



THE OBSERVER

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The Alternative President

IN COLOUR
KING ARTHUR AND HIS COURT: NEW FACTS

Comdr. Rawnsley
on the National Trust

KNITTED FASHION

Vive le Steeplechase!
Kenneth Harris

JOHN BIRD
MUGGERIDGE

WHITEHORN

Why Lady Macbeth
needs raw steak

TODAY'S PROGRAMMES

Lawyers will urge divorce by consent

by a Staff Reporter

THE Law Commission is expected to recommend divorce by consent in a report to the Lord Chancellor which will be published this week.

This will be the first major reform of substantive law to be recommended by this new body of paid servants of the Crown, set up last year by the Government under the inspiration of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Gardiner, and with Mr Justice Scarman as chairman.

It is understood that the Commission has broadly accepted the

analysis of the report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Committee, headed by the Bishop of Exeter, Dr Robert Mortimer. This committee reported in July and recommended the abolition of the doctrine of the matrimonial offence, i.e. adultery, cruelty or desertion, and its substitution by a new doctrine of the irrevocable breakdown of the marriage.

The Law Commission is unable to accept this recommendation, largely because of the immense volume of work which it would involve for the courts. Instead it

plumps for the simpler remedy of divorce by consent after a given number of years separation. It is understood that the Commission has deferred certain important issues such as the question of the children of a marriage and the apportionment of property between the parties. Recommendations on these will follow later.

Failure ten years ago

The report is bound to be highly controversial. Neither the Roman Catholic nor the Anglican Churches could possibly accept the concept of divorce by consent without going back on long-held doctrines.

There may also be some criticism of the Commission for going beyond what was understood to be its proper function of tackling branches of the law which are unclear or contradictory. What it has done is to tackle a controversial branch of the law in the spirit of a Royal Commission.

The last Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce reported 10 years ago but was hopelessly divided in its recommendations. It is its failure to agree that has given the Law Commission its title to take charge of the issue.

Members of the Commission were in session at Oxford early last summer together with members of Archbishop Ramsey's committee.

Private Bill for reform

Among those present on this occasion was Sir Jocelyn Simon, the Lord Chief Justice. It is understood that he was then over to a considerable measure of acceptance of the concept of divorce by consent.

An attempt by Mr Leo Abse, Labour MP for Pontypool, to add marriage breakdown to existing grounds for divorce failed three years ago. But he was given leave by the House of Commons last month to introduce a new Private Member's Bill with this object.

Members of the Law Commission are Mr Laurence Gower, Professor of Law at the University of Lagos; Mr Neil Lawson, QC, Recorder of Folkestone; Mr Norman Marsh, formerly Director of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law; and Mr Andrew Martin, Professor of International and Comparative Law, University of Southampton.

Man flees from police guard in hospital

by PETER DEELEY

A MAN under observation by detectives in a London hospital escaped yesterday after leaving a dummy figure made out of books in the bed of his private room.

After an extensive police search no trace had been found of him last night. His identity is not being revealed but he is understood to be a vital witness in a large-scale Scotland Yard investigation.

The man had been detained for questioning. No charge had been preferred against him and he was being kept under surveillance partly for his own safety. It was feared that a London gang might harm him.

The man, a chickenpox suspect, escaped from Hither Green isolation hospital early yesterday morning. He was being kept under a 24-hour guard on the hospital's first floor.

After his disappearance, a dressing gown and pyjamas were found in the hospital grounds. Police believe that he got away in a waiting car.

On Friday, four men went to visit him in hospital but the police guards, acting on instructions to check every caller, allowed only one person, a relative, into the room.

Salvation Army offers to play

THE Salvation Army has volunteered to step into the breach left by the Scots Guards' band's refusal to play at next Sunday's memorial service for Rhodesian war dead.

The offer, by the Army's Chalk Farm, N. London, branch, was made yesterday to Mr Tom Lawler, secretary of the Anglo-Rhodesian Society, organisers of the service.

Mr Lawler said last night: 'Presumably there can be no controversy about a religious organisation providing music for a religious ceremony. On Friday, 24 hours after agreeing to play, the Scots Guards' band withdrew on advice from the Commonwealth Relations Office because of its 'political consequence'.

Wilson receives Smith's answer

by our Political Correspondent

Mr Ian Smith's answer to the Government's proposal for bringing Rhodesia back to constitutional rule was received by Mr Wilson yesterday.

Mr Wilson discussed it over the telephone with Mr Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Commonwealth officials.

Mr Smith has moved towards the British position, Mr Wilson will probably make a statement to the Commons early this week.

In Salisbury last night Mr Smith said his message contained 'firm and definite proposals' for a settlement.

Storms struck across Europe from Italy to Britain this weekend. Frome in Somerset (left) was flooded, and in Florence (right) floods wrecked shops on the famous Ponte Vecchio.

68 dead in Italian flood

from GEORGE BLACK: Rome, 5 November

FLOODS, carrying mud and sewage, are feared to have damaged beyond repair many irreplaceable works of art in Northern Italy.

The historic cities of Florence, Venice and Siena were among the worst hit places. At least 68 people are feared dead, thousands are injured, and tens of thousands made homeless.

Officials said the water had caused more damage to Florence and its art treasures than all the fighting around the city in the Second World War.

The Arno River, fed by two weeks of heavy rain, spilled over its banks yesterday, and poured in torrents through the narrow streets of the city. It was feared that the Ponte Vecchio, the fourteenth-century fortress-like bridge spanning the Arno, might collapse. Goldsmiths' shops, which once made the bridge one of Italy's greatest tourist attractions, disappeared.

Archives lost

Two-thirds of the city was flooded at the Arno burst its bank. It has now subsided, but today many quarters are without power, light or drinking water. Food and medical aid are being flown in by helicopters. The inside of the cathedral and the Baptistery, like the great Piazza della Signoria, were a quagmire today.

In the Uffizi Gallery, the Renaissance treasure-house of the Medici, the entire photographic archives of 130,000 negatives were destroyed. Besides a number of original works that were being restored. One, by Giotto, was saved in the nick of time. The bronze gates of the eleventh-

Storms hit west

NON-STOP rain brought chaos to the West Country yesterday. Flood-water on roads was more than four feet deep in places.

Rail links between London and South Wales were disrupted when a water-logged bank collapsed on to the line between Chipping Sodbury and Badminton, in Gloucestershire.

The line was immediately closed. Trains were diverted through Bath, Bristol and Gloucester as workers struggled to move 150 tons of mud from the track.

In Bristol, three inches of rain had fallen in 24 hours. This is normally the city's total for the whole of November. Traffic was halted or reduced to a crawl in several areas.

Chipping Sodbury was left without telephone or road links with Bristol. Frome, in Somerset, was described by the AA as a town 'suddenly cut off from the outside world'. Streets and shops were flooded, and police diverted traffic round the town.

Motoring organisations were inundated with questions about road conditions in the West. In many cases drivers were told: 'Don't try to get through—it isn't worth it.'

The AA warned of further flooding danger, particularly in Blandford, Dorset, and in Bath.

Police in Bath said they would put a flood disaster emergency plan into operation if the River Avon rose another nine inches. Overnight, the

TODAY'S WEATHER

LONDON, S.E., CENT. S. ENGLAND, E. MIDLANDS, EAST ANGLIA, CHANNEL ISLANDS: Dull with rain at times. Perhaps becoming brighter later. Wind N.E. to N. moderate or fresh locally strong. Rather cold, max. temp. 8C, 46F.

S.W. ENGLAND: Becoming brighter with showers and sunny intervals. Wind N.E. to N. moderate or fresh locally strong. Rather cold, max. temp. 9C, 48F.

N. WALES, ISLE OF MAN, BORDERS, EDINBURGH AND E. SCOTLAND, S.W. SCOTLAND, GLASGOW, ARGYLL AND N. IRELAND: Sunny periods and scattered showers. Wind N.E. to N. moderate to fresh. Rather cold, max. temp. 8C, 46F.

LAKE DISTRICT, N.W. AND N.E. ENGLAND: Sunny periods and scattered showers. Some snow over high ground. Winds N.E. to N. moderate or fresh. Rather cold, max. temp. 8C, 46F.

OUTLOOK: Sunny periods and showers.

Wilson-Brown Market clash

by NORA BELOFF, our Political Correspondent

A SPLIT has developed between the Prime Minister and George Brown, the Foreign Secretary, over when and on what terms Britain should renew her bid to join the Common Market.

Mr Heath's dramatic challenge to the Government yesterday to go beyond vague declarations and spell out its precise intentions reflects views privately held by both Mr Brown and Mr George Thomson, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has responsibility for Common Market matters.

Both have met all the West European leaders, and have already told their Cabinet colleagues that clarification of policy is essential.

Common Market advocates in the Cabinet—and they are in a substantial majority—are wondering whether Mr Wilson is merely over-optimistic in thinking he can obtain entry on very much better terms than those negotiated by Mr Heath, or whether he intends deliberately to provoke another rebuff which will put the onus of Britain's exclusion on General de Gaulle.

Differences

The differences of view have not prevented the continuation of Cabinet talks which are now amounting to intricate quasi-diplomatic negotiations between the Ministers themselves. At the Chequers meeting on Europe it was agreed that decisions were now needed at the top.

George Thomson is understood to have reported that Britain would not be admitted to the Market unless ready to sign the Rome Treaty and accept the subsequent conventions, including the common agricultural policy.

Negotiations would be mainly over price levels and the length of the transition period for adapting Britain's farm policies. Brown and Thomson would like a clear commitment along these lines.

Once this is done the way would be open for unofficial discussions with Britain's prospective partners on concrete issues. The hope would be that this time there would be no official application for entry until the terms were known to be acceptable to all.

The Prime Minister is as fully aware as Mr Brown that, for both international and domestic reasons, something will have to be done. He is particularly anxious to take some new initiative which would be welcome to private business and serve as an encouragement for the much needed revival of capital investment.

He is also convinced that Britain needs wider markets but he believes there may be alternatives to the Common Market.

Some of his advisers, Nicholas Kaldor, for example, would argue that, on purely economic grounds, Britain would do far better in the United States.

There are also vague proposals, which might interest the Prime Minister, for a wider free-trade area, either European or transatlantic, and he feels strongly that Britain would be in a much better position when negotiating with the Market's six nations if she could claim to have alternatives.

The timing of the new initiative is also creating difficulties: it is now widely rumoured that if Britain did join the Six, the pound might be devalued. Mr Wilson is determined to avoid any new risk to sterling which might be provoked by a premature announcement before the pound has fully recovered. He is refusing to be hustled.

The Dutch Foreign Secretary, Dr Josef Luns, died with the Prime Minister last Monday and warned him that if Britain wanted to join the Six she must accept the Treaty of Rome and all subsequent conventions.

He insisted that this was the position from which Britain must bargain with the French, and could not expect her allies to mediate for her. But he certainly did not get the impression that Mr Wilson had accepted this verdict, or was ready to act on it.

Time is short, says Heath: Page 2

Brown going to Moscow

Moscow, 5 November.—Mr George Brown, the Foreign Secretary, will make an informal visit to Moscow on 22-23 November, it was announced tonight.—AP

Full report: Page 5

So polite, this North Sea spy game

by ANDREW WILSON, our Defence Correspondent

THE RAF photograph of a Soviet Bison bomber being escorted away from Britain by Lightning interceptors disclosed last week only one incident in a game of high-altitude peek-a-boo which has been going on continuously for a considerable time.

In one week recently there were 16 interceptions of various types of Soviet aircraft on reconnaissance over the North Sea.

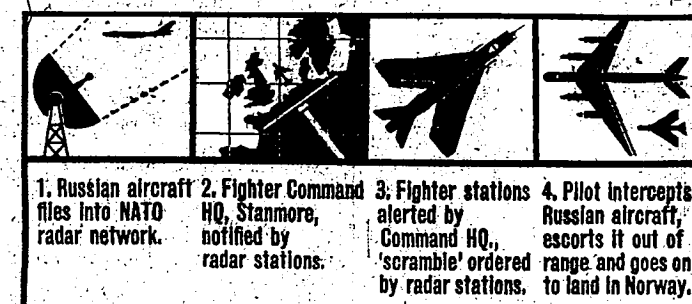
Most of the aircraft—Bison, Bear and Badger bombers—have returned to their bases in northern Russia without venturing closer than 100 miles off the British mainland. But one has flown within 10 miles of the Shetland Islands.

The object of these missions is thought to be threefold: (1) oblique

radar photography, which at the most common interception altitude (about 38,000 ft), becomes possible up to 240 miles from the coast; (2) electronic searching for NATO radar frequencies; a mission also performed by Soviet fighters; (3) testing the alertness of NATO air defences.

The four-engined Bison, with a 7,000-mile range, is a newcomer to the North Sea reconnaissance game. The most common 'intruder' is the turbo-propeller Bear, which is capable, in its strike role, of attacking targets in North America. During the past month, for unexplained reasons, the Bears have been flying farther south than they used to.

No sinister motives are attributed to the Russians, who are legally entitled to fly where they wish, so long as they do not infringe our airspace. Moreover, their pilots are said to act very correctly. But, the Soviet



patrols, including night movements, present a round-the-clock challenge to the alertness of RAF Fighter Command.

First warning of a Russian aircraft approaching is an identified 'blip' on the network of NATO radar screens stretching far north and south of the British Isles. Such blips are

immediately checked against the flight plans which must be filed by all civil aircraft and are supplied every day to Command headquarters at Stanmore, near London.

If there is no registered flight corresponding with the 'blip' Fighter Command authorises the appropriate fighter units to 'scramble' (take off

for action). But the actual order to take off is given by a master radar station, which knows the intruder's course, the best interception point and, therefore, the right moment to get airborne.

Lightnings on alert can take off in seconds and reach 40,000 ft in two minutes. But for peacetime interceptions they more often fly subsonically towards their target, conserving super-sonic capacity until it is wanted. The final interception is made by the aircraft's own radar and computer, giving the pilot his course. He does not actually see his quarry until he is within a couple of miles of it.

The interceptor stays with the intruder for about 10 minutes. The Russian crew wave coffee breakers from their cockpit. The RAF responds with V-signs. If the Russian aircraft is taking its time—and most of them are—the interceptors may 'shadow' it in turns. Or they may follow the Russians across the North Sea and land in Norway.

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