted look at the real world; during the interview, TV became an industry again, with machinery and manpower, editors and policies

between you and the object. Grant was held at arm's length. On the other hand, all the technicians of the drama department—especially all those gut-wrenching steadicam tracking shots—were used to collapse the distance between your point of view and that of the boys from *The Bill*.

During the great spiritualist vogue in the United States, fake mediums used conjurers' tricks to con the desperate into believing they had made contact with their dead. Real conjurers got very angry about this. The craft that they had developed as an uplifting celebration of human dexterity and ingenuity had become a parasite on human misery. Harry Houdini in particular set out to expose phoney mediums (note that word). The situation within television is similar. Television dramatists are illusionists too and they should be up in arms about this wholesale pilfering of their repertoire. They should be trying to expose the fakers, drawing attention to and celebrating the means of production where the news tries to keep them hidden. We should be showing that television is not a 'medium'.

A-level TV

It was with this particular fire in my belly that I showed up at the Birmingham Film and Television Festival. It was packed with men from the BBC anxious about how they were going to defend 'quality' television from the ravages of Rupert Murdoch. As they talked it dawned on me that their definition of quality was a bit different from mine. Swanky adaptations of A-level texts seemed to loom large in the discussions. And heritage drama with actors from the RSC swanning around the works of David Edgar (he was there). In other words, television that aspired not to be television at all, but *Cole's Notes*. Sometimes there would even be a controversial sex scene so that we all had the opportunity to exhibit our maturity. They were very worried because this stuff is expensive to make.

Even when talking about series which were not adaptations they were

still obsessed with production values. *Hill Street* and *thirtysomething* were held up as something to be proud of—programmes in which a shagged out old formula is brought shrieking back to life with a huge overdose of the amphetamine of 'quality' and the monkey glands of money. They were not talking about quality television but Quality Street television, the same old soft centres and nut brittle dressed to death for Christmas. It was significant that TV's major formal contribution to drama, the dramadoc, was not mentioned. In the right hands this form can menace the authority of news footage directly—by creating fictions that look just as authentic. A trivial example will do: Richard Dimbleby's famous spoof 'documentary' about harvesting spaghetti from trees in the Po valley.

Crime is crime

Of course one or two people said some terribly radical things, but mostly at the level of content. For instance, if the news bans real coverage and analysis of Ireland then the drama department should supply it. This is very worthy but if you don't think about the form, you'll still get suckered in the end. Most 'complex and disturbing' dramas about Ireland take the form of thrillers. It doesn't matter what your party politics are, if you write in a genre that takes its cue from crime, one way or another you end up projecting the subject in a way which fits comfortably alongside Britain's criminalisation of the legitimate political aspirations of Irish people.

In any event the lush sets and class acts that upholster 'quality' dramas are enough to undermine any political purpose. Envy and awe are likely to be the most common viewer response to the distant, glamorous worlds they are usually forced to behold. David Edgar could write a BBC series eulogising Lenin (not that he would) and I guarantee that the deepest yearning it would nurture in you would be the wish that when you go bald there'll be a BBC lighting man around to give your pate that lovely

BBC afterglow. The coffee table look of most 'quality' drama endows just about any subject with a majestic sheen, a royal photograph album high-gloss finish.

Even when they try to do rubbish, British TV producers end up with sweet wrappers rather than nuclear waste. Look at *Blind Date*. Let's face it, the attraction of this formula is that really ugly people might be paired off with really gorgeous people. What else is the point of people not being able to see each other? The main interest afterwards is, Did They Have Sex? Cilla's version manages to botch it on both levels. We have pretty girls and boys, all around the same age so as to avoid any of that sort of thing, swapping rehearsed banter in the style of Gordon Fraser valentine cards. Watching it, you feel like the parents of well-bred teenagers off on their first dates: don't they look nice; I hope they have a good time; oh, they're going to Venice, lovely. Lovely art galleries. And, when they come home, don't ask them if they got their leg over.

The most scary thing about the idea of the Brits leaving 'quality' and going downmarket to compete is that they'll never do it. They'll never get that happy trashy tabloid feel. Murdoch will win, and deserve to win. British Satellite Broadcasting, for instance, is trying to get a drive-in style space opera together based on a satellite in orbit around Jupiter. Called *Jupiter's Moon*, guess what's on that moon? A polytechnic.

Throughout the discussions Italian TV of course was used as an off-the-peg nightmare of the possible future. I kept thinking of RAI's afternoon chat show *Pronto, Chi Gioca?* which Cilla could learn a lot from. The content of this show is so genuinely brain-defyingly trivial (guess the weight of the bosom, etc) that the technicians took to amusing themselves by going for grotesque close-ups and astonishing video fidgeting. A guest's eyes are detached from her face, float around for a while and then come to land on the host. The view of Rome that you get through the window at the back of the set disappears and is replaced by the moon. Is the show made in Rome or is that skyline PaintBoxed in? Which is real, which is a trick? Suddenly a long discussion about Patsy Kensit's belly-button is enlivened with a bit of televisual vitality which is rare on any sort of British TV.

Just for the record, RAI are holding their own against Berlusconi's strip show and direct sales channels and have won back a good deal of the audience that they initially lost. The signs are that when you have too much junk food, you start to pine for fresh fruit. The trouble with British TV is that there isn't too much fresh fruit around—just a lot of sweet pickles and rich Edwardian country plum cakes.

Rock 'n' roll clichés

POPBOILERS

The latest crop of music books from Omnibus Press failed to set Toby Banks' toes a-tapping

The pop music book does not enjoy a high reputation. This may have something to do with the fact that most of them are sycophantic drivel, cobbled together from old press cuttings and conversations with people who are famous for knowing famous people, with the sole aim of ripping off die-hard fans. To give an idea of the depths plumbed, Kate Bush's biography quotes her producer as saying 'the sounds of Kate's records come from the way she writes her songs and the way she performs them'.

Against this bench-mark we can judge Robert Sellers' biography of Sting. It compares well to the Kate Bush book, but not to any other book I can think of. Sellers clearly takes the whole thing rather more seriously than the average hack. For a start he furnishes the dust jacket with a history of his own career (from co-founder of 'Horace Goes Skiing, a comedy group who performed self-written sketches in a rented room in a Southend pub', to failed performer at 'London's infamous Comedy Store') which only just stops short of recording his O-level results.

No sting in the tale

Unfortunately, unlike the autobiography of that other pop star-turned-do-gooder, Bob Geldof, this is not a salacious exposé of the rock 'n' roll life, or of anything else. If you have spent the past 10 years worrying about whether the leading Policeman was really a punk (no), or where he got his name from (not that bloody stripy jumper story again!), then *Sting* is the book for you. Otherwise, take away Sellers' name-dropping of authors and film directors and you're left with the usual scissors-and-paste job: a chapter for each LP and film, consisting of a digest of press reviews. There are moments of unintentionally humorous relief, as when Sellers declares that Sting has earned the right to be considered as an actor of the stature of David Bowie, but these are few and far between.

On the positive side, Sting will be pleased to see that very few trees were destroyed to produce the book, and



Billy on guitar, Gorby on shirt, Lenin up the wall

its slimness will be welcomed by readers too. What is genuinely depressing about this book is not Sellers' pretensions, nor the absence of any interesting insights or even a good anecdote. It is that a 24-year old journalist can invest such faith in somebody as dull as Sting, whom he regards not just as a colossus bestriding the worlds of music, cinema and theatre, but also as a leader of men, standing above politics, a force for spiritual change in the world.

Like Sting, Billy Bragg is probably better known for his causes than his tunes. In particular, he is associated, for better or worse, with the Labour Party. He has always voiced his misgivings about Labour and Kinnoch, but in his self-penned introduction to *Midnights in Moscow* he lets slip where 'critical support' leads, as he describes the ultimatum which Red Wedge gave the grey men of the Labour leadership at its formation before the 1987 general election: 'Together with sympathetic activists we had a meeting with Neil Kinnoch, and said that if the whole party from the top to the bottom didn't want to back us, we'd do it anyway.' That told him, Billy.

As it happens, Billy comes across as a nice bloke, and not half as dull as his

public image. The introduction, and his recent articles in the press, show that he's not a bad writer either. Unfortunately, the rest of the book is written by Chris Salewicz, a music press hack who accompanied Bragg on his tour of the Soviet Union.

Salewicz makes the most of the fact that Bragg is a political figure by inserting his own unwelcome political views into the text in the form of copious footnotes. For instance, Salewicz considers Marx to be 'a very boring writer: this is the reason no one has read his books—they are unreadable...they are not page-turning rattling reads and there are no dirty bits'. None of which would matter much if Salewicz had turned out a rattling good read himself. But, as Marx would have said, he hasn't.

In between Salewicz's ponderous reflections on life, we have a travelogue, recording faithfully every incident and joke along the way: Bragg changes trains and hats, complains about the cold, goes gigging among the people and punks, and admires Gorbachev's reforms (while remarking, when he fails to get 'yuppie' translated to a mystified Leningrad audience: 'Oh well, a little more perestroika and they'll know'). It is hard to know what to make of the events themselves,

since Salewicz's fifth-form style manages to make their great adventure sound as dull as a school day-trip. Thus we can only speculate about how amusing it must have been to sit in a train carriage with Billy, 'Wiggy', Salewicz and the rest as they compete to 'produce ever groovier muesli bars'.

Salewicz considers that 'the Sex Pistols, the Clash and punk...disturbed the powers that be on both sides of the Iron Curtain'. If he is serious about this, he should be locked in a room with Brian Cannon, whose 'major new book', according to the blurb, 'shows how punk design emerged from the youth tradition and the crisis of the seventies and devised for itself a radical new aesthetic (or anti-aesthetic) he shows how its self-image determined its public reception'. Despite the appallingly punk grammar of the above, this major new book, *Going Nowhere*, is in fact a thesis produced by a graphics student at Leeds Polytechnic, padded out with xerox-quality reproductions of old record sleeves and posters. Punk did throw up some notable images, such as Jamie Reid's Sex Pistols collages (Queen with safety pin, etc). This book could do with a bit of Reid's wit: I hope Brian's mum and dad (to whom it is dedicated) enjoy it.

Not minimal enough

Brian Edge is on a hiding to nothing. His *Paintwork* is an attempt to chronicle the life and times of the Fall, probably the most awkward and uncooperative group in the world. It is in the Robert Sellers tradition of trawling back issues of *New Musical Express*. Consequently it says nothing new, but it says it less pompously than *Sting*. Fall fans will like the pictures.

Nobody should like the pictures, or anything else, in *Beyond the Velvet Underground*. It is a collection of quotes from and about members and associates of the Velvet Underground (Lou Reed, Nico, Warhol, etc), all made after the 'prototype sixties minimalists' went their separate ways. (John Cale on the recently departed Elvis Presley, August 1977: 'I thought he died when I recorded "Heartbreak hotel."') No comment is offered, which may be a blessing, and the pictures are among the roupiest ever printed, all platforms and shades. Author Dave Thompson's name appears in letters of the size usually reserved for 'Not for sale in the USA'. It looks as if it's trying to crawl off the page, and so it should.

- Brian Cannon, *Going Nowhere: The Art and Design of the Punk and New Wave Movement*, £7.95.
- Brian Edge, *Paintwork: A Portrait of the Fall*, £6.95.
- Chris Salewicz, *Billy Bragg: Midnights in Moscow*, £6.95.
- Robert Sellers, *Sting: A Biography*, hbk, £9.95.
- Dave Thompson, *Beyond the Velvet Underground*, £6.95.

Letters

We welcome readers' views and criticisms of *Living Marxism*. Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.

RED AND GREEN

So Ian Wingrove of the Association of Socialist Greens thinks that 'the final insult is to accuse the Green Party of wanting to go backwards' (letters, October). How else would he describe a party which, in calling for a cut in population, unearths the reactionary, 150-year old theories of the country parson Thomas Malthus who claimed that poverty was caused not by capitalism but by there being too many people? The Greens criticise economic growth, technological advance and scientific progress: in which direction does Wingrove think that attitude points society?

Unlike Malthus, I do not believe in God, but if I did I would thank him for people like Professor Robert Edwards. His defence of his embryo research ('Playing God or helping humanity?', October), holding out the prospect of doing things like growing a new heart, certainly lifted mine. It has come to something when a prestigious scientist, who would normally be considered a pillar of the establishment, has an infinitely more forward-looking vision of the world than those like Wingrove who call themselves socialists.

Mary Roberts
London

I am disappointed by your self-righteous views on Red-Green cooperation (Frank Richards, 'Red and Green don't go', October). Nineties Marxism will need to follow the example of CND, which transformed the popular culture of the left for a generation.

Given that peace is not synonymous with socialism, we need to find common ground with radical sections of the Green movement. If there are rightist Greens advocating barriers to immigration, then it is fair enough for a socialist to object, but *Living Marxism* is seemingly suggesting that ecology is, in essence, a reactionary movement distracting attention from the real struggle.

However, capitalism's factories are

symbols of oppression of both the workers and the environment, and we must press for further understanding and interaction of our views: a broader interpretation of the meaning of the word 'environment' to include the inner cities, and for a Green-for-all, rather than an elitist Green society. Red and Green are both fundamentally *acapitalist*, and their existences rest on the present system's (including the Eastern bloc's) inadequacies and internal contradictions.

Some Greens are clearly looking in the right directions, not only in terms of pacifism, but also as they are 'committed to seeing the massive empires of multinational companies broken up' (Green Euro-election manifesto). If Reds don't embrace Greens as comrades in the struggle against our oppressors then socialism's message will disappear without trace!

Simon Kye
Slough

GREEN VEGANS AGAINST ABORTION

I found Kevin Young's view of animals most offensive ('Puppy love and pet hate', October). He is to animals what Hitler was to Jews. Animals most definitely do have feelings and consciousness. I also find it offensive when Paul Johnson says that abortion is a prerequisite for women's equality. What about the equality of the unborn child? I am for women's rights but not to the extreme of murdering unborn babies.

I am a Green vegan but feel that I am definitely more left than right politically. Above all I am a respecter of life, animal and human, born and unborn, and why didn't the article on embryo research even touch on the 'pro-life' arguments?

Lesley Roberts
Vegetarian and Vegan
'Pro-Life' Network
London

ANIMALS AND ALIENATION

Having had some of that old violent sexual abuse as a child, I grew up pretty alienated. I already knew that this was the reason that, as Kevin Young argues, I was involved with my dog. For a disturbed child with no human available to help me, he was literally a lifeline. So while I admire and agree with the cogency of Kevin Young's analysis, I would have preferred it if he had adopted a different tone than sneering condescension. It was a creative solution to appalling circumstances.

I agree that it is vital to struggle to change our social environment to end the material sources of our alienation from one another.

However, I would argue that it's not enough. While firmly rejecting the individualistic postures of most systems of therapy I think the success of the revolution will involve some effort to heal one another of the effects of alienation. You're kidding yourselves and others though if you think people are going to wake up one morning and think 'Well, the objective conditions of my exploitation are gone, I think I love, trust and respect my comrades'.

David Morris
Bristol

A TRULY FREE STATE?

Mike Freeman (letters, October) is very derogatory of Ireland's Free State government of 1922 and its stance of neutrality in the Second World War.

To accuse the Free State government of being 'a collection of British stooges' is to make a mockery of the 1921-22 Civil War in Ireland which determined the make-up of that first government. People like Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith did not die in a struggle to perpetuate, however subtly, the British presence in Irish politics.

The decision of Eamon de Valera to embark on a neutral course during the difficult years of the Second World War was not a cosmetic exercise. Had he not succeeded in getting back those valuable ports that were still in British hands after 1922, I have no doubt that Ireland would now be a more blatant sub-state. Or worse, we could now be an American tool ideally (militarily) situated between themselves and the Soviet Union. This is borne out by the fascination that the US and British submarines have with Irish waters.

It is worth remembering that Ireland has only been a nation in its own right for a mere 60 years after hundreds of years under British rule. However much we dislike it, we have to acknowledge that we are a post-colonial state and that economic independence does not happen overnight. This should not make us complacent about the vested interests of other nations in Ireland, where Ireland's interests and welfare become, once again, a secondary issue.

Deidre O'Flynn
Cork

MARX AND IRISH BOMBS

I suppose it was inevitable that in response to Charles Longford's too-brief piece ('When Karl Marx marched for Irish freedom', August) someone would dredge up that hoary old story about Marx condemning

the 1867 Fenian bombing in Clerkenwell. Terry McCann states that 'Marx did not support the Irish outrage as Longford seems to suggest' and quotes Marx calling Clerkenwell 'a very stupid thing' (letters, October).

No, Marx did not hold a party to celebrate Clerkenwell (and neither, in my copy of the magazine anyway, does Longford seem to suggest otherwise). But nor did Marx publicly condemn the Fenian struggle, even when they planted bad bombs. The critical quote, as McCann admits, comes from a private letter to Engels. The pair kept these opinions to themselves, understanding that public attacks on the Fenians' use of force could only aid the British right. So in public they stuck to condemning British interference in Ireland. Too many British socialists have forgotten this aspect of Marxism, and that I feel is truly an outrage and a very stupid thing.

John McVie
Derbyshire

RIGHT, REVEREND

Alan Harding's 'A war to redivide the world' (September) states exceedingly well what many of us thought about the background to the events which were slowly, inexorably, leading to another war. I would add two things: First, until almost the last moment many Brits were fervently anti-war. As one example, I quote the famous mid-thirties motion by the Oxford Union, favouring a refusal to fight for King and country if asked to do so; second, it was widely recognised that the post-Versailles Weimar Republic had left the Germans in a nasty stew for any nation to get out.

Toby Banks' 'The Blitz Spirit—'One big thumping lie'' is somewhat different. In Coventry—and bombing here was by no means limited to one night in November—there really was a spirit of (somewhat cynically cheerful) mutual concern. We were not impressed by news reports of only a few churches and cinemas having been damaged after raids on our own and other cities any more than by other aspects of economy of truth. Nevertheless, the hitherto unknown phenomenon of being addressed as 'chick' or 'duck' by a total stranger became common enough on the mornings after those gruelling nights. Indeed, this new mateyness was the direct forerunner of present informality—eg 'we are a so and so team, if interested ring Chrissie on 01 such and such'—which has become now as hypocritical as it is silly.

Rev Fred Cuthbert
Coventry

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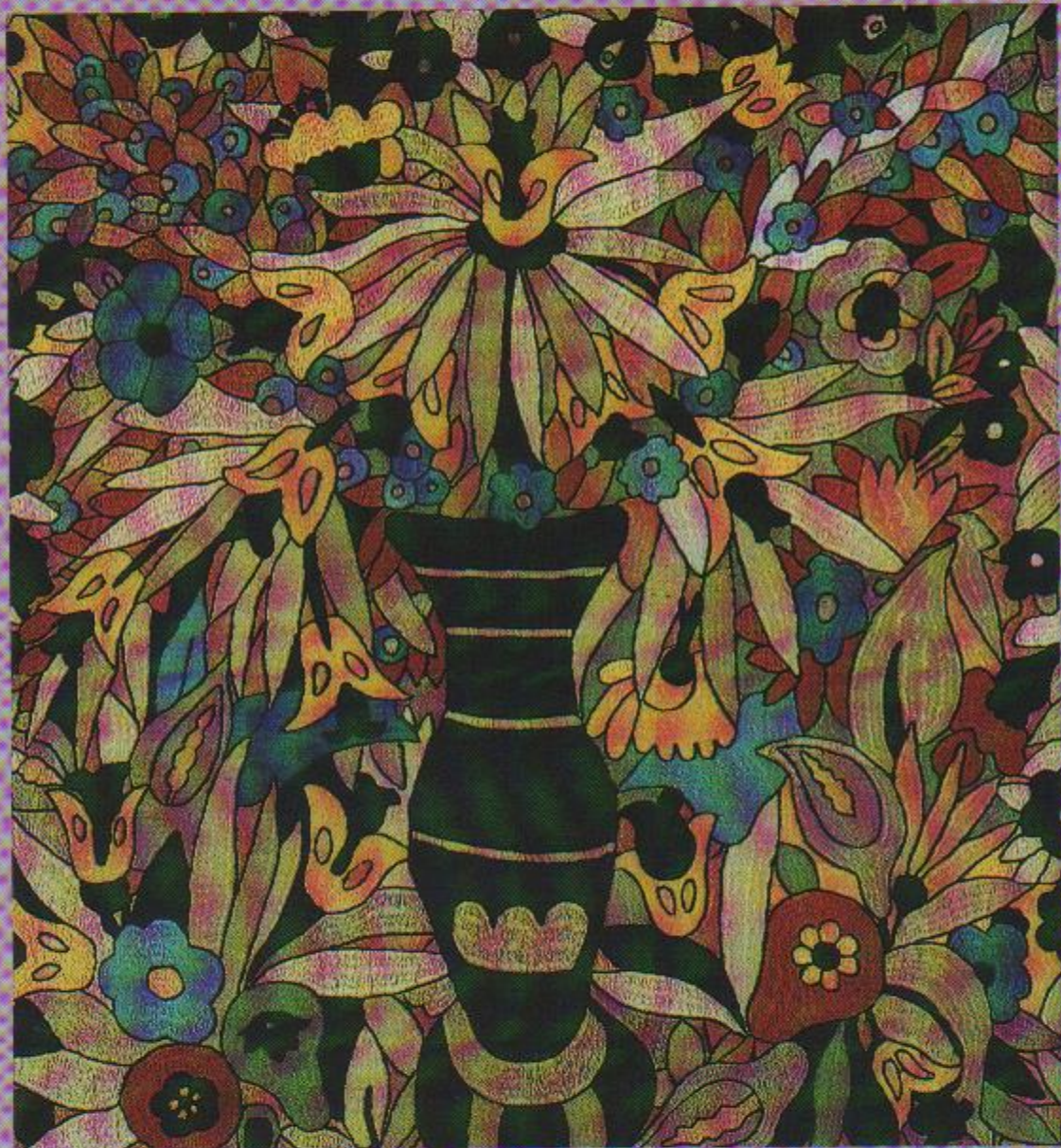


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