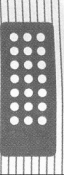


Detective Archer (Sam Riley) is under threat in the Nazi-run Britain of *SS-GB*

Jonathan Wright previews the pick of upcoming programmes

# TV & RADIO



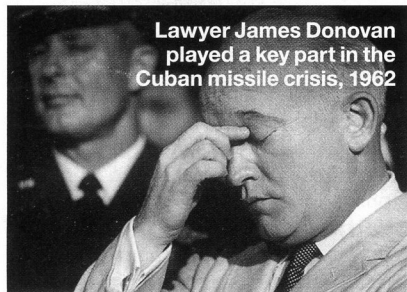
## Occupied territory

**SS-GB**

**TV** BBC One, scheduled for February

What if the Nazis had prevailed in 1940 and invaded Britain? Based on Len Deighton's 1978 novel, *SS-GB* imagines a country under occupation. It's not a great place to be a cop, as detective Douglas Archer (Sam Riley) learns when he investigates what initially seems to be a black market-linked murder case, only to find the SS scrutinising his every move.

Written by Neal Purvis and Robert Wade (noted for 007 films such as *Casino Royale* and *Skyfall*), *SS-GB* at heart explores the choice between collaboration and violent resistance. Kate Bosworth co-stars as an American journalist, Barbara Barga.



Lawyer James Donovan played a key part in the Cuban missile crisis, 1962

## Good to talk

**Friends and Foes: A Narrative History of Diplomacy**

**RADIO** Radio 4, scheduled for February

Despite their crucial role in shaping events, history is rarely told from the perspective of those at the front of international relations – diplomats. Presented by political scientist David Rothkopf, this 10-part weekday series makes good this lack as it deals with such subjects as the role of lawyer James Donovan (played by Tom Hanks in *Bridge of Spies*) in negotiations that helped avert disaster in the Cuban missile crisis, how to apply sanctions effectively, and issues around talking to terrorists. After a year when the notion of expertise came under attack, Rothkopf reaches the perhaps surprising conclusion that we're poised to see a renaissance of diplomacy.

## Notions of a nation

*Patrick Wright tells us about his new series on ideas of Englishness*



**The English Fix**

**RADIO** Radio 4, scheduled for February

The Brexit referendum brought the question of what it means to be English to the forefront of debates. Writer Patrick Wright concludes that it's an identity the English don't much think about – until they see England as somehow being challenged. "The idea of England is seen in relief against vividly imagined threats," he says, "so you only have an intense idea of England when you have an intense idea of things trying to extinguish it."

His new three-part series looks at "moments when the idea of England is being championed in opposition to modern forms of transformation": the agrarian revolution that so worried William Cobbett (1763–1835); the notion of elites, especially Fabian socialists, and an over-mighty state bearing down on ordinary Britons, championed by GK Chesterton (1874–1936); and disquiet over Britain's entry to the European Common Market as it played out in Kent in the early 1970s, when left-hand-drive foreign juggernauts alarmed the locals.

Cobbett and Chesterton are problematical figures, courageous in speaking up for ordinary people and admirable for their willingness to fight their corners, with a sense of longing for a lost golden age too. Cobbett had ideas about introducing new crops to help farmers, points out Wright, but generally thought the world had gone downhill since the Reformation.

With Chesterton, who championed 'little Englanders' as repositories of common sense and defended the pub as a great national institution, his opposition to modernity meant his work could be tinged with nostalgia. "He's the author of Nigel Farage's pint of beer, he anticipates so much," says Wright. "Chesterton is full of this picture of England as bamboozled by corrupt or pretentious elites."

Back in modern Britain, a powerful idea of Englishness that played into Brexit will lose its immediate external 'threat' when the UK leaves the EU. This will create cultural space to debate and reinvent Englishness. "The question of Englishness is now tied to the rebirth of society and the distribution of responsibilities within it," says Wright. **H**

Tower Bridge, a symbol of England, seen in the mid-20th century. But what does Englishness mean to us today?



**"You only have an intense idea of England when you have an intense idea of things trying to extinguish it"**



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