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AUTUMN/WINTER DIRECTIVE 1990

This directive is in four parts! But please don't be daunted. They don't all call for masses of thinking and writing. In fact Part III is a list and Part IV doesn't require any writing at all.

I have tried in Part I to get away from the heaviness of the last two directives but I'm afraid you can't escape entirely because the theme of Part II seemed so crucial.

Please be sure to put your replies to Parts I, II and III on separate sheets of paper so that they can be filed away separately.

PART I: CELEBRATIONS

We want to know which are the most important celebrations in your year but first - please start by telling us something, very briefly, about your family background. Please record your religious upbringing (if any) and your present religious practices and beliefs, your ethnic origins - where you and your family come from (maybe going back to your grandparents) and any other social or cultural factors which you think are relevant. This needs to be only a few lines long, unless of course you happen to have a very complicated family history!

Is there one big celebration in your year? Or several? Have you had any special occasions recently which you could describe? (Obviously some of you could write masses on this. If you've been involved in a lot of big events, just list them and then pick one to describe in more detail).

Please include details of special food and drink, dress, decorations, present-giving, special rituals or traditions, music, singing and dancing, how long the festivities lasted, how well (or badly) everyone behaved. Was it solemn or festive, or both? Was it a family occasion? Who attended the occasion? And who paid? Was the occasion photographed or video-taped? Any funny incidents?

Your last birthday. How did you spend it? Did you receive presents and cards? Who shared it with you? Was it a typical birthday? What do you recall about your childhood birthdays? (Please mention your age now).

PART II: THE GULF CRISIS

Please record your immediate reactions to the situation in the Middle East covering the following if you can: feelings about the main political figures involved, your reactions to military and diplomatic developments, to the hostage situation, to the Middle East generally and to the way Britain is involved and to media coverage. If you have personal experience of the Middle East, or relations in the Gulf, please say so.

Please turn over

As I write, there is unfortunately no way we can know how long the crisis will last. It would be very helpful if, even after you have sent us your initial responses, you could continue to keep a kind of log of your reactions to events. This could take the form of a 'Gulf Crisis' diary which you could either send in instalments or keep until you are returning your reply to Spring Directive next year.

PART III: MEMBERSHIP OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Please list everything you belong to, from the local darts team to OXFAM, from your trade union to your babysitting club. You should include local clubs, self-help groups, national & international associations, charitable organisations, pressure groups, religious groups, writers' circles, witches' covens, political parties, special interest groups, professional organisations, campaigns, discussion groups, coffee morning networks, motoring organisations, sports clubs, social clubs. If in doubt, list it.

Please make sure you explain what's on your list (eg don't just put initials). You could use the list above for headings. Please indicate how active you are in the organisation and if you hold office.

PART IV: AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!

Could you bear to part with a recent photo of yourself? We would like to add to your personal file a photo for posterity. Some wartime. Mass-Observers sent in a snap shot of themselves and it's wonderful to be able to see their faces fifty years later. I know some of you have already sent in photos so it would be good to have a comprehensive collection. It can be black and white or colour and any size. It doesn't have to be a passport-style mug shot or a professionally taken portrait. It can be a holiday snap and it doesn't matter who else is in it as long as you are clearly visible.

Please send it in with a caption on the back stating the date and place that the photo was taken and your VOLUNTEER NUMBER.

LABELS: The use of labels for your acknowledgement cards worked very well for us and we are enclosing another one with this directive. Please write your name and address on it and return it to us still on its backing when you send in your next contribution.

Our Freepost address

our usual address (stamp needed)

The Mass-Observation Archive
FREEPOST 2112
University of Sussex Library
BRIGHTON BN1 1ZX

The Mass-Observation Archive
The Library
University of Sussex
BRIGHTON BN1 9QL

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