



Internet Explorer cannot display the webpage



Most likely causes:

## When liberals attack!

**Padraig Reidy**

October 12, 2007 4:00 PM

[http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/padraig\\_reidy/2007/10/when\\_liberals\\_attack.html](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/padraig_reidy/2007/10/when_liberals_attack.html)

Good time for spats, isn't it?

Not the shoe protectors, obviously (though it's always a good time for those), but the little slappy fights our great, good, and too often average cultural commentators get themselves in to. In the past few months we've had some real quality bitchfests, with admittedly a pretty small, rotating cast. [Cohen vs Hari](#) was good fun: [Berman v Buruma](#) was a real heavyweight tussle, [Anthony vs Milne](#) set Cif alight. Then there was [Eagleton vs Rushdie](#). Then [Eagleton vs Amis](#). Just this week, we've had [Alibhai-Brown vs Amis](#) (actually a spinoff from [Eagleton vs Amis](#)). And last night, at the ICA, on the eve of Eid (Eid Mubarak all, by the way) a few of us were lucky enough to witness round one of Amis vs Chris Morris. I'm amazed Mr Amis has the energy. But, judging by the way he gleefully smoked rollies in the ICA cinema, he's absolutely spoiling for a fight with anyone who wants to step up, including the elfin safety.

The [event](#) was ostensibly a cosy chat/book plug featuring Amis and Andrew Anthony. What it turned in to was a bizarre liberal version of a cage fight, with satirist Morris leading the mob.

The tone was set by the man from the ICA's introduction. Anthony and Amis, he told us, had some "controversial views on Islamist violence" and were here to "explain themselves and defend their standpoints".

What were these controversial viewpoints that were to be defended? Amis's was clearly worrying: in an [interview](#) last year, in what he now [claims](#) was merely a mind experiment, some thinking aloud, Amis intimated that he had felt at times that "the Muslim community will have to suffer until it gets its house in order. What sort of suffering? Not letting them travel. Deportation - further down the road. Curtailing of freedoms. Strip-searching people who look like they're from the Middle East or from Pakistan ... Discriminatory stuff, until it hurts the whole community and they start getting tough with their children ..."

Anthony, Amis's co-accused, has not so far even permitted himself the luxury of such experiment. His controversial view? That Islamist terror is wrong, and that people should not have to live under religious tyranny.

Anthony started us off by referring to [Qutb's Milestones](#), comparing Qutb's belief in an absolute submission to religion to the bondage enthusiasts' belief that true liberation comes when one is bound and gagged. The difference? At least fetishists keep it to themselves.

We then rambled through the usual stuff, ie the arguments put forward in Anthony's [Fall Out](#) and Amis's [essay "Horrorism"](#).

Then, the floor, and the floodgates, were opened.

First question: "In view of the fear over Islamism, is it time to bring communism back?"

"Er, no", came the polite answer. "You loon", the impolite, unexpressed addendum.

It was at this point that TV's greatest satirist, the shaggy-haired Swift of our age, took his turn to speak.

And what a wonderful turn it was.

"How many members of the Muslim Brotherhood have you actually spoken to in your research?" he pronounced, in the tone of the man who's sure he's got a dead cert, TKO, killer question.

"Er, quite a few, actually," replied Anthony.

Needless to say, Morris was somewhat deflated, as the haymaker he was sure would condemn his opponents to the canvas somehow fell short. But like any true champion, he kept plugging away.

"And you're saying they're all murderers," he jabbed.

"I think Islamists subscribe to a murderous ideology," parried Amis.

"So you mean they're all murderers?"

"No, but I believe the ideology they subscribe to is murderous."

This continued for what seemed like years, until Anthony deftly tagged Amis, and immediately set about the exposed belly of Morris's argument.

"For example, [insert name of prominent member of MCB, well known to Cif readers] supported Osama bin Laden right up to Sept 11 2001, a period including the Kenyan embassy bombings among others."

Morris, on the ropes, threw out the last lunge any southpaw can in these situations: "Well we supported Saddam Hussein."

At this point, your humble hack had to consider. Did "we", Chris? I certainly didn't, and I don't remember you doing it. Maybe you did, on your LBC show. I dunno, I didn't live in England then, so I may have missed it.

This was the signal for everyone else to bail in, raining shibboleths down with great fury: Israel, they cried. What about Israel? Won't somebody think of the Palestinians! This, of course, despite the fact that I don't ever remember Amis or Anthony saying anything anti-Palestinian. Remember - this is the liberal world, where disagreeing with Islamism is the same as hating Palestinians. Because, in this world, Palestinians aren't people - they're a rhetorical device. You'll score points in every argument as soon as you mention them.

Amis attempted to rally with a quick point about Israel being surrounded by hostile countries, but Morris slapped him down with the unanswerable "Oh my God, he's defending Israel now". Alas, in defending Israel, the once mighty pocket dynamo Amis had forgotten to defend himself. He reeled against the ropes, exposed. Badly exposed.

Then, the final hammer blow. A grizzled old heavyweight rose, extended an arm in Amis's direction, and proclaimed to the audience "You could read views like this man's in the Daily Telegraph!" With this, the fight was over. For if there is one thing worse than killing Palestinians, which Amis obviously does on a daily basis, it is having a view that might, possibly, be agreed with by someone who writes for the Telegraph.

With the thorough pounding complete, the undisputed belt of righteousness was retained, and the good people of liberal England could go home, happy that their great white hope, Chris "Killah" Morris, had vanquished the bad, bad men with their bad, bad ideas.