

# Labour & Trade Union Review

January 2001

No. 100

Price £1.20 (IR £1.20)

## Is Free Trade A Good Thing?

## Health in Cuba

James Bisset  
on Kosovo (II)

Tories and  
Northern Ireland

# Labour's Free Trade Empire

In the globalist era free trade is compulsory. Countries are not free to trade or not to trade based on a calculation of their material interests. They must engage in free trade or be outcasts. And what free trade means is that their economies must be market economies and must be open to capital investment from outside.

In the last months of the Second World War Hitler came under pressure from influential elements within the Nazi regime to authorise them to try to negotiate a deal with the Western Allies in the hope of stopping the Communist advance. The furthest he would go was to authorise them to give an undertaking that Germany would give up its economic *autarky* and blend itself into the world market. Reading that during the era of the Cold War, when capitalism was constrained to be well-behaved by the pressure exerted on it by the Communist half of the world, one was inclined to see that offer as a mere symptom of the fact that Hitler's mind was breaking up. Ten years after the end of the Cold War, the conduct of world affairs by a capitalist system freed from all socialist constraint shows that Hitler's offer, though of no consequence in the militaristic circumstances of the time, was not irrelevant to the brute economic realities of the long term. Once the consideration of holding the ring against Socialism no longer applied, national economic autarky was no longer tolerated.

After Milosovich had collaborated with NATO in making what is called the Bosnian settlement, it was put to him that the socialist elements in the Serbian economy should be dismantled. There can be little doubt that if he had taken the hint NATO would not have taken the Kosovo Liberation Army under its wing, removed the terrorist sticker from it, and bombed Serbia as its ally.

Louis Althusser, the 1970s guru of the *New Left Review*, the Communist Party, *Tribune* and virtually the entire British Left, hard and soft, apart from this magazine, took societies to be mere epiphenomena of economic forms, and lacking human continuity. He therefore postulated that there was a "radical absence of memory" between successive economic forms—because memory would imply a continuity of human substance—and he frankly described his theatrical system as 'ahumanist'.

Appearances did not lend credibility to Althusser's theory back in the seventies when his name was a household word. And one never hears his name today, when his theory seems no more than a description of what has been happening for ten years. But that is, of course, as it should be according to his theory. A great economic change has been accompanied by radical forgetting.

The Althusserian theory reduced humans to the status of



zombies—they were the 'bearers' of economic forms whose notion of themselves had no foundation. And what does one see all around one today but zombies—old bodies bearing a new economic form in their heads and using names that give an illusion of human continuity—Jack Straw, Clare Short, Robin Cook, Peter Hain, Peter Mandelson, etc., *ad infinitum*?

But we are burdened with memory. And we can remember that long era when Yugoslavia was not denounced for its nationalist economic autarky but praised for having a market system at all.

There was an uncomfortable three years, from 1945 to 1948, when the Communist regime in Yugoslavia (which had been imposed on Serbia with British arms in 1944), was the spearhead of the Communist attack on the West. Then the breach between Belgrade and Moscow happened and for the next forty years socialist Yugoslavia was the darling of the West—and the fact that it still made some empty pretensions towards being Communist was seen as positively advantageous to Western interests.

Then came the collapse of the Soviet enemy, who had saved us from Hitler, and the autarkic market system in Yugoslavia was immediately described as Stalinist and was marked down for destruction.

Yugoslavia was in 1989 the most open, the most Western and the most economically prosperous country in Eastern Europe, as Iraq was in the Arab world. Both have now been all but destroyed by the West.

A few months ago Jeremy Paxman introduced an item on Indonesia in *Newsnight* with a reference to "that old thug Suharto". Being burdened with memory we recall when General Suharto was a distinguished statesman in the cause of freedom. He saved civilisation in South East Asia in 1965 by killing a million Communists—or was it two million? Or when one gets into seven figures does it matter what the exact total is?

What did General Suharto do in the mid-1990s to get himself reduced from saviour of civilisation to thug? Nothing that he had not been doing ever since 1965—operating a capitalist economy that was not wide open to Euro-American capital investment, and that was therefore judged to be corrupt. The skids were there put under him by the 'money

markets' and the Anglo-American propaganda apparatus.

There are exceptions to the absence of memory across the great divide of 1990. New Labourites occasionally remember things that they said—slogans that they uttered—when they were old Labour. It was routine for them in the old days to protest about goings-on in Indonesia and Iraq. George Robertson, for example, remembered protesting about the Iraqi gas-bombing of Kurds and that gave him the moral stomach for maintaining the sanctions which have resulted in the death of half a million children. Gwynneth Dunwoody is another.

But this is the remembering of jackals.

Amnesty International came in from the cold in the autumn of 1990 by issuing a report on Iraq which contributed significantly to the propaganda preparation for the bombing. It must now be regarded as part of the established order.

Revitalised Imperialism not only has the Left in tow but is largely conducted by the Left. But it was ever so. Imperialism would have found the going very hard indeed if it had been unable to feed on the Left. Cecil Rhodes tapped the radical impulse around 1890. The Suffragettes called off their own campaign when war was declared on Germany in 1914 and began hounding young men into the Army. The Fabians were Imperialists, so is it anything new in the world when Clare Short reveals that the democratisation of the world has been accomplished in the form of the World Trade Organisation?

In the days when Imperialism called itself Imperialism, the object of the Imperial state was to commandeer for its own population the resources of other countries. It was a precondition of doing this by means of 'free exchanges' that these countries should be dominated militarily and then browbeaten ideologically. What progress meant in effect for those countries was that they should discard ways of living that had satisfied them for centuries, or millennia, and accept it as a moral obligation that they should supply cheap goods as required by the Imperial centres of capitalism.

The word 'Imperialism' is no longer in fashion, but the kind of activity that then called itself Imperialism goes on more intensively than ever. It does not

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now go under an honest name. It prefers euphemisms. (When Professor Fred Halliday of the LSE went imperialist in the early nineties he called it 'ethical universalism'.)

The compulsory system of unobstructed, universal exchange can be called a free trade system because of the welter of ambiguities lurking under the word 'free'. The words 'free trade' could mean either unobstructed trade or trade willingly entered into by all parties as the preferred alternative to another viable course of action. The reality of the system that is called 'free trade' is of course that a great many of the parties to it have been forcibly deprived of the possibility of not engaging in it. They have been compelled not to obstruct it, and so the trade is free because they are not.

There was a time when free trade

Concluded on back page

Gwydion M. Williams

## Notes on the News

### A Fate Worse Than Blair

The year 2001 will see an election that New Labour should win easily. In the end it will be the thought of the alternative that gives Tony Blair his second term.

Hague immediately caters to every bad habit or ill-tempered and short-sighted reaction by the voters. Blair is less than pure on this score, but Hague the Vaguely Racist is worse.

Meanwhile, 'nice' Michael Portillo is anxious to relieve the rich of the burden of only having an income a little above the growth of the society. He would like to see them—his own stratum of upwardly-mobile self-centred characters—pigging out on the entire increase in wealth as has happened in the USA since the 1970s. Only Hague keeps messing it up for him, since these upwardly-mobile self-centred characters are also suspicious of anything that sounds like a return to old-fashioned morality.

I doubt if Britons would ever be dopey enough to allow themselves to be treated as the working mainstream has been treated in the USA, regardless. Some Britons still take a slightly deferential attitude towards inherited titles, but very few have the servile admiration for the rich that has messed up the USA.

### One Nation—And It's Essex!

Tory talk of 'one nation' used to mean an acceptance of different traditions. There was a time when Scottish Tories included substantial ministers and prime ministers. All it means now is that they do not recognise other traditions as valid. That their own tradition should be the core and the strongest element is not enough. These characters have such a view of their own

superiority that there is no such thing as 'enough' in their eyes.

Under Thatcher the vision was not British, or even English, but a kind of Greater Essex, though many born and bred in Essex would reject it. Support beyond Greater Essex faded, it became hard to find a Secretary of State for Scotland who would pass muster. In the case of Wales they finally concluded that a substantial English Tory would be less of an insult.

That was under Thatcher. These days, do they even have enough ministerially competent English people to form a reputable government?

### Domefathers

It is said that revolutions devour their own children—leave the leaders of the first stage stranded by the tide of history. And so it has been with Thatcherism. Heseltine, etc., are slow to abandon Hague because they are more offended by the risks of right-wing populism than by the ideas themselves.

Heseltine should also be credited as the Domefather. He kept it alive when it could and should have been quietly killed. So I'd like to commemorate him and the recent Tory conference as follows:

In London lands did Haughty Mike  
A clueless pleasure-dome decree  
So miles and miles of browned-off  
land  
Were girdled round with plastic  
dress—  
The public stayed away.

But lol! that vast pretentious media  
circus  
That danced with glibness for the  
camera  
And flung up momentarily some pints

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of lager.

Behold the savage Shadow Home-Secretarix

And truckers wailing for some cheaper diesel!

Damn the cursed euro thrice  
And close your eyes to common needs

For they of hashish much have smoked

And lost the touch of common-sense.

### Fuel Fools

On the matter of the truckers, they could have used the floods as an excuse to postpone the protest to the New Year, if they'd been clever. Instead, they acted like typical truckers, in the spirit of the



juggernaut, and deservedly lost.

In a sense, they are victims of Thatcherism, which led lots of ordinary people to abandon the security of collective action in the belief that fortunes were the easy reward of private enterprise. "The main problem facing the road haulage industry is over-capacity—too many trucks chasing too little work." (*The Economist*, 11 Nov 2000)

Farmers are another matter. They are being destroyed by a strong pound, a currency oddity which suits the money-men. Farmers are half-forgotten and, sadly, seem likely to remain so.

#### Europe in the Millennium Year

At the Nice summit France tried, and failed, to sweep the smaller nations of Europe out of the 'corridors of power'. Reducing the number of commissioners to 12 would suit Britain, France and Germany, because obviously each of them would have one of their own in an important job.

Italy, nominally one of the 'big four', does not care as much. Italian unification is relatively recent, extremely recent from an Italian perspective, where 'Naples' was originally Neopolis, New City, and is as old as Rome, still young compared to some of the cities of Sicily and South Italy that, along with Carthage, were the pioneers of city life in Western Europe. Italy seems quite ready to dissolve back into general European culture. But no one else is, not even Luxembourg.

Talk of a failure to make radical reform misses the point. Not enough people liked the actual radicalism that was on offer. So, in a democracy, things had to move gradually.

Meanwhile, Germany has acquired the substance of extra power while formally remaining just one of the big four. All four now have 29 votes, but population weighting is being done by its actual population, 99 as against 72, which makes it stronger than the UK, Ireland and Denmark put together. This also applies to seats in the European parliament, if it should ever count for anything.

Should we worry? Hardly. It is still

impossible to get anything done without building a coalition of diverse nations. And, for that matter, our own government spends a lot of time fighting social policies that would be best for most ordinary Britons.

#### Global Englishness

But shouldn't Europe be urgently changing to match US success. (Rush now, before the recession / depression starts.)

In any case, US success has been based on a dominance in information technology, where the common language is always English. Very few business people would know French, apart from those who are French. Nor did any other language have the spread or the technology. There are more native speakers of both Spanish and Standard Chinese (Mandarin), but very few Spanish who know Standard Chinese, or vice versa. Even most overseas Chinese speak Cantonese and find Standard Chinese as opaque as an English person finds German, and only began to learn it after Beijing took over Hong Kong.

Globalisation has of necessity been done through English. Also the standard software designs are mostly US, with a small number of British and very few other companies with global sales in anything important.

All computer keyboards are set to write English plus those symbols commonly used by business in the USA. Even the British pound sign can be obscure or absent, and can turn into something else if you move text from one computer to another.

The nearest to a common computer system for text is ASCII—the A stands for American, naturally. It has no consistent rules for the accent-marks used by most European languages, what works on the Apple Mac may turn into gibberish when translated onto a PC.

Likewise, the logic of the standard tools like Microsoft Outlook is based on US practice, and then stretched a little for other cultures.

Not to mention industrial espionage. There has been a 'military-industrial complex' since World War Two, if not

before, and data gathered for other purposes can easily be given or sold to businesses, usually businesses in the spy's own country. The 'military-industrial complex' funded a lot of computer technology, including the micro-processor and the early versions of the Internet. Britain's Prestel and France's Mintel had the same idea rather earlier, but Prestel died from neglect and indecision, while Mintel remains resolutely French and not accessible to the rest of the world.

Despite all this, the USA's growth in terms of GNP has been barely different in the period 1950-1975 and 1975-2000. The same is true of Britain. If Thatcherism changed anything, it was our view of ourselves, our sense of having a role in the world after the Empire was gone. And of course Western Europe has slowed to US levels of growth in the period 1975-2000, and Japan has been persuaded to 'liberalise' its successful economy into stagnation and crisis. China is catching up fast but still very poor, and for now it is called 'capitalist' even though it is far more state-regulated than Western Europe ever was in its successful recovery and growth in the period 1950-1975.

#### Mid-Atlantic Internet Bubble Blues

Unlike France's Mintel, the Internet is deeply insecure. It does not pay to shop around, because your dot-com supplier may be a front for crooks, or may be on the verge of bankruptcy. Or a discontented employee may run off with your private data and sell it to the highest bidder.

There is also the problem of delivery. A lot of the people who'd naturally be first with the new technology also live alone or are in a household where everyone works, so it becomes rather less convenient than going to an old-fashion bricks-and-mortar shop, more and more of which are now open out of office hours.

The same applies to business-to-business selling, you are much better going to an existing and trustworthy supplier. So a lot of the splendid schemes that investors thought would make them a fortune have proved complete duds.

I am reminded of the South-Sea Bubble, (a slavery-based speculation) which was a blip in a developing British economy of the 1720s. Britain was lucky that power then passed Sir Robert Walpole. He had the advantage of having no strong principles. Therefore he did not close down the economy in the interests of a balanced budget, as the 'financially correct' governments did in the 1930s, ever keen to balance the budget and make life easier for the rich.

(Note, incidentally, that Hitler's initial advantage was that he had no principles or beliefs on economics, and thus was ready to ignore the rules. This gave him the power to realise his principles and beliefs on other matters. Also, it was not inflation that gave him power. Hitler's 'Munich Putsch' during Germany's chronic inflation failed. It was unemployment that was the killer, no one respected liberal principles when they led to the obvious lunacy of people in need and good workers unable to find work.)

In the present-day world, the Internet is a wonderful system for the free distribution of information. Payment is a burden on it, whereas tax and subsidies would be fine. This could be done by the same system as libraries use: free to the public, but a payment by use to authors. And software could catch someone repeatedly logging on for their own book, etc., with much less danger of fraud and distortion than market-based systems.

Maybe British socialism is dead, but some sort of global socialism is the only way to get the Internet providing a really useful service.

#### Naked Woman Found In Bed Beside Her Husband

The above is not exactly news, but it grabbed your attention, didn't it. And while the professional aspects of the Internet are mostly supported by advertising, it's the sort of misleading rubbish that tends to get on the various competing services.

Meanwhile, you have BBC Online, criticised for being supported out of licence fees, and also for being dull. And a splendid source of useful news,

laid out quite nicely. Headlines are honest, and do not promising more than they actually deliver.

#### ICANN Says You Can't (Officially)

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is supposed to make Internet names more useful and rational, an addition to the .com or .uk you see at the end of internet names. But after long contemplation, it turned down any number of sensible proposals, including one for .sex or .xxx to define and limit pornography—get it neatly to those who want it and are entitled to have it, make it easy to block the rest.

ICANN cited the supposed difficulty in definition. I can't see that the problem of defining sex is any harder than defining the difference between a business (.biz), a professional (.pro) and an individual (.name)? The same person could be all three, I'd imagine that some professional ladies of the night will opt for (.pro) when it becomes available, but of course Sally.pro might equally be a clothes shop or a shipping line, or a celibate accountant called Sally.

Everything is kept muddled, subversive and dominated by commercial values. And this is related to the general confusion over freedom in the modern world.

There are very few people who will say they are against 'freedom'. And even fewer who would allow everything that some other people might genuinely see as an essential freedom.

People who claim to be 'for freedom' without any qualifications have actually 'loaded the dice', put their qualifications and limits on what they will call freedom. Excluding things some people will call freedom, even sometimes what most people would call freedom, only these characters 'know' that freedom isn't really like that.

#### Tibetan Freedoms

Historic opportunities of a Buddhist-Marxist synthesis were lost with the decades-long conflict between Tibet and Beijing.

Tibet, please note, was never officially recognised as independent by any qualified international body. Tibet's inclusion with China goes back to before the days of Kubilai Khan. And almost any Chinese government would have had to do something about some aspects of Tibetan culture. Consider the following:

"As a pretty 10-year-old, he had been plucked from a remote village .. to join the Dalai Lama's dancing troupe... helped by the senior monk who, as was customary, kept Tashi as a drombo, or sexual partner. Yet Tashi was free to fall in love with a noble woman who bore them a son. Only his lowly background prevented their marriage...

"China was determined to break the stranglehold of Tibet's aristocratic and monastic estates, which terrorised their serf tenants with violence in this world, and the torments of the damned in the next." ('Enter the Dragon', 10th October 2000, *Independent*)

Buddhist monks are supposed to be celibate, incidentally. That is a common factor in all branches of Buddhism—some of which have been separate since before the advent of Christianity.

#### News Flash

Police became very confused after several large posters saying 'BANG' were found fly-posted in London streets. Responsibility was later claimed by the Surreal IRA

#### Weaving The Web.

You can find the Bevin Society at <http://members.aol.com/BevinSoc/is.htm>

### *The Heresiarch*

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£3 per issue

15 Haywood Avenue, Belfast  
BT7 3EU



## Cuba's Olympian Health Record

David Morrison

The accepted wisdom is that Britain had the most successful Olympic Games since 1920, winning 11 Gold medals, 10 Silver and 9 Bronze and coming 10th in the international medal table. It is also the accepted wisdom that the success was due to the Lottery money spent on sport since the Atlanta games in 1996 when oarsman Steve Redgrave was Britain's sole Gold medal winner.

A conventional medal table is a biased expression of national Olympian prowess since it takes no account of national population or national economic wealth. Since it is now the accepted wisdom in Britain that spending money on sport is the passport to Olympic success, perhaps a more appropriate measure of national prowess should be medals per unit of GNP.

*The Guardian* produced such a table on 3rd October with interesting results. Giving 3 points for a gold, 2 for a silver and 1 for a bronze, then the US moves from 1st in the conventional table to 62nd with a mere 0.25 points per \$10bn of GNP, behind Britain in 54th with 0.50 points. But the winner by a street is Cuba with 33.33 points, followed by Jamaica with 12.22 and the Bahamas with 8.96, all from the Caribbean.

Even in the conventional medal table Cuba beats Britain, albeit with just 1 Bronze medal more.

### ...And In Health Care

The previous day, 2nd October, *The Guardian* contained another interesting comparison between Cuba and Britain, this time on health outcomes and costs. An article by the paper's health correspondent, Sarah Boseley contained the following interesting information:

"When Fidel Castro came to power, Cuba's mortality rates matched many other places in the developing world, with a life expectancy of 48 for men and 54 for women. Now it rivals anywhere in Europe or the US.

"Male life expectancy is 74, the

same as in the UK. Women can expect to live to 76 years old (79 in the UK) and infant mortality is 7.1 per 100,000 births—not much higher than ours.

"However, one major difference between Cuba's health statistics and ours has caught the attention of officials: here, healthcare costs £750 a head annually. In Cuba it costs £7."

According to the article:

"The NHS is turning to Cuba for inspiration on how to improve its services. Officials from the Department of Health and 100 GPs visited the Caribbean island which, despite being short of medicines and money after decades of a US-led economic embargo, manages to deliver excellent healthcare at a fraction of our cost.

"Later this month a delegation of Cuban doctors, led by Cuba's deputy health minister, will arrive in Britain to share the secrets of their success."

The Government kept remarkably quiet on this initiative. The high-powered visit to Cuba took place earlier this year. But this is the first I heard of it and there is no mention of it on the Department of Health web site. Very odd for a Government which likes to announce the most trivial initiative several times. Could it be that they were fearful of political flak for taking an interest in truly socialised health care?

And what did the fact-finding mission discover about health care in Cuba? According to the leader of the delegation, Patrick Pietroni, a dean of postgraduate general practice at London University:

"What we can learn is how they have managed to produce these healthcare statistics which are sometimes better than ours at 1% of the expenditure. They have more family doctors, who are better trained than our GPs.

"When we went to Cuba what was

so impressive were the three-storey buildings called consultorio. The ground floor was the practice, the first floor was the doctor's flat and the second floor was the nurse's flat. No Cuban lives more than 20 minutes or so from one of these.

"They also have fewer patients. Cuba has 30,000 GPs, the same number as Britain, but has only a fifth of the population. There is one family doctor per 500 to 700 people in Cuba, compared to one for 1,800 to 2,000 here.

"Cuba has 21 medical schools, but Britain has only 12. Cuba has 37,000 practice nurses. The UK, which has a shortage of all nurses, has just 10,300."

Lest readers get the impression the New Labour leopard has changed its spots, attention should be drawn to another unannounced initiative, this time from a story in *The Guardian* on 27th October. This revealed that New Labour's favourite think tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research, is undertaking a study into privatising clinical services in NHS hospitals. Doctors and nurses would no longer be employed by the NHS but by a private health care company providing clinical services at a profit.

And why not? With the growth of the PFI, other services—buildings, cleaning, catering, etc—are increasingly provided by private companies for profit. What is so special about clinical services?

After all, at the suggestion of the Conservatives, Alan Milburn has just announced a "concordat" with the private health care sector to buy in clinical services from private hospitals. This is the thin edge of very large wedge, which will end up with a large proportion of clinical services being supplied at a profit—because it can be guaranteed that demands for capital investment in NHS hospitals will be increasingly rejected in favour of buying in clinical services from the private hospitals.

And it is but a small step from that to allowing the private health sector to provide clinical services within NHS hospitals for sale to the NHS. How could anybody object? After all, many NHS hospitals are really private hospitals, owned by PFI consortia.

## Kosovo and Human Rights

# 'The Claims and Assertions by NATO About Kosovo Were Lies'

Text of a speech given by James Bisset, Canadian Ambassador to Yugoslavia 1990-92, to the Canadian Hellenic Federation, May 2000

I am grateful to the Hellenic Canadian Foundation of Ontario for the invitation to speak at this conference. I fully support the objectives of the conference and agree that it is important to get at the truth about the tragic events involving violations of human rights. It is a particularly important topic for Canadians because as the conference organizers have emphasized, concern about human rights has become a corner stone of Canada's foreign policy. Our Foreign Minister talks about the need to give pre-eminence to human security as opposed to the traditional respect for the principle of state sovereignty.

The debate about whether concern for human rights should override sovereignty is topical and ongoing. We will be hearing much about this issue in the months and years ahead. The horror of mass killings in Rwanda has given impetus to those who believe the civilized world cannot simply stand by as dispassionate observers when genocide is taking place. On the other hand, intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state cannot be undertaken lightly.

There is always the danger that the human rights argument may only be an excuse to justify intervention for other quite cynical motives. We recall Hitler's justification for invading Czechoslovakia was because he claimed the Czechs were violating the human rights of the Sudeten Germans. The long and frequently sad history of Western intervention in the Balkans should also serve as a warning about the dangers of taking sides in internal disputes. The NATO military misadventure in Kosovo that has destabilized the Balkans and shaken the framework of international security is another more recent example that calls

into question the validity of so-called humanitarian intervention.

One year ago as NATO aircraft were bombing Yugoslavia. I was in Winnipeg attending a rally at the University of Winnipeg speaking out against the war. Now almost a year after the bombing has ceased and the war has been brought to an uncertain conclusion, we are beginning to find out more about the truth of this war. A war, we were told, that was being fought for human rights.

NATO's military intervention in Yugoslavia was justified on the grounds that the human rights of ethnic Albanians were being violated by the Yugoslav military authorities. We were told that large-scale atrocities were being carried out in Kosovo. Some of the NATO leaders charged that genocide was taking place in that Serbian Province. United States Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, suggested that more than 100,000 Albanian Kosovars may have been murdered. We were also told that massive ethnic cleansing was under way and that the Serbian Government had long-range plans to remove all of the Albanian population from Kosovo.

We were confronted with daily atrocity stories in our media, of massacres taking place, of young Albanian men being rounded up and taken away, of rape and pillage occurring on a massive and systematic scale. Indeed, what United States Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, described as the "galvanizing event" for NATO military action was the alleged massacre of 45 Albanian Kosovars in the village of Racak in January 1999. *The New York Times* wrote in an article dated April 18th of that year, that the Racak massacre was a "turning point" in NATO's road to

war.

Later, as the bombing campaign was stepped up and thousands of Albanians were being driven out of Kosovo by Serbian security forces, it became evident that the bombing had not stopped ethnic cleansing, but on the contrary had intensified it. To convince the public that this was not the case, NATO spokespeople began to talk about "Operation Horseshoe". This, we were told, was a secret, long-range plan of ethnic cleansing by Serbian forces to rid Kosovo of its Albanian population. A diabolical scheme arranged and planned long before the bombing took place.

The German Defense Minister, Rudolph Scharping, announced that the details of "Operation Horseshoe" had been uncovered by German intelligence intercepts. The revelation of this alleged plan was used effectively by NATO to support the bombing of Yugoslavia. Canadian Foreign Affairs spokespeople made frequent references to "Operation Horseshoe" as justification of the NATO military intervention.

Proclaiming a major victory after the war, NATO military spokespeople boasted of dealing the Serbian war machine a crippling defeat. The high-altitude bombing had, according to NATO, successfully destroyed one third of the Serbian armor and one half of the artillery. The Kosovo war was hailed as an example of how air power alone could achieve victory. Even the British military expert John Keegan was convinced that Kosovo had proven "a war can be won by air power alone".

The problem with these assertions and claims by NATO is that they were lies.



According to NATO's own estimates there were approximately 2000 people killed in Kosovo before the bombing took place [this figure includes Serbs and Albanians]. After the bombing estimates are that close to 10,000 people were killed—although far fewer actual bodies have been found. Nevertheless, 2000 casualties on both sides during a civil war do not constitute genocide.

The so-called Racak massacre, which was a key issue for NATO apologists, had been from the outset, challenged by French journalists who were on the ground when the alleged incident supposedly took place. More recently German investigative reporters for the Berlin *Zeitung* have charged on March 24th this year, that the autopsy reports, to which they gained access, showed no evidence of an execution scenario. It appeared the victims had been killed in combat and later placed in a ditch to simulate an execution. There is a strong suspicion that the US General William Walker, in collaboration with the KLA, may have had a part to play in staging this incident.

We now know, as a result of the disclosure of the German General Heinz Loquai, that "Operation Horseshoe" was a complete falsehood engineered by the German Defense Minister to swing public opinion in favor of the bombing. There is absolutely no evidence that the Serbs were planning to drive out all of the Albanian population from Kosovo prior to the NATO bombing campaign. *The Sunday Times* of London exposed this scandal on April 2nd of this year. It is interesting that despite this being a major story in Germany and a matter of debate in the German parliament there has been no coverage of the story in the Canadian media.

The current issue of *Newsweek* magazine [May 15th] has reported on the basis of a suppressed US airforce report that the number of military targets destroyed by NATO air strikes during the bombing, "was a tiny fraction of those claimed". *Newsweek* reported there were 14 tanks hit not 120; 17 armored personnel carriers, not 220; 20 artillery pieces, and not 450. The suppressed report stated there were only 58 confirmed strikes by NATO pilots and not the 744 previously claimed by NATO spokespeople.

I regret to say that I fully expect more lies and falsehoods about Kosovo will be revealed as time goes by. We haven't had the full story yet by any stretch of the imagination. What was the extent of German and United States assistance both militarily and financial to the KLA? When was it decided that the civilian infrastructure of Yugoslavia had to be destroyed because the military targets could not be seriously damaged from a height of 15000 ft?

What were the real reasons for the attack on Yugoslavia? Why was there no serious attempt to negotiate with the Serbian side at Rambouillet? And why did NATO finally agree to drop their original insistence that a referendum on autonomy be held in Kosovo? Why did NATO make other substantial concessions to the Serbs after bombing them for 78 days? In time we will probably get the answers to these and other questions, but it will be after the fact and after the damage has been done.

What is one to make of all this? Well, one thing is certain it demonstrates pretty clearly that we cannot trust our political leaders to tell us the truth. This may not come as a total surprise to many of you who have already had some experience with the political process. Nevertheless it is not a comforting thought. It is particularly distressing when we are talking about serious issues when matters of life and death; war or peace and the destruction of modern states; are at stake.

In the case of Canada and some of the other smaller NATO members it may well be that these countries themselves were at the beginning misled and misinformed. This cannot, however, be an excuse and we must not forget that the Canadian Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Defense stoutly defended the NATO action. These same Ministers make no apology for sending the Canadian armed forces to war against a sovereign state and former ally in two world wars. Nor have they as yet expressed any misgivings that for the first time since the founding of the United Nations Canadian armed forces were engaged in a military action not authorized by that body and in direct violation of its Charter.

To the credit of Greece, despite its membership in NATO, its Government refused to take part in any of the military actions against Serbia. The people of Greece from the outset of the bombing made abundantly clear their adamant opposition to the war. This is not the first time in history that Greece has adopted a courageous and heroic stand in the interests of truth.

The Kosovo war also reveals another disturbing characteristic. That is the ease with which the main stream media accepted, and indeed supported without serious question, the NATO military action. None of the major Canadian newspapers or TV networks, to my knowledge, expressed concern about the legality of the bombing and—more alarmingly—seemed almost eager to accept and condone the massive bombing of civilian targets in Yugoslavia. All of the atrocity stories related by Albanian Kosovars were accepted at face value and few questioned the canned news stories manufactured by the NATO public relations machine.

Some of the reason for this extraordinary media subservience can be explained by the secretive nature of the NATO decision-making process and an all-too-willingness to assume that everything that NATO spokespeople like Jamie Shea told them was the truth. As one critic has suggested, the military approach to media relations can be summed up by the slogan, "tell them nothing until its over and then tell them who won". Nevertheless, I suspect the paramount reason explaining the reluctance of the media to question NATO aggression was because of a natural hesitancy to challenge a war that allegedly was being fought for humanitarian reasons.

Herein lies the danger of the new human rights dogma. In an age of political correctness there are few that are prepared to challenge the appropriateness of bombing people especially if the bombing is for humanitarian purposes. The Progressive Conservative defense critic in the Canadian House of Commons on the opening day of the attack against Yugoslavia dared to question the validity of the bombing only to have his leader, Joe Clark, repudiate him the following day. Later the unfortunate man was removed as the defense critic; so much

for even daring to question a war fought for the safeguarding of human rights! Needless to say there was no debate in the Canadian Parliament about the NATO decision to send Canadian armed forces to war. The Government was not questioned about the legality of the NATO attack or the appropriateness of taking such action without UN approval.

Perhaps the most perplexing question about the NATO action against Yugoslavia is why? Why the deep concern about the natural attempts by Serbia to suppress an armed rebellion that was rapidly developing into a full-scale civil war? There were many more appropriate targets if the concern was truly about human rights violations.

It is estimated that over three million Kurds have been dispossessed and over 30,000 killed by Turkish military forces. This is a human rights issue that makes Kosovo appear rather inconsequential in comparison. Our NATO leaders seem unconcerned about the human rights of the Kurds.

What about East Timor where for almost 25 years the human rights of the East Timorese were being violated by President Suharto's military forces using British aircraft and weapons. It is estimated that the Indonesian forces killed 200,000 East Timorese before finally last year a peaceful settlement was negotiated.

Why so little concern about the plight of the Iraqi children suffering as a result of the American and British led sanctions against that country? Two successive United Nations assistants under secretaries general have resigned in protest against the embargo. One of these, Hans von Sponeck, in addressing a public meeting this month in London stated that half a million children have died as a direct result of the sanctions and one out of every five children in Iraq go hungry. Nobody seems to care.

We have witnessed the reaction of our Western democratic leaders to the frightful humanitarian tragedy in Sierra Leone. Thousands killed and many more maimed by the drug crazed youths of the rebel army. There has been no rush to prevent human rights abuses in Sierra Leone.

Indeed it was the United States Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, who led a Western imposed peace settlement in that ravaged country that called for the sharing of power with the rebel leader, Foday Sankoh, the man chiefly responsible for the carnage. This is the same Madeleine Albright who when asked if she thought the sanctions against Iraq were worth the lives of so many Iraqi children replied in the affirmative.

And so it goes, the list is a long one. Obviously the Western democratic leaders are selective about their human rights concerns. There was no suggestion of intervention in Chechnya another example of human rights violations on a scale that made Kosovo look like a picnic.

Canada's Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy would in all likelihood answer to this charge of inconsistency as he did in a speech last February at the New York University School of Law by saying, "for those who criticize humanitarian intervention on the grounds that it is inconsistently employed, I would ask: if the international community cannot intervene everywhere, does that mean we must not intervene anywhere?"

Surely this is too convenient and facile an answer. If there is to be any sense at all in the structure of international security there must be some degree of consistency and criteria to determine when intervention in a sovereign state is warranted. What exactly are the new ground rules for humanitarian intervention? These, to my knowledge, have never been spelled out except in the vaguest of terms. The human security agenda deals in abstractions and generalities. It sounds great but so far has fallen far short of becoming a realistic formula for international action.

In contrast, we do know what the rules are now. The founders of the United Nations established them.

They demand Security Council authority before armed intervention can be taken against a sovereign state. If Security Council authority is blocked by the veto power of one of the great powers then it is still possible to go to the General Assembly where a two-thirds vote would be sufficient to permit intervention.

Mr Axworthy, our Foreign Minister

has complained that the Security Council does not always respond to the challenges posed by the new human security threats. I would suggest if he is referring to Kosovo then there might be more than arguable grounds for believing the Security Council would have every right to contest this intervention.

Nevertheless, the point is that NATO didn't bother even approaching the Security Council before bombing Yugoslavia. Nor did our NATO leaders choose to approach the General Assembly of the United Nations for authorization. The bombing of Yugoslavia was an illegal act, contrary to every precept of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Quite a part from all the other serious implications of the NATO strike against Yugoslavia the trampling on the United Nations Charter is perhaps the most serious.

Having totally ignored the United Nations Charter it is curious to find that our NATO leaders place so much reverence on some of the subsidiary organs of the UN. The International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda receive lavish praise from NATO leaders. So far every attempt by international lawyers to get the Tribunal in the Hague to consider charges against NATO leaders for the most serious crime on the UN books; namely waging war, has met with no success.

This begs the question of who are the real war criminals. During my period in Yugoslavia as the Canadian Ambassador I witnessed how time and time again it was interference from the Western powers that did little to bring a non-violent and diplomatic solution to the problems of Yugoslavia. On the contrary, Western involvement complicated an already complex problem and ensured that a peaceful settlement among the several parties became impossible. American and Western European policy driven by selfish domestic issues contributed directly to the bloodshed and violence that tore the Yugoslav Federation apart.

As Yugoslavia began to experience the first signs of disintegration the United States policy of indifference and later ambiguity encouraged the extremists on



all sides and undermined the authority of the central government. I was in Belgrade when US Secretary of State, James Baker assured the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Anton Marcovic, that if the Slovenes attempted to break away from the Federation by illegal means then the Yugoslav army could be used to prevent secession. A few days later this is what happened but the United States then quickly withdrew its support for unity. The West abandoned the many thousands of Yugoslavs of different ethnic or religious persuasion who believed in a united Yugoslavia. The playing field was left to the extremists and those who wished to separate.

Later, as many thousands of Bosnians marched for peace fearing the inevitable blood bath of civil war, a peace settlement seemed to have been reached through the skilful negotiations of the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Jose Cutileiro. The so-called, Lisbon Agreement, of March 1992 held out the last hope that the three religious groups in Bosnia might live peacefully together. It was not to be. The United States dispatched its Ambassador from Belgrade to Sarajevo, who encouraged the Muslim leader, Alija Izetbegovic to withdraw his signature from the agreement he had signed along with his Serbian and Croatian counterparts. This US intervention guaranteed civil war in Bosnia and the death and displacement of thousands of people.

After the fighting broke out in Bosnia it was the United States that undermined every subsequent peace initiative that might have brought an end to the killing. The Vance/Owen and later the Owen/Stoltenberg peace plans were both subverted by the Americans so that the fighting was prolonged. Moreover, it was the United States that violated the arms embargo by providing arms and training to the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats. It appeared that the United States was determined to pursue a policy that prevented a resolution of the conflict by other than violent means.

The Americans were not alone. Germany's determination to reassert its dominance in the Balkans led it to encourage and support Slovene and Croatian independence. Chancellor Kohl's insistence that Slovenia and Croatia be recognized as independent

states was the death sentence for Yugoslavia. Sadly it was also the death sentence for many thousands of Serbs and Croats.

Given the horrors experienced by the Serbian minority in Croatia during the Ustashi terror of the Second World War it was a certainty that without some guarantees of their civil and human rights the Serbian minority would take up arms to prevent being cut off from their Serbian brothers in Serbia and Bosnia. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the West's new found obsession with human rights no Western leader gave a moment's consideration to the human rights of the Serbian minority that at that time made up 12% of the population.

It is ironic that there has been no acknowledgement of Western culpability for the bloodshed in the former Yugoslavia. Instead we in the West have with pious self-righteousness condemned ethnic cleansing and murders. We have singled out the Serbs as the villains. Early in the conflict CNN and the Western media gave them the bad guy label. They have never been able to shake that image. Terrible things did take place in the wars that accompanied the disintegration of Yugoslavia but it is simplistic and wrong to blame only the Serbs. If there are war criminals in Yugoslavia and I have no doubt there are then those responsible for creating the conditions for violence and bloodshed are equally guilty. If not guilty directly then certainly guilty as accessories. I am referring here to the Western leaders who are as responsible for the killing as are those wielding the weapons.

It is because of my experience in Yugoslavia that I am cautious about the so-called new human security agenda. Those who champion human rights frequently do so for the wrong reasons. Very often there is a hidden agenda that has little to do with human rights. As we have also seen there is always selectivity to human rights intervention and the choices made are not always altruistic in nature. Furthermore, more often than not, the intervention does more harm than good. This has been particularly so in Kosovo.

The NATO intervention, ostensibly for humanitarian reasons, ended up

creating a human rights catastrophe. In every respect it has been a disaster. NATO's action has convinced the two other great powers, China and Russia, that the West cannot be trusted. Even more serious, the high moral ground that had been a proud feature of the Western democracies has been abandoned. We have shown ourselves to be no better than our former communist adversaries and quite prepared to use violence and force to gain our ends. Prepared as well to wrap these ends in the cloak of high purpose and humanitarian principle.

The long-range implications of the Kosovo fiasco are far-reaching and ominous. In the short term the destabilization of the Balkans caused by the war may mean a return to violence and bloodshed. Albanian dreams of uniting all of their people in one territory have been given solid encouragement by the support given to them in their struggle for Kosovo. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia could well become the next powder keg. The Albanians there are winning the battle of the cradle and already there are increasingly vocal demands for self-determination and possible secession. The north-west region of Greece provides another potential trouble spot and is shown on Albanian maps as a part of greater Albania. The southern region of Serbia bordering on Kosovo has already come under pressure from Albanian armed bands.

Serbia itself has been crippled economically and psychologically by the Yugoslav wars; especially by the Kosovo experience. Embittered and rejected by the Western democracies it is festering with bitterness and hostility. Encumbered by a Government increasingly isolated from its people and desperate to remain in power by any means, the country is ripe for civil war. Its army remains one of the strongest in Europe. Should relations with Montenegro deteriorate further or should a provocation be arranged we could see another outbreak of conflict with all of the terrible consequences of internecine struggle.

Are there lessons to be learned from all of this? One might hope that we become more reluctant to accept without question those who advocate using force to protect the human rights of people

claiming to be oppressed. A healthy skepticism in this regard would be desirable. If intervention in a sovereign state is necessary let it be done through the authority of the United Nations for although it is imperfect it is the only world body that is designed to maintain international peace and security. We must stand by it and strengthen it.

Let us also accept the reality that those who claim to be fighting for self-determination are really fighting for territory. The one is intrinsically bound up with the other. President Havel of the Czech Republic might say to the Canadian Parliament that Kosovo was the only war fought for human values rather than territory but he was wrong. In the final analysis Kosovo was about territory and who should occupy it—Serbs or Albanians. That struggle is not yet settled.

One might also suggest that the Kosovo experience should teach us to stay out of civil wars or if we cannot stay out then at the very least let us not take sides unless our own vital interests are at stake. We can play a role and do our best to bring the two sides together so the issue might be settled peacefully but let's not again become militarily involved in this type of conflict. We should also send a warning to all those who decide to take up arms and use violence to achieve their independence that the choice is theirs to make but it precludes them from our assistance. Having chosen violence they must expect it in return.

Finally, I would hope that Kosovo has taught us to be more demanding of our political leaders. It is not good enough for Canadians to find themselves at war without the people of Canada or the Canadian Parliament having anything at all to say about it. Our leaders decided to send our armed forces to bomb another people with whom we had no quarrel and for reasons that do not stand up to even a cursory examination. Canada has gained nothing from the Kosovo adventure. We have lost much. Our Foreign Minister has demanded reform of the United Nations and rightly so but a similar demand for reform of NATO might be of more immediate value and be given a higher priority.

(See also No 98: "Nato Corrupted")

## Hague Winds Up the Conservatives In Northern Ireland

Andrew Bryson

There was an interesting moment the other day on Jeremy Paxman's Monday morning discussion programme on Radio Four. The speakers included Ronan Bennett, the first episode of whose drama series, *Rebel Heart*, had been shown the night before (the drama deals with Irish nationalist history from the Easter Rising to the end of the War of Independence in 1921). Mr Paxman's guests were talking about the state of modern Ireland and how different it is from what is implied by the term 'Sinn Fein', which, as Mr Bennett pointed out, means 'we ourselves' and not 'ourselves alone', and do not imply any kind of isolationism from the rest of the world. The speakers agreed that Ireland was a very outward-looking country nowadays, what with its very positive relationship to the EU and its general prosperity.

But Bennett then remarked that this outward-lookingness did not apply to the 800,000-strong Northern unionist minority in Ireland. There was a pause, followed by Jeremy Paxman's 'look here...' tone in what had been up till then a relaxed and amiable discussion. He pointed out that of course the unionists were a majority in the North and, without quite getting around to saying it, made noises to the effect that Mr Bennett's attitude was unfair to unionists. Another pause, in which Bennett said, sweetly, that he would be interested to hear alternative views on the question. Silence. Paxman then quickly steered the discussion on in a different direction. It would indeed have been interesting to hear arguments refuting Bennett's view. Obviously Paxman couldn't think of any, and no one else stuck their neck out. So was Bennett right?

Clearly, nationalists in Northern Ireland are outward-looking in the sense that they want out. Out, and into a united Ireland. Theoretically, unionists look out towards Britain. Back in the 1980s

there was a reasonably high-profile campaign to provide Northern Ireland with the means to be outward-looking in political terms. It was a campaign to get the main parties, Labour and the Conservatives, to organise in Northern Ireland, so as to provide an alternative to the inward-looking, sectarian politics the province had been left with in consequence of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act—the Stormont regime imposed (against Carson's wishes) by Westminster's 'hard faced men who looked as if they had done well out of the War'.

Some readers will be familiar with the thinking behind this campaign which, in the end, was faced down by Labour and finessed by the Conservatives (a process still going on, as we shall see in a moment). It failed because the Unionist politicians in Northern Ireland acted at strategic moments to make it fail—quite deliberately, and in full understanding of what was at stake. The Protestant population at large took their cue from their Stormont-conditioned political leaders, and did not come out and put real pressure on the Labour and Conservative parties to organise. I have no doubt at all that the thing could have succeeded. The leaderships of the British parties were in a shockingly vulnerable position on the issue. There was simply no respectable argument they could muster against the idea that it was wrong in principle—as well in terms of practical governance—to deny a region of the country the ability to participate in the party politics of the state by denying the region access to the parties of government and opposition. (The most memorable statement of the shameful Whitehall consensus was perhaps that of Sir Nicholas Scott, then a junior minister at the NIO, who wrote in a *Daily Telegraph* article that "Northern Ireland is different and must be governed differently".)

In the course of the campaign there



was an effort to get publicity in the media for what was being done, and, in particular, coverage of the various efforts at the conferences of the Labour and Conservative parties. Any campaign tries to become news, and that means getting on to Jeremy Paxman's *Newsnight*. Material was communicated on many occasions to the programme. But it all failed to make an impression. Paxman and his friends were not interested. The most that was ever achieved was a five minute piece on Laurence Kennedy's efforts to get the Conservatives to function in the province. I do not remember anything on *Newsnight* about the much more sustained efforts at shaming the Labour Party into organising. So at least Jeremy Paxman remains consistent on the issue. Having not given air time to those who wanted to get the politics of N. Ireland more outward-looking, Paxman at least remembers to defend the protestants from charges that they are inward-looking.

Still, Ronan Bennett was on to something. The protestants did not prove outward-looking where it mattered, namely in the realm of their political and national identity. They did not take the opportunity to be politically British when it presented itself in the form of a functional campaign. If implemented, this would have provided the catholics with the opportunity to be politically British too. The sectarian divide would in time have dissolved in political cooperation over the 'bread and butter' politics of choosing the government. But the opportunity was not taken; the protestants stuck to their old ways and reflexes and rejected the new idea of demanding to be included in the party politics of the state.

The wheel of this inward-lookingness is coming full circle. The campaign to get the British parties to organise in Northern Ireland was not an unmitigated failure. It put the professed 'Britishness' of the Ulster protestants to the test, and it forced the Conservative Party to allow Northern Ireland people to become members. Under the tutelage of the late Ian Gow (one time chief fixer to the Thatcher court, and a junior minister, who resigned from the Thatcher government following the Anglo-Irish agreement) Laurence Kennedy succeeded in setting up a number of Conservative branches in Northern

Ireland constituencies. These received sporadic recognition and occasional support from Conservative Central Office. But it did not receive consistent and effective support from the Tory high command. Rather than shame Labour over their continued boycott (even refusing membership of Labour to Ulster residents) the Tories did as little as they could get away with, having conceded the membership principle. They never made serious efforts to win Ulster seats or to build up Conservatism in the Province. It was all tokenism of a low-key kind. Now they are apparently trying to dismantle what little they did allow to be set up.

According to a report in *The Irish Times* (5th Jan) by Nicholas Watt, Conservative Central office is trying to stop the Northern Ireland Conservative Party from fighting more than three constituencies out of a possible eighteen. Michael Ancram, the dashing Tory aristocrat who doubles as Party Chairman, has told the Northern Ireland Conservative party that they should not fight in any constituency in which they are likely to lose their deposits, and will only be given Central Office support for such contests. At the last election the Tories fielded candidates in ten constituencies, and say they still intend to fight in nine constituencies despite Ancram's wishes, and presumably raising their own money. (Needless to say without backing and real determination from Central Office, the Northern Ireland Tories have fared very badly electorally.)

Nicholas Watt quotes Jonathan Lund, the Conservative vice-president in N. Ireland: "We offer a refreshing alternative to the traditional orange and green politics. This is an important time for conservatism in Northern Ireland because of the sectarian bigoted political system in the province". Against this, Watt quotes "a senior Tory" as saying that Central office has a high regard for the stalwarts of the party in the North who are seen as genuinely anti-sectarian. But the Tory source told Watt that in favour of reviving the old link between themselves and the Ulster Unionist Party, and he added that, "there is a strong feeling that whatever we do we should strengthen the position of David Trimble".

As usual, bi-partisanship and bad government will out. Tony Blair's policy on Northern Ireland is to shore up Trimble at all costs. After a ten-year period of toying with would-be Conservatives on the ground in Northern Ireland, the Tory leadership has now officially adopted the same policy. They are worried that Trimble might lose to Paisley's DUP in certain constituencies if people have the Tories as an alternative home for their votes. They are presumably thinking about the mid-Ulster bye-election last autumn, in which the Unionist David Burnside lost to the Rev William McCrea of the DUP.

Watt says, with considerable hyperbole, "The decision by the Tory leadership to wind down its efforts in the North has dismayed local members who were welcomed into the party 10 years ago after a lengthy campaign. In the 1990s, the leadership hailed its Northern Ireland members as a sign of the party's commitment to the Union, in contrast to the Labour party which refuses to organise there." In reality the Tories were never genuinely committed either to winning seats or to democratic principle in Northern Ireland. They were simply having it both ways and biding their time to see how things turned out.

Well, now we know how they have turned out. The Ulster Unionists are reduced to living off the patronage of both the British parties, and are respected by neither. Their leader, David Trimble, is always having to be shored up—against everybody in sight, and by everybody in sight. Against Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness—naturally. This is largely done by Peter Mandelson. In the mid Ulster bye-election the Trimble candidate, David Burnside, was supported (and the Paisleyite candidate opposed) by everyone from Andrew Mackay, the Tory shadow spokesman, to Eoghan Harris (ex-official IRA), John Lloyd of the New Statesman, *The Daily Telegraph*, Professor Paul Bew, etc, etc. But on a day to day basis, he has to be shored up against Jeffrey Donaldson and his followers in the Unionist Party itself.

Jeffrey Donaldson is in a way a symbol of the condition which Ronan Bennett put his finger on. When the Campaign for Equal Citizenship was at

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## Asocialism and Sub-Americanisation

Gwydion M. Williams

Old Labour was dead in the water when it stopped talking about 'denationalisation' and accepted the new and meaningless 'privatisation'.

Likewise, the unquestioned use of terms like 'free markets' and 'globalisation', even by bitter critics of such things, puts the terms of the argument well away from the reality of what is happening. You appear an impractical opponent of necessary change.

A lot of Old Labour were just that. Yet they were not always so: the re-balancing of the global economy after the Second World War was realistic and successful. Whereas the 'realism' of the New Right is neither realistic nor justified by events.

The Keynesian system set up after World War Two was real and serious modernisation. The old order had little appeal to those who remembered it. So a partial return to it has to be described as 'modern' and 'reforming'. Or made necessary by 'globalism'.

Globalism would a proper term if the project was the building of a Wellsian world state. This is not on offer, nor are the prospects good for the moderated democratised version that the UN was intended to be.

And 'free markets'? Markets have historically been 'free' only in the sense that the strongest can freely use their superior wealth to grow still richer: the rights of money, set against human welfare. A step down from the Keynesian system that paid careful attention to when the West rebuilt itself in the face of a then-popular Soviet alternative. (And remember also that Fascism had been popular, with a large part of the British

Tory party admiring Hitler until he became a threat to British imperial power.)

We are also told that 'Free markets' are the alternative to European and East Asian 'social markets'. The main protestors against the process needlessly concede half the battle just by using such terms. All markets are social, relying for their existence not just on people, but also people trained to a very particular set of habits.

Economists believe that a truly asocial market would be harmonious and perfect. Why?

Normally the gurus of the New Right get this conclusion by just assuming it, and then claiming it as a result of their analysis. If you assume a capitalist utopia, you have the assumption of a capitalist utopia which you can then cling to as proven in the face of any amount of contrary evidence.

They claim market-orientated behaviour is hard-wired into our brains, citing the current successes of the West over Leninism. One could with as much logic claim that English is hard-wired into our brains, since it is now well established as the common world language.

The social values of today's dominant elites are hailed as Darwinian and as Unchanging Human Nature. As were yesterday's values—white-male dominance. If, tomorrow, the world were to be dominated by, say, a lesbian-vegetarian elite, this too could be easily shown to be Unchanging Human Nature.

Economists from Adam Smith onwards floated theories of 'Asocialism', whereby a carefully conceived social

order imposed with savagery by rulers like Henry VIII and Oliver Cromwell is deemed 'spontaneous rationality'.

Capitalism and democratic liberty grew together in the late-18th and early-19th century, thanks to the benevolent neglect of the British state, we are told. Like hell they did! The key decades of Britain's Industrial Revolution were the 1760s to 1820s, in which an unreformed parliament elected by a minority made sure that industrialisation and agricultural reform favoured just that minority and squeezed out the voteless peasantry and workshop-artisans. And in which free speech on political issues was harassed with treason laws, which led to odd phenomena like radicals supporting the rights of George IV's unwanted, unlovely German wife as a form of protest that even English law could not call treasonable.

Economic theorists posit an infinitely large world full of identical units known as The Individual. Or sometimes The Household, it's all much of a muchness, since the human element is not there despite the reassuring names. Ties from one unit of The Individual to another are assumed to be abstract, based on coldly rational greed. Social networks based on developing mutual trust or antagonism are not allowed into the equations, they are merely the reality of business life and not allowed to corrupt the purity of analysis.

That is the theory, and it is never allowed to interfere with the practice and policies of those who put up the fund to create the 'Nobel Prize For Economics', which is quite different from the five Nobel Prizes created according to the will and legacy of Alfred Nobel.

Capitalism as an historic



phenomenon has gone hand in hand with the growth of a large police force, large army and large state apparatus. The model of detached households freely trading just has nothing in common with the reality. In as far as it ever existed, it was found in the protected traditional world that industrial capitalism replaced.

'Free markets' in the present day means that you're free to do what's good for the USA. They keep most of the subsidies and protectionism that were introduced in Roosevelt's New Deal. Unrestrained market forces are only deemed good for people who do not vote for US Presidents and Members of Congress. Pure Asocialism is only for foreigners.

The Western social structure won its Cold-War battle with the Soviet system, because it offered the same social security with much less political repression. The two systems could and should have converged in the 1960s. But Brezhnev chose to send tanks into Czechoslovakia in 1968, ensuring a vastly more drastic break-down of the system twenty years on. And the brutal uselessness of the Brezhnev system encouraged the rich in the western world to see how much they could snatch back before large numbers of ordinary people would start objecting.

In the USA, it proved possible to treat the working mainstream with utter contempt. Ordinary Americans show a servile admiration for the wealthy, and have quietly accepted economic policies that leave the bulk of the society no better off than they were in the 1970s. This is quite different from Britain, where the working mainstream has done about as well as it did under Keynesianism, with the poor squeezed and the rich getting the lion's share.

It is not a question of social needs versus growth. Allowing people to compete to obtain the maximum private income has damaged the system, which is why the West has grown more slowly overall than when the Keynesian system of economic and currency regulation broke down in the 1970s. The USA possibly does better, Europe most definitely does worse.

The virtue of what used to be called 'free enterprise' comes not from the

profit-motive but from the simple fact of private enterprise. If dozens of people do different things, one or two are quite likely to hit on something good. Profit need not come into it. Economists from Adam Smith onwards have made a fundamental error, mistaking a defect for the source of wealth.

Private enterprise without much thought of profit exists in science and to a lesser degree in literature and art. That shows you what the real engine is. Art can flourish anywhere, and does so unpredictably. But it was the conscious development of science by state-sponsored bodies like the British Royal Society that laid the basis for later industrialisation

But will this be understood? Or will the entire world be Sub-Americanised, reduced to a weak copy of the USA?

The key theatres of struggle are India and China, especially China. The Indians, before the Asian currency crisis, were being urged to copy East Asia's successful policies. I think they know better now. And the Chinese, despite some gross and thriving corruption, have generally favoured private enterprise rather than 'free markets'.

Tiananmen is supposed to have permanently tainted the Communist Party leadership—whereas similar events in countries servile to American interests are soon forgotten. You always get reminded of it, and are never reminded that President Jiang was in charge in Shanghai at the time, where the crisis was talked down peacefully. That's how Western commercial media slants it, journalists listening to the company-owner's voice.

In a corrupt system those doing well are still held responsible for looking after the rest. China so far is basically stable because most people are much better off than they were ten years ago. (Something that has been true at all points in the last 50 years of Communist power, a point carefully evaded by Western commentators who have good words only for Deng. But in fact India and China started out at much the same level in 1950, and India has been growing at 4% and closing the gap with the West, and yet China even before Deng was visibly much richer and stronger than

India.)

In the former USSR, and in the rest of Eastern Europe, suddenly no one was responsible. The 'Miracle of the Market' was supposed to fix it, and the actual sharp decline in wealth and welfare came as a shock. It's as if Jesus had botched the Miracle of the loaves and fishes, and instead of multiplying them had reduced them to three crumbs and half a fishbone.

Russia is suffering from a mysterious absence of miraculous results after the 'miracle of the market' was sought with great earnestness. There was an attempt at real Asocialism in the rebound from Brezhnev's corrupt socialist dictatorship. And the ex-Brezhnevites, the people with existing power and connections, grabbed what they could make money out of, while the rest was neglected. The gap between rich and poor widened, indeed, but the poor and middling also got very much worse off even as the new class of rich people emerged.

China, unlike Russia, is following the pattern that actually occurred in Britain and America and every other successful economy. Individuals can grow rich, but there are social obligations that come with it. Even if China wants to make itself exactly like the USA, this would be best achieved by doing what the USA does, rather than what the USA says. The great error of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was to take the rhetoric at face value.

The actual rules, as applied by the USA—and by Britain before them—are (a) Freedom does not extend to freedom to do anything *we* really don't like. (b) Free markets are not free to damage us. (c) Rights of secession apply only to the territory of *foreign* states and nations. China does just this, only for China's benefit rather than Britain or the USA's.

The process of Sub-Americanisation is not really avoidable. Moving beyond Sub-Americanisation depends on America accepting a true globalisation, which at present it continuously blocks and frustrates. But nations and states can choose to do this in a dependant or independent fashion.

In China, dependence has so far been avoided. In most ways the

development resembles the way Japan and the East Asian 'tigers' developed in the days when the USA was keen to build them up as successful examples of Western values. In all of these countries, Japan especially, corruption was the mechanism by which new social habits were spread.

Once something solid has grown in the muck, a bit of muck-raking can take place to remove the surplus. But without damaging the still-fragile social structures. I assume this is rather the logic behind the present Chinese tidy-up.

It's not of course that Asocialism and pure Sub-Americanisation offers anything wonderfully pure or moral. The US system has ingeniously legitimised political corruption. Though it is not possible to actually buy an election, almost all successful candidates need huge contributions from the rich. And

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its height in the late 1980s, and had the full support of the Young Conservatives (who carried the membership issue at the Conservative Conference of 1988), Jeffrey Donaldson came dangerously close to giving the campaign his wholehearted support. He even made a broadcast in favour of it on Channel 4. For a moment it looked as if the 800,000 might be opting for looking outwards. But the moment was not followed through. The energy and political ability that Donaldson has since shown in turning Trimble into his ventriloquist's dummy did not find expression in pursuing the outward-looking vision. He chose not to risk his career within Unionism (the Stormont system did the work Lloyd Goerge intended for it by creating a whole web of careers like Donaldson's). So Ireland's minority still look inward—but are going southward.

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its 'free' politics has maintained an unchanging two-party rule since their Civil War of the 1860s. The absence of proportional representation and the ability of rich candidates to buy almost unlimited publicity has successfully prevented any other sort of politics from emerging.

But the Western system offers 'equality of opportunity', doesn't it? Equality of outcome is an interference with Liberty, but equality of opportunity is splendidly upheld. That's why all of the rich ensure their own children get an expensive and selective education not available to most people.

'Equality of opportunity' does not in any sense mean that opportunities are equal. In Britain, the process of equalisation has been disrupted by adding fees for higher education, so that success is probably more dependant on family background than it was 30 or 40 years

## Hell and Polly Toynbee

Diane Abbott

Polly Toynbee had an article entitled 'Time for a sex change' in *The Guardian* on 29th September moaning about the working conditions for women in Parliament and attacking the retiring Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, for being anti-women.

The following letter from Diane Abbott was published in reply on 2nd October:

"Polly Toynbee writes about 'The hell of women's working lives in parliament' (Time for a sex change, September 29). This is plain silly. The hours are difficult. And the media can be nasty. But we women MPs enjoy salaries, perks and privileges that the average working woman can only dream of. Hell is a single mother struggling to bring up her children on benefits. Not a woman MP on £46,000 a year.

"Polly Toynbee is also wrong to say that Speaker Betty Boothroyd dislikes women. In 13 years in parliament I have never seen a shred of this alleged dislike. Betty was a strong defender of the rights

ago. The USA is not much different, Bill Gates comes from a rich family. And this along with the good luck in doing just the right things accounts for his success relative to others of his generation who were just as talented and entrepreneurial.

A lot of what has happened since the 1950s has been anti-meritocratic, including comprehensive education as it was actually done. Rather than raising the status of non-academic skills, life was simply made harder for those who just have skills but no useful family background.

The broad stratum of the university-educated have advantaged themselves and their children at the expense of those both above and below them in the social stratum. The former ruling class have been pulled down to the level of the broad university-educated middle class, but these have also pushed the rest of the society out of public life.

of backbench MPs—including women. She carried out her duties as Speaker with intelligence, independence and style. And consequently did an enormous amount for the reputation of women politicians both here and internationally.

"I have campaigned for more women MPs all my political career. I was saddened to find that more new male MPs had the courage to vote against the government's cut in benefit to single-parent mothers than did my new female colleagues. This may shed some light on why ordinary Labour party members are now less willing to select women parliamentary candidates."

There has yet to be a reply from either Polly Toynbee or any of Ms Abbott's female colleagues.

**World Wide Web**  
Further information about various magazines, pamphlets and books can be obtained on the Internet. Look up ATHOL INFORMATION at [www.users.dircon.co.uk/~athol-st/](http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~athol-st/)



**Leader concluded from p.2**

went on between African communities in the sense that they freely made exchanges which satisfied each party. That was in the era when *autarky* was general.

When autarkic economies were deliberately broken up by the great Imperial powers of Euro-American capitalism and whole countries were reduced to 'cash crop' producers for the world (i.e. Anglo-American) market, it became meaningless—or perverse—to describe those countries as freely engaging in international free trade. What they produced had to be sold into the world market because it was not something they could live on. The means of life had to be bought from the world market with the money got from the cash crops.

In the ongoing colonial economy of Zimbabwe the British 'commercial' farmers 'excel' in the production of tobacco for the world market. And since they own the bulk of the most productive land they hold the country to ransom because the import of means of life depends on the tobacco exports.

This is the progressive, moral state

of affairs. Peter Hain and Clare Short are therefore greatly angered by the attempt being made by the Government of Zimbabwe to roll back the colonial economy and restore some degree of autarky.

Britain is in a sense the counterpart of countries like Zimbabwe—their creator and their counterpart. She is the country on the wealth side which is most dependent on the globalist development of free trade—on the compulsory system of unobstructed universal exchange, carried to the length of unobstructed capital investment.

Robert Blatchford was repelled by British industrial capitalism of the late 19th century. He published a booklet against it called *Merrie England*, which made more socialists than any other publication ever issued in England. Then he came to see that in the course of making itself a great Imperial economic power England had destroyed the Merrie England way of life beyond any possibility of recall—and that such uncivil and unpleasurable prosperity as it enjoyed depended on the world dominance it had achieved. So he said: 'My country right or wrong! Merry or Prudish!' And he declared himself an

Imperialist and campaigned for an even stronger Navy to deal with the rise of Germany as a serious commercial rival.

There was a time in the 1960s and 1970s when, under the Tory leadership of Macmillan and Heath and the Labour leadership of Wilson, Britain seemed to have acquired a genuine will to de-Imperialise itself and become part of the new order of things in Europe that was being constructed by the European states that had been defeated in the War. That was the context in which Heath proposed that there should be a three part corporate structure—Labour, Capital and Government—to decide on the division of the national wealth, and that Wilson set up the Bullock Commission which proposed that industry should be conducted under a system of Workers' Control. We supported both proposals. Everything else on the Left opposed them with very great vigour indeed. Ken Coates's Institute for Workers' Control was never so active as in the campaign against Bullock's Workers' Control proposals. And thus the way opened for Thatcher to sweep aside the semi-socialism of the Heath/Wilson era and set Britain on the road back to Imperial glory.

Announcement

**Open meetings of the Bevin Society/*Labour & Trade Union Review* are held on the first Wednesday of every month. The next meeting is on February 7th.**

**Theme: Tim Berners-Lee:  
*The World Wide Web—a Social Construct?***

**Speaker: Joe Keenan**

**7.30 p.m. Printer's Room, Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Road, London N.7**

**Nearest Tube: Finsbury Park**

**Buses: 4, 29, 153, 259, 279**

**All Welcome**