



Going to the dogs

EVERYWHERE ONE LOOKS there are signs of turpitude and moral decay, a lack of firm resolve, a relentless, corrosive process of mediation and moderation, which undermines all commitment and steady principle. There was a time when the *East* was *Red*, a time when each new day brought forth songs of praise for Chairman Mao Zedong, and for the Communist Party, which like the sun brought the bright light of liberation to the people. Now, this enthusiastic certainty has given way to theatrical productions of dubious provenance. Last week, theatre director He Nian told the Chinese newspaper *Wen Hui Bao* that his operatic production of Karl Marx's magnum opus, *Das Capital*, would open in Shanghai next year. This, of course, should be an occasion for celebration; the setting of the analysis of the commodity and the theory of surplus value to music is to be welcomed, but I fear that this production will simply be another reformist nail in the coffin of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought.

He Nian told the press that "Marx's theories cannot be distorted." To reassure the Party and the public Zhang Jun, Professor of Economics at Fudan University and Director of the China Centre for Economic Study, has been appointed as a consultant to ensure that the actors, dancers, and singers, get their *Das Capital* just right. However, this is all dry ice and top show, because the plot of the musical plainly suggests that collective bargaining and what Lenin would have called, "mere trade unionism", is the

solution to workers' problems. Compromise and collaboration with the class enemy is the message of the show. Marxism is no longer a Promethean gift to a proletariat struggling to break its chains, but has been reduced by these wily capitalist roaders to a musical appeal for workers to replace revolutionary zeal with good sense and moderation.

This kind of accommodation with the modern moral malaise is not restricted to China or indeed to former communists. It is even eating away at the BBC, which is, once again, cutting back on its Christian broadcasting. A Sikh has been appointed to produce *Songs of Praise* and now there are moves afoot to appoint a Muslim as the head of religious programming. Not unreasonably the Church of England is up in arms. At a recent meeting in Lambeth Palace, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, warned the BBC's Director General that it must not ignore its Christian audience. It is not clear whether the Archbishop threatened the Corporation with divine intervention, but we know that the Christian clergy are preparing to resist the special privileges being awarded to what it calls "minority religions".

However, the ground on which it is choosing to fight is not at all solid, because while a clear majority of British people are not Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, New Agers, or any ecumenical combination you could name, it is hard to prove that they are Christians. About half the population nominally cite the "C of E" as their religion of choice, but only a very few go to church and the nearest most of us come to a service of Christian commitment is in the crematorium chapel at the end of our days. This lack of faith has been recently brought to the fore by a survey conducted by the Church of England itself when it found that only 22% of people asked could identify Easter Sunday as the day on which Christians celebrate Christ's resurrection. Most people were just as vague about the meaning of Good Friday thinking it had something to do with milk chocolate eggs, fancy

hats, and bunny rabbits rather than the Via Dolarosa and the Crucifixion of Our Lord.

All this is beginning to make the leaders of the Church of England distinctly uneasy, particularly since Charles, Prince of Wales, has said that he wants the Coronation Oath, which names English monarchs as the Defender of the Faith, altered to make him “Defender of Faith” so that he can include Muslims and Hindus in his mystic aura. This has now been compounded by the desire, in the interests of fairness and equality (no less), to abolish the ban that prevents Roman Catholics from ascending the throne. The problem is clear: if it is admitted that a Roman Catholic can become the monarch then they could no longer be the defender of the Anglican faith. The Church of England would have to be disestablished and take its chances on an equal footing with all the other outfits competing for our immortal souls and our generous donations. This is where their indecision, lack of resolve and stern purpose has brought them – to the very edge of ruin and dissolution.

In these circumstances, with the BBC surrendering to “minority faiths”, and the Church of England heading for the rocks, is it any wonder that the British people’s commitment to animal welfare is now being called into question. Recently, livestock rescue centres have been confronted with a new problem: floods of inquiries from people wanting to adopt their woe-begone farm animals. However, these Good Samaritans are not what they seem; a suspicion has arisen in the minds of a number of people running homes for homeless beasts that a fair number of those posing as pals of defenceless creatures simply want to eat ’em. Lady Lesley Cooper of Trallwm Farm Animal Sanctuary confirmed this suspicion last week when she said, “They say they are interested in taking one of our cows or pigs or goats, then within a minute or two they’ll ask if the animal is safe to eat.”

This is the kind of deception that one just has to get used to when you live in a country that is clearly going to the dogs, losing all sense of purpose and resolve.

This is even true of our own dear homosexuals who are now apparently confused as to the meaning of the phrase “gay icon”. In a miserable outburst of compromise and moderation a panel of sainted gay and lesbian public figures have been appointed by the National Portrait Gallery to select images of “gay icons” for a special exhibition. The panel, including Sir Elton John, Sir Ian McKellen, Sarah Waters and Billie Jean King, have chosen people like, Nelson Mandela, Maya Angelou, and Alan Turing. Worthies all. It is true that Lord Ali opted for Lily Savage and Will Young, but in the downbeat of compromise and respectability the traditional histrionic enthusiasms of screaming queens, Judy Garland, Kylie Minogue, Madonna, David and Victoria, Barbie and Ken, are nowhere to be heard or seen.

Things have got so bad in the country that even political scandals have become simply ludicrous. The revelation that the Home Secretary’s husband has been watching the odd pornographic movie on the “public purse” can only serve to remind us that there was a time, a time when Britain still had colonies, when our Defence Minister shared hookers with member of the Soviet secret service, a time when a naked cabinet member (“the man in the mask”), frolicked at private parties in stately homes. Now all we are left with are the viewing habits of a ministerial spouse.

In these circumstances is it any wonder that Johnny Rotten’s advertising efforts have helped to raise the sales of Country Life butter by more than a quarter since October last year. The erstwhile Sex Pistol, anarchist, member of the working class, is clearly going the same way as Marxist-Leninist Mao Zedong Thought.

As a demonstrator’s placard said last week: “We’re All Doomed”.