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Letters

Vol. 33 No. 5 · 3 March 2011

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Unfair to Marty

Geoffrey Nice writes about the Swiss senator Dick Marty's report to the Council of Europe on the inhuman treatment of prisoners by members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which may have included the murder of some headless prisoners in order to extract and sell their vital organs (*LRB*, 3 February). The former deputy prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) – which was responsible for the monstrous five-year-long prosecution of Slobodan Milosevic that sent the defendant to his grave before he could complete his defence – gives the impression that he has demolished Dick Marty report by refuting some Serbian newspaper reports about a mysterious 'witness known as K144'.

K144 is a straw man. There is no mention of him in the Marty report. The report, mandated and adopted by an overwhelming majority of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, makes it clear that numerous witnesses, mostly ethnic Albanians, were interviewed and would be willing to testify publicly to the crimes if they did not fear for their lives. Nice is disingenuous when he criticises the Marty report for not giving the names of these witnesses. Marty will only provide names to judicial authorities with a credible witness protection programme. Such caution is absolutely necessary given Kosovo's record of large-scale witness intimidation and even murder, which, for example, obliged the ICTY to acquit a clan leader Ramush Haradinaj for lack of evidence. Nice merely says that Haradinaj has been 'accused of witness tampering'. (Haradinaj is currently facing retrial.)

The basic problem is that there is no judicial authority willing and able to investigate the numerous criminal activities linked to the KLA. The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), sent to try to impose some form of judicial order, suffers from a dependence on unreliable interpreters and a

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arousing the hostility of the local Albanian population. The result has been impunity for KLA leaders, notably the US favourite, Prime Minister Hashim

Nice doesn't conclude by calling for a proper judicial investigation, but by suggesting that Thaci should resign, apparently in order to make dealing with Kosovo less embarrassing for its Western sponsors. Nice's negative view of Martyr report is consistent with his former role at the ICTY, which has served primarily to justify Nato's bombing war of 1999 by criminalising Serbs and offering excuses for the crimes of the other parties to the tragic conflicts that destroyed former Yugoslavia.

Diana Johnstone

Paris

Revolutionary Events

Adam Shatz touches on a few of the myths exploded by the revolutionary events in Egypt, but doesn't quite explode the one that was subscribed to, in their different ways, by both Tony Blair and Osama bin Laden (*LRB*, 17 February). This was the belief that the Arab masses would never act on their own behalf to create a better world, however envisaged, and so military intervention would be necessary. Many thousands have died as a result of that myth.

Keith Flett

London N17

A Serious Man

Iain Sinclair's treatment of John Major – 'a gap-year, work experience prime minister sleepwalking through the job as a profile-raising opportunity' – is wonderfully imperceptive (*LRB*, 20 January). I used to say hard things about politicians for a living, but I tried to watch the facts. In 1990, John Major is not just membership of the ERM, but the pound's too high valuation there had been insisted on by Margaret Thatcher. A speculator's bouncy castle, it was a horrid start. However Major had one asset: exit meant devaluation. With Kenneth Clarke, he managed the consequences wholly successfully, as ministers after 1972 and 1968 did not. There followed four years and more of rising economic growth, inward investment and employment. In foreign policy, Major turned the Gulf to good use by securing the Kurdish enclaves, which are still working. Both of action represented good, intelligent government. A contemptible petty bias in Sinclair's eyes, the evidence shows Major as exercising serious purposes evident since 1997.