

"All the News
Unfit to Print"

Signs of the Times

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When two heterosexuals murder a homosexual, it is a "hate crime" to be splashed over the nation's front pages for weeks on end. When two homosexuals brutally rape, torture, and murder a 13-year old boy—as they did last September in Arkansas—it is news unfit to print.

A 13-year-old named Jesse Dirkhising was killed on September 26 in Rogers, Arkansas. The police affidavit describing the crime is utterly nauseating; the following is from a far less graphic Associated Press report:

According to police, Davis Carpenter Jr., 38, and Joshua Brown, 22, drugged and blindfolded Jesse Dirkhising, gagged him with underwear, and strapped him to a mattress face-down with duct tape and belts. Then the boy was repeatedly raped and sodomized with various objects before he suffocated. . . . At the apartment police found handwritten instructions and a diagram of how to position the boy. Other notes described apparently unfulfilled fantasies of molesting other children. . . . On the night of Jesse's death Brown repeatedly raped the boy while Carpenter watched, police said. Brown took a break to eat a sandwich, and soon noticed the boy had stopped breathing.

The AP report omitted several abhorrent details about the murder; but more noteworthy than the whitewashing is the date of the story. It appeared on October 29—*more than a month after the boy was killed*. The crime occurred a few days before the first anniversary of Matthew Shepard's murder. The only major media outlets to report it—as far as we are aware—were the *Washington Times*, the *Boston Globe* and Fox News TV.

Our courtier press accurately reflects the current regime's belief that morality is not a function of "objective" behavior but

of the place of the actor within the ideological system. The killing of Christians by Muslims is a case in point. Remember Ambon, which we mentioned in this space in October? The grim religious war there continues unabated. According to a routine Reuters report (December 30):

Fresh ethnic and religious clashes erupted in Indonesia's ravaged spice islands on Thursday, raising the death toll from almost a week of fighting to at least 328 . . . "Up until Thursday, three days of quarrel between groups in the district of Tobelo (Halma-hera) left 265 dead," Indonesia's armed forces said in a statement . . . At least 360 buildings were razed, including churches and mosques. . . . The violence followed similar clashes in Ambon, where at least 63 people were killed and more than 100 were injured this week. . . . The killings bring to close to 500 the number who have died in violence this month . . . About 1,000 people have died in almost a year of largely sectarian violence in the islands, once held up as a model of religious tolerance in predominantly Muslim Indonesia . . .

Of course, 1,000 dead Muslims in Sanjak would be more than enough for the U.S. Air Force to rev up its engines for another bout of Serb-killing. The inequality of Balkan geese and ganders in the eyes of the West was pointed out by the former Australian prime minister, Malcolm Fraser, in his summary of one of the top stories of the year (*International Herald Tribune*, December 22):

NATO's actions were directed not just against the Serbian military but also against the people of Serbia. Homes, hospitals, even refugee centers

did not escape. . . . Does illegality become sanctioned when the illegality is perpetrated by the most powerful? There were alternatives—the exercise of wisdom as opposed to unreasoned conflict. Even after the war, the West is reluctant to learn any lessons. Sanctions hurt the poorest of the poor. Because of the current cold winter in central Europe, it is likely that many old and very young people will die because there is insufficient heating to sustain life. In all of this tragedy, Serbia and Serbs worldwide have been demonized. There are no saints in the Balkans, but the history and bitternesses there are too old and ingrained to be susceptible to quick Western solutions.

The one "lesson of Kosovo" that the Europeans have learned is that they need to act jointly to counter the arrogance of the United States. The U.S. media seem to ignore signs of European apprehension with U.S. policy in the aftermath of Kosovo. A remarkably blunt statement by the German chancellor (AP, December 28) went all but unreported here:

Europe must act more like a single country if it wants to challenge U.S. economic and political dominance, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said Tuesday. Asked in a television interview whether the United States lacked consideration for its allies, Schroeder said: "Yes, that certainly is so. . . . Whining about U.S. dominance doesn't help. We have to act."

Russians may be forgiven if they feel prompted to act, forcefully and soon, when they see the brazen hypocrisy of our opinion creators over Chechnya. Take the

Washington Post editorial of December 12, which began with the admission that, "in many ways," Russia had more justification for intervention in Chechnya than . . . no, not the United States in Kosovo, but *Serbia* in Kosovo! The editorial then takes a sharp turn:

But whatever sympathy Russia therefore might have enjoyed for its campaign it has squandered with methods that echo all too familiarly those of Mr. Milosevic. Not only the looting, but also the indiscriminate shelling of civilians; the creation and mistreatment of hundreds of thousands of refugees; and, according to sketchy accounts, the abuse of prisoners and suspected "terrorists"—all this goes far beyond what might have been justified by difficult circumstances.

But the *Post's* outrage is completely at odds with its editorial of April 18:

It's inevitable in a democracy with a free press that an allied bombing accident that kills dozens of civilians will garner as much attention as an adversary's murder of hundreds or even thousands of innocent people. The concern is legitimate; NATO should be pressed to account for its actions. But it's also important not to lose sight of the larger point. The victims of NATO's mistakes were on the road, like hundreds of thousands of others, because [of] the troops of Slobodan Milosevic. . . .

The logic behind this reasoning was dissected by Matt Taibi in *eXile* (No. 24, December 12), an excellent Internet magazine published from Moscow:

America gets to do the Machiavelli thing—the "ends" in Kosovo justify the "means"—but Russia doesn't. Russia has a good reason to go into Chechnya, but the way it's going about it [is wrong] so it should get out. The way we're going about the Kosovo operation [is wrong], but we have a

good reason to be there, so it's OK.

John Laughland's travelogue in the *Spectator* of London (December 18) gives the real flavor of postwar Kosovo, unlike the thousands of fact-free stories our own fourth estate has force-fed us since the beginning of the NATO occupation:

Six months after its liberation by Nato, the province continues to wallow in chaos and squalor. . . . By day, Kosovo resembles India. The throng and press of people on the streets are matched only by the appalling traffic jams, caused by the sudden influx of stolen cars, the constant flow of articulated lorries bringing aid, and the endless gigantic tanks which Kfor troops unnecessarily use to move around in. There is mud everywhere. . . . Meanwhile, the great self-referential world of international organizations has installed itself in force. There are more than 400 foreign non-governmental organizations registered in Kosovo, each of which seems to have its own fleet of white jeeps.

Laughland encountered many members of this new global elite in the main hotel in Pristina, "discussing whether their next posting will be in Jakarta or Geneva, while upstairs seminars are held on the rights of the child in Cambodia and on gender equality in the Balkans." Outside, he noted "an army of stubby young men in leather jackets and sunglasses hangs around on street corners," but:

Of the Serbs, meanwhile, there is little trace. During the summer, Kfor and the United Nations turned a blind eye as all non-Albanians were systematically chased out of Kosovo, thereby flouting the very principle invoked to legitimize the Nato war in the first place. Whereas during the Nato bombing tens of thousands of Albanians were able to remain in Kosovo unmolested by the Serb police, any Serbs who have been foolish enough to venture out since Kfor entered the

province have been beaten to death or shot in the street. In towns where previously tens of thousands of Serbs used to live, now not a single family remains. Their houses have been looted and burned. The specifically ethnic nature of these attacks is emphasized by the systematic bombing campaign which the Albanians have waged against Serb churches. Since June, some 80 churches, including some of the greatest jewels of mediaeval Christendom, have been desecrated or professionally dynamited.

Laughland's final remarks are enough to make any *Washington Post* editor's blood boil:

Crossing the border on foot back into Serbia proper, I found myself on a dark and deserted country road. The nearest village was many miles away. Fortunately, I was discovered by a helpful policeman who gave me a lift and then drove into the village to find me a taxi. One had the strong impression of arriving back in civilisation.

In the meantime, on the other side of the civilizational divide, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright celebrated Ramadan with American Muslims. She held a lavish *iftar* dinner in the ornate Thomas Jefferson room at the State Department to mark the end of the Islamic holy month on December 21.

"U.S. foreign policy is conducted in your name," Mrs. Albright told about 60 guests of the American Muslim Council, co-host of the event, and she went on to criticize—what else?—the Russian action in Chechnya. "Killing the innocent does not defeat terror. It feeds terror," she said.

M O V I N G ?

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Best of British Conservatism

by Derek Turner

*“Hail, happy Britain! Highly favored isle,
And Heaven’s peculiar care!”*

—William Somerville

A Bastard’s Tale
by Sir George Gardiner
London: Aurum Press; 280 pp., £18.99

The Abolition of Britain
by Peter Hitchens
London: Quartet Books; 351 pp., £15.00

Salisbury: Victorian Titan
by Andrew Roberts
London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson;
938 pp., £25.00

British conservative circles are awash with books at the moment. Apart from the usual think-tank reports and surveys, we have seen recently John Major’s and Norman Lamont’s memoirs, John Redwood’s *Death of Britain*, and the latest miscellany from *Daily Telegraph* columnist Michael Wharton (*Peter Simple*), to name several. Three books, however, are among the most interesting and useful of this post-May 1997 oeuvre.

A Bastard’s Tale is the autobiography of Sir George Gardiner, former Conservative MP for Reigate and briefly the only MP ever for the late Sir James Goldsmith’s Referendum Party. Sir George was Chairman of the influential back-bench assemblage of MPs called the 92 Group, which is in many respects the arbiter of power within the Parliamentary Party. During his tenure as leader, the 92 Group pursued a Euroskeptical line which was often at odds—especially once John Major became prime minister—with that of the party hierarchy, culminating in the famous revolt against the Maastricht Treaty and Major’s description of the rebel MPs as “bastards”

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(hence the book’s title).

Sir George has right-of-center opinions on most issues, notably Europe, capital punishment, and the family, although his views on immigration are unsound. This, however, is true of many Conservatives, who do not understand that conservatism, if it is anything, means the conservation of a particular people in a particular place. His political opinions, his position in the 92 Group, and his physical appearance (he was once described as “Dracula left out in the rain”) have encouraged the growth of legends about him. “Were all the world a stage, [Gardiner] would be played by Vincent Price,” former MP Julian Critchley has said.

Much of Sir George’s book is consumed with minutiae about late-night conclaves in smoke-filled rooms or constituency meetings on the “rubber

chicken circuit” and will therefore date quickly, but the author has included considerable detail concerning how the party machine works (or does not work). There are many interesting anecdotes, and stark insights into the vacuity of John Major. “John Major had no deep convictions and little conception of the kind of country he would like Britain to become. Leadership for him was essentially an exercise in manipulation to keep himself at the top of the greasy pole.” Sir George was a political journalist and columnist whose journalistic experience is evident in his lucid and unpretentious style. Those who have a basic knowledge of the Conservative Party and are interested in the personalities involved will find *A Bastard’s Tale* well worth reading.

Peter Hitchens, broadcaster and *Daily Express* columnist (also, ironically, the brother of Christopher Hitchens), has produced a well-written and thoughtful overview of cultural trends in his *Abolition of Britain*. British Tories, for the most part, still do not realize the importance of cultural politics, and their (often rather dreary) books reflect this. Hitchens’ penetrating one begins to address this deficiency.

Hitchens starts by quoting Tony Blair’s words in 1997: “I am a modern man. I am part of the rock and roll generation—the Beatles, color TV, that’s the generation I come from.” For Hitchens, this somehow encapsulates the difference between the old Britain, which ran the world’s largest empire and defeated Nazi Germany, and the new “People’s Britain,” which could elect a ludicrous figure like Blair as its prime minister. Like many other conservative-minded people, he found the extraordinary scenes surrounding the funeral of Princess Diana curiously disgusting, signaling the end—or at least a nadir—of