

Empire No More!

By Ken Coates,

Reviewed by Matt Carr

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Against the New Imperialism

The veteran socialist and peace campaigner Ken Coates occupies a special position on the British left. He is a founding member of European Nuclear Disarmament (END), the chairman of the [Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation](#), and a former Labour MEP who has twice been expelled from the party.

This collection of essays and short piece written over the past decade is unlikely to endear him to the New Labour heirarchy. For Coates remains one of the most lucid analysts of international politics from a leftist perspective. His long involvement in European parliamentary politics and pan-European activism has given him a very different orientation to the brave new US world that has mesmerised New Labour.

Whether he is discussing the Nato intervention in Kosovo, the war in Iraq or nuclear power politics at the beginning of the new century, his arguments are calm, lucid and difficult to refute. There is much to admire: a point by point rebuttal of foreign secretary Jack Straw's abject defence of Washington's revived 'star wars' programme; a powerful deconstruction of the 'benign imperialism espoused by the Foreign Office mandarin and New Labour foreign policy guru Robert Cooper; and a chilling analysis of the new direction of nuclear warfare.

Like E. P. Thompson, Coate's political thought is driven by morality rather than doctrine and steeped in libertarian sensibility that owes much to William Blake, from whose *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* the title of this book is taken. He is also an activist thinker, whose polemics are matched by practical

projects and proposals such as the [2002 Cordoba Dialogue on Peace and Human Rights](#), at which representatives of human rights movements in Europe and the US met with their counterparts from the Middle East.

END emerged from a similar beginnings in the early 1980s: its foundation was fuelled by a real sense of urgency resulting from the revived Cold War and militarism of the Reagan-Thatcher years. Coates has not lost that urgency, and both his writing and his activism reflect a passionate concern that the militarist fantasies of last century are already unleashing new horrors, and that the light of nuclear madness as the final instrument of imperial domination remains undimmed.

To Coates the great force that can counter these developments is the prospect of a revitalised international peace movement. These fine pieces are a significant contribution to that process.