

# Londoner's Diary

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## Galic charm wins the day at America debate

"THE AMERICAN Empire is a force for good" was the subject of last night's Intelligence' debate but there was no question who the audience thought was a force for good.

Dashing French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy, who was speaking in favour of the motion, stole the show with his Gallic wit and charm. His presence helped guarantee a sell-out crowd including Jemima Khan and novelist Ian

of the motion, were opposed by former Middle East reporter Charles Glass, American policy guru Clyde Prestowitz and Sir Samuel Brittan, columnist on the FT. Prestowitz won plenty of applause for attacking Tony Blair as Bush's "poodle", but the motion was carried by 372 votes against 264.

A satisfied BHL couldn't resist celebrating by unbuttoning his shirt to the navel, as his wont.

## Korean park and ride

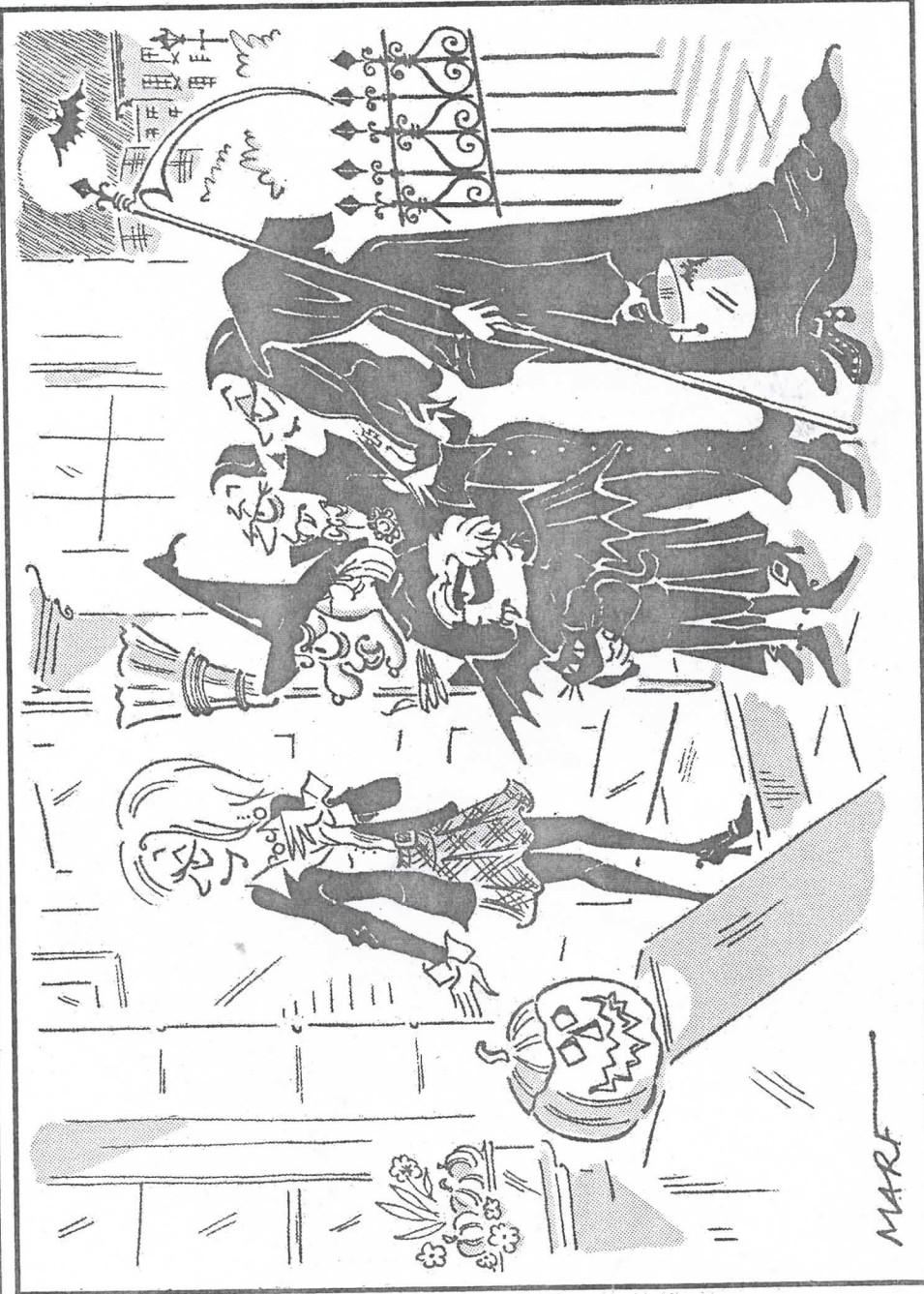
HATS OFF to the Queen for standing up to the Axis of Evil. Her Majesty normally sends out her landau to collect newly arrived ambassadors from their residences to meet her at Buckingham Palace. But the first incumbent of the new North Korean Embassy Ri Yong Ho, was not afforded



Levy and Shawcross: French philosopher wowed audience

Rankin at the Royal Geographical Society.

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"It's OK, dear, it's just Michael Howard's people canvassing for support."

with liveried footman, down the A40, so the Palace originally agreed to meet them half way. But the Queen stood firm and in the end the North Koreans, resplendent in morning coats and tails, could only negotiate a lift in the landau from Belgravia, and had to make their own way there.

"They were collected from a hotel in a place approaching Belgravia," says the Palace. "A horse-drawn carriage would have been impossible in West

## Skyscrapers plan blocked

IT'S A triumph for Chelsea residents over developers who planned two residential skyscrapers near Lots Road power station. Councillors rejected the plan at this week's planning committee meeting at Kensington Town Hall by 13 votes to five.

defeat for the chairman and vice chairman who voted in favour of the proposal," says Terence Bendixson of the Chelsea Society.

"It was unprecedented. The twin towers would have ruined the view for miles down the river."

## Wrong time for Panorama

were fully covered, there was little mention of the intervening three decades. Some were also underwhelmed by Director-General Greg Dyke's speech. If the programme is as important as he insisted, why is it still scheduled in a graveyard slot on Sunday nights? "It's on too late," lamented former *Panorama* senior reporter Tom Mangold. "*Panorama* should be on much earlier." However Dyke dismissed

BARONESS JAY, Michael

ably more anti-Bush than any one else on the panel, BHL said he was fed up with anti-Americanism — "I know, as a Frenchman, we invented it," he joked. But he pointed out in the battle between good and evil ("George and the dragon," as he pronounced it), it was important to back America.

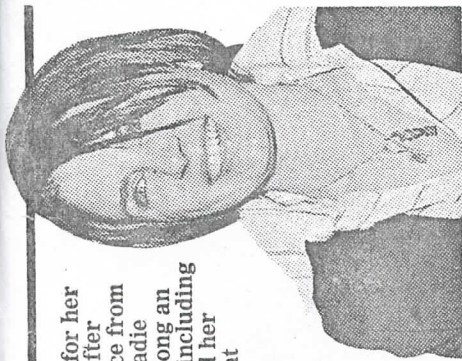
The audience loved it. Even BHL's fellow speaker William Shawcross, recently named one of the ten sexiest men in London, was eclipsed by the magnetic Frenchman. Shawcross, BHL and the *Evening Standard's* Anne McElvoy, who were in favour



**Queen and Ri Yong Ho: carriage wasn't sent to embassy in Ealing**

this privilege yesterday. Since the Korean Embassy is located in Ealing, it was deemed too far to send the horse-drawn carriage, replete

**WHERE does a girl go for her divorce party? Hours after obtaining a 'quicke' divorce from Jude Law on Wednesday, Sadie Frost (pictured) brought along an entourage of close friends including Welsh actor Rhys Ifans and her lawyer for a dinner party at Claridge's, having earlier attended the launch of the newly refurbished Wedgwood store in Regent Street. To emphasise the celebratory mood, a beaming Sadie was sporting a necklace inscribed with the word "Love".**



Ancram and Andrew Marr joined BBC supremos Greg Dyke, Richard Sambrook and Lorraine Heggessey at a party celebrating 50 years of *Panorama* at Riverside Building, SE1. *Newsnight* reporter Michael Crick also showed up, even though he is suspended from the BBC in the light of his role in Betsygate.

The decision to show a compilation of memorable moments from the BBC's flagship investigative programme on a giant screen did not meet with universal approval. Although the Richard Dimbleby and present era under current editor Mike Robinson

slot on a Sunday evening," he told me. "It means I can see it."

**WHO SAYS the Lib Dems aren't effective? A press release lands on my desk from its parliamentary Press Office: "Malcolm Bruce MP, Liberal Democrat Shadow DTI Secretary, has written to Patricia Hewitt to urge her to intervene to bring to an end the escalating and deeply damaging disputes affecting Royal Mail." Let's hope Hewitt receives the letter one day.**

# The National Theatre's smash hit production transfers to the West End

# JUMPERS

Tom Stoppard

'Simon Russell Beale and Essie Davis are superb.

**An irresistible hit'**

Daily Telegraph



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