



Simon Schama:
America will never
be the same again

G2 Page 8



Lady Macbeth,
four-letter needle-
work and learning
from Cate Blanchett.
Judi Dench in her prime
G2, page 22

Chris Patten:
How the Tories
lost the plot

This Section Page 32



Amy Jenkins:
The me generation
is now in charge

G2 Page 2

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Backlash over Blair's school revolution

City academy plans condemned by ex-education secretary Morris

An acceleration of plans to reform state education, including the speeding up of the creation of the independently funded city academy schools, will be announced today by Tony Blair.

But the increasingly controversial nature of the policy was highlighted when the former education secretary Estelle Morris accused the government of "serial meddling" in secondary education.

In an article in tomorrow's Education Guardian she writes: "Another round of structural change won't by itself achieve universally high standards. Worse than that it could be a distraction. In five years' time, whose children will be going to these new academies? Will choice and market forces once again squeeze out the children of the disadvantaged?"

Today, the prime minister will say: "It is not government edict that is determining the fate of city academies, but parent power. Parents are choosing city academies, and that is good enough for me."

He will also set out the future of local

education authorities as "commissioners of education and champions of standards", rather than direct providers.

The academies replace failing schools, normally on new sites, in challenging inner-city areas. The number of academies will rise to between 40 and 50 by next September. This month 10 city academies started, bringing the total to 27, and Mr Blair will insist the government is on target to reach 200 by 2010. City academies have proved to be among the most hotly debated aspects of his public sector reforms. The Commons education select committee has criticised them as divisive and teaching union leaders have also denounced the expansion of an "unproven" scheme.

However, this will not deter Mr Blair who will point out that in the last academic year the proportion of pupils receiving five good GCSEs in city academies rose by 8 per cent, four times the national average.

Patrick Wintour and Rebecca Smithers

4»

UK link to terror snatches

The United Nations is investigating the CIA's use of British airports when abducting terrorism suspects and flying them to prisons around the world where they are alleged to have been tortured. The inquiry, led by Martin Scheinin, a special rapporteur from the UN Commission on Human Rights, comes as an investigation by the Guardian reveals the full extent of the British logistical support. Aircraft used in the secret operations have flown into the UK at least 210 times since the September 11 terror attacks. Foreign Office officials have denied all knowledge of the

secret flights, telling MPs on the foreign affairs select committee that the ministry has "not granted any permissions for the use of UK territory or air space", and suggesting to the Guardian that it was "just a conspiracy theory" Privately, Ministry of Defence officials admit that they are aware of the flights, and that they have decided to turn a blind eye. "It is not a matter for the MoD," said one. "The aircraft use our airfields. We don't ask any questions. They just happen to be behind the wire."

Ian Cobain and Richard Norton-Taylor

13»

Bad'day mate Aussies lose their grip



Shane Warne at the Oval yesterday. Sport » Photograph: Kieran Doherty/Reuters

Column five

The shape of things to come

Alan Rusbridger

Welcome to the Berliner Guardian. No, we won't go on calling it that for long, and yes, it's an in-legant name.

We tried many alternatives, related either to size or to the European origins of the format. In the end, "the Berliner" stuck. But in a short time we hope we can revert to being simply the Guardian.

Many things about today's paper are different.

Starting with the most obvious, the page size is smaller. We believe the format combines the convenience of a tabloid with the sensibility of a broadsheet. Next most conspicuously, we have changed the paper's titlepiece and headline fonts. Gone is the striking 80s David Hillman design – adapted over the years – which mixed Garamond, Miller and Helvetica fonts. In their place is a new font, Guardian Egyptian, which is, we hope, elegant, intelligent and highly legible.

The next difference you may notice is colour. The paper is printed on state-of-the-art MAN Roland ColorMan presses, which give colour on every page – something that sets us apart from every other national newspaper. The effect will be to give greater emphasis and power to our photography and, we hope, make the whole paper a touch less forbidding than it sometimes may have seemed in the past.

G2 has also shrunk: it is now a full colour, stapled news magazine with newspaper deadlines. Sport has expanded into its own section – at least 12 pages every day, again in full colour.

As the week progresses you'll notice further changes. There are one or two new sections. There will be new columnists, both in G1 and G2 – most notably the pre-eminent commentator Simon Jenkins, who joins us from the Times to write on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Continued on page 2 »

National

Police chief blames Orangemen for riots

More than 2,000 police officers and soldiers clashed with loyalists in Belfast in the worst riots for more than a decade. The violence erupted after a small Orange Order parade was rerouted by fewer than 100 metres away from Catholic homes. Hugh Orde, Northern Ireland chief constable, accused Orangemen of taking part in and stoking up the riots, which spread to Ballymena, Antrim, Carrickfergus, Larne, Ballyclare, Glengormley and Ahoghill. More than 30 police and soldiers were injured as rioters used automatic weapons, petrol bombs and blast bombs to attack the security forces, who responded with 450 baton rounds.

3»

Law

Judges may block deportations

The government faces a confrontation with judges over its attempts to deport terrorist suspects to Middle Eastern and north African countries with poor human rights records. Four appeal court judges who may have to decide whether deportations can go ahead have told the Guardian they will refuse to rubber-stamp the UK's human rights deals with countries such as Jordan and Algeria. Despite being urged by the home secretary to respect the country-to-country agreements, the judges say they will demand evidence that the assurances are "worth the paper they're written on".

15»

International

Israeli troops leave Gaza after 38 years

Israel lowered its flag in the Gaza Strip for the last time yesterday as the government declared an end to 38 years of occupation and troops withdrew from demolished Jewish settlements. The last troops were expected to leave overnight. Palestinian leaders described it as a "liberation", but said Israeli controls on border crossings and other restrictions maintained the occupation. Thousands of Palestinians gathered on roads leading to the settlements, ready to storm the rubble once the last troops were gone. A 12-year-old boy was seriously wounded by gunfire from an Israeli tank still guarding the settlements.

17»

Financial

Sky's Premiership rights under threat

BSkyB's 13-year monopoly over live broadcasts of Premier League football games is under immediate threat. Media regulator Ofcom has told the European Commission it should force whoever holds the Premiership TV rights to sell a number of games to rival broadcasters. A separate regulatory plan under consideration in Brussels could see individual broadcasters limited to 50% of the live games put up for sale. The League, meanwhile, is resisting all attempts to remove its "exclusivity premium," arguing that clubs' finances will be undetermined. The current rights deal expires in 2007.

26»

Bigger isn't always better...