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LM101

The mag ITN wants to gag

THE TONY BLAIR COMMANDMENTS

THOU SHALT NOT

smoke, drink,

or eat what you like;

have a gun, a knife

or a wild sex life;

watch, read

or download what

you want; bring up your

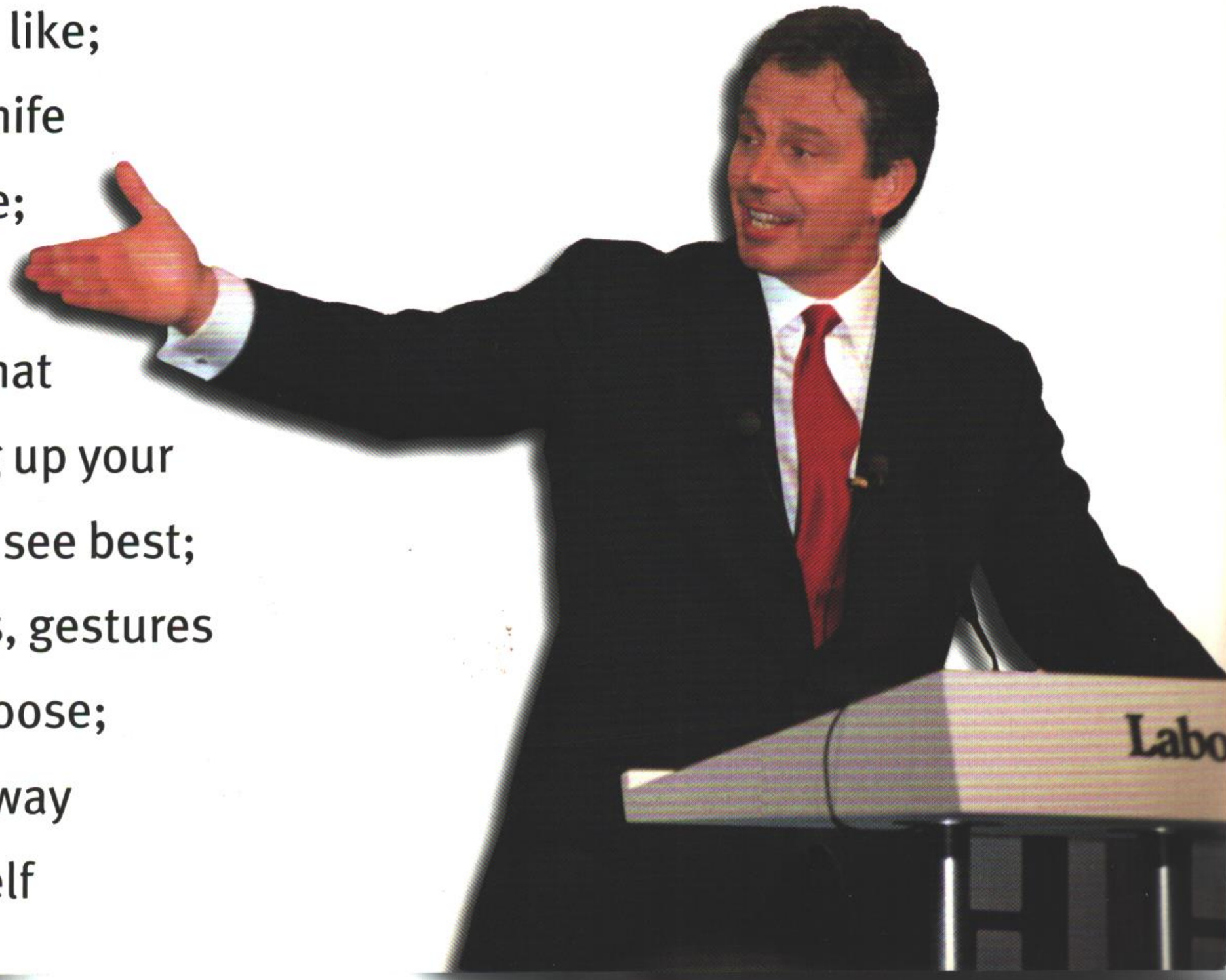
children as you see best;

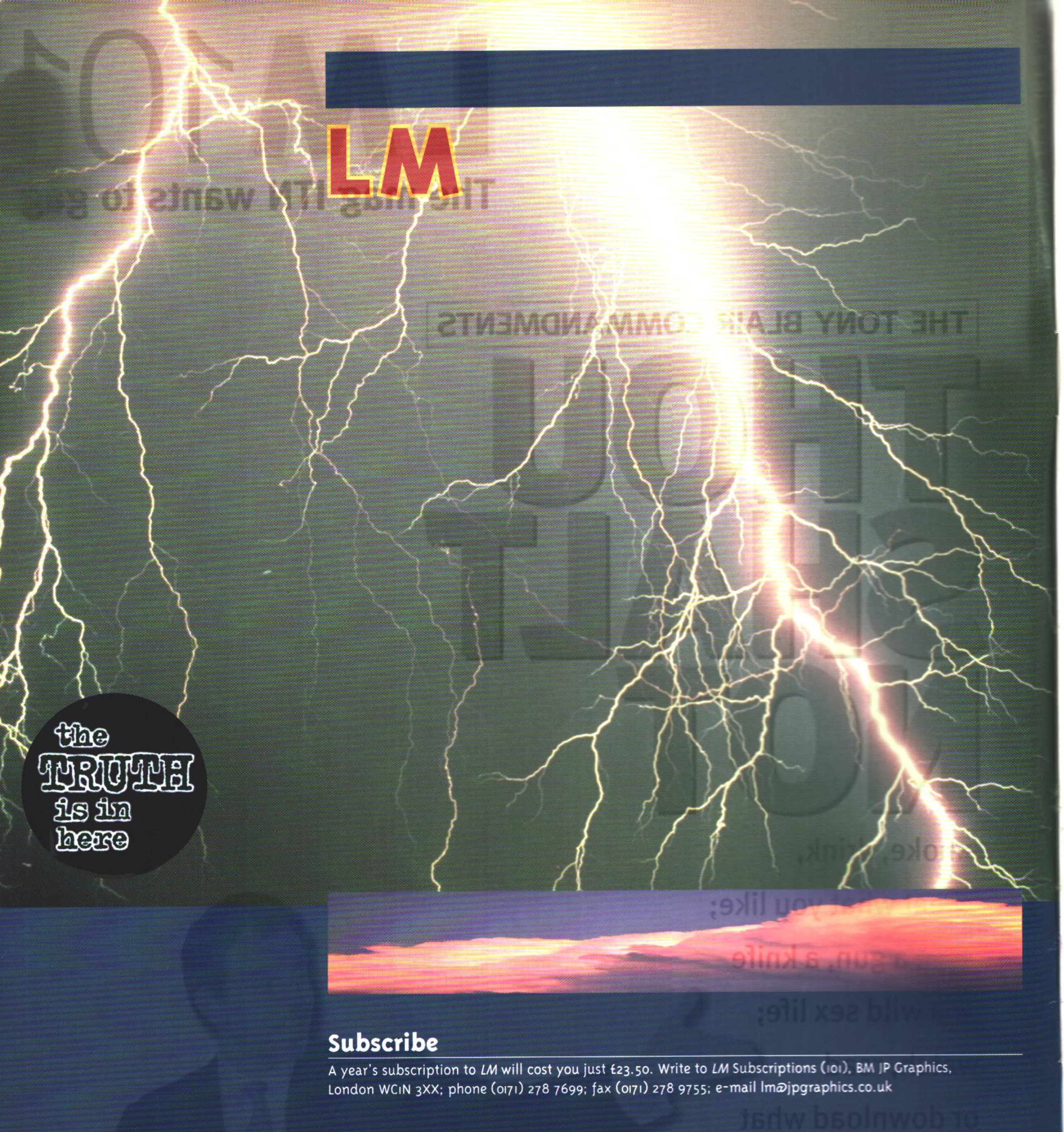
use what words, gestures

or jokes you choose;

or in any other way

think for yourself





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HAVE WE GOT NEWS FOR THEM

Contrary to the excited reports carried in several national newspapers and on BBC television, *LM* magazine did not support any candidates in the general election. We did, however, support two propositions which will be proved true sooner rather than later.

1. The worst pinstriped politician is better than the best white-suited journalist. Whatever their sins or self-interests, politicians selected by a party to stand for a set of policies are at least accountable to the electorate. That is democracy. By contrast, self-righteous journalists selected by the *Guardian* editor to stand for nothing except 'good' against 'evil' are accountable to nobody, with the possible exception of God. That is elitism.

2. However bad the Tories were, New Labour is going to be worse: more authoritarian, more dangerous, more dull.

Neither of these propositions, however, meant that we supported Neil Hamilton or anybody else at the polls on 1 May. Now, if the bright and bolshy Mrs Christine Hamilton had been standing...

LM101

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MICK HUME

Editor

THOU SHALT NOT

BRITAIN HAS NOT ONLY GOT A NEW government, but something approaching a new religion. It is a pseudo-religion that began to emerge under the old Tory regime, but can now take to the highest pulpits in the land in the hands of New Labour. And the central message of the sermon for today is Thou Shalt Not.

Thou shalt not smoke, eat or drink what you like; have a gun, a knife or a wild sex life; watch, read or download what you want; bring up your children as you see best; use what words, gestures or jokes you choose; or in any other way think for yourself.

It is not just that Blair's cabinet are a collection of churchy killjoys (although most of them are). The new religion has stepped in to fill the gap in public life created by the demise of the old politics.

The general election campaign confirmed that no political party today has a bold vision of how to improve society. Instead all sides now agree that there is no alternative to the market system, and no argument with the economic orthodoxy dictated by the financiers in the City and the Bank of England.

In which case, what exactly is it that Tony 'Time for a change' Blair can change? How can the new government address the widespread anxieties and insecurities of the age?

If social change and progress are off the agenda, all that remains is to try to alter things at the level of the individual, to control society by regulating how people behave. That is a major reason why, instead of a debate about policies and programmes for improving public life, so much discussion today focuses on our private affairs. It is why politicians and media commentators are falling over themselves to deliver moral sermons about how we ought to live our lives.

The new religion is moralising nineties-style—more about parenting classes and health promotion campaigns than fire and brimstone—but it is just as restrictive and sanctimonious as old-fashioned bible bashing. This is the natural territory of New Labour's neo-puritans, who do not have a libertarian bone in their bodies.

As we noted during the election campaign, instead of the politics of right and left we now have to contend with the pieties of right and wrong. Every issue, it seems, is being redefined as a simple moral question of good and evil. New Labour's plans for government read like a hit-list of laws aimed against the alleged evils of modern society: evil cigarettes, evil children, evil parents, evil neighbours, evil words, evil handguns, evil squeegee merchants. The holier-than-thou temper of politics today is summed up by the entry into parliament (thanks to New Labour and Lib Dem support) of BBC journalist Martin Bell, who basically stood for election as Snow White against the wicked witch.

As well as legitimising an authoritarian system of social controls and state regulation of personal behaviour, the new religion also has serious implications for democracy. New Labour claims to stand for no group in particular, but to represent something called the Greater Good. New Labour's moral mission to clean up politics rests upon the assumption that most people are basically greedy and selfish and cannot be trusted to put the good of the community before their own interests. This is what lies behind the preoccupation with 'sleaze'. The message is that people should not be involved in politics to represent particular interests, but to uphold the Greater Good of all.

THE NEW RELIGION IS ROOTED IN THE PREJUDICE WEAKLINGS IN NEED OF PROTECTION

The problem is, however, that democracy has always been a contest between parties which represent competing interests. It is hard to think of one important issue on which you could secure the universal agreement of 'the community'. What is now condemned as greed, selfishness, corruption and sleaze used to be called standing up for yourself, or for your class, or for whichever group you aligned yourself with. That contest is the lifeblood of democratic politics, and has been a motor of social progress.

By contrast, those who preach the need for a higher morality today seek to separate themselves from the base urges of the greedy masses. Like the priesthood of old, if they are to uphold the faith they feel the need to be insulated against the selfish demands of the sinful mob below. Which means that democratic accountability is out. Instead, we can expect to see New Labour concentrating more power in the hands of appointed 'experts'—that is, those who are far enough removed from the madding crowd to know what is best for the rest of us.

In the first few days after its election, New Labour handed over control of financial policy to the governor of the Bank of England, made the chairman of BP a trade minister, and announced that Lord Nolan would be a permanent policeman of elected MPs. Tony Blair has also pledged to appoint a US-style drug czar, and reportedly took the Dunblane parents into the cabinet room to ask them to ensure that home office ministers kept to the right line on gun control.

This collection of bankers, businessmen, law lords, officials and high profile victims collected a grand total of nil votes in the general election. Yet as guardians of the new moral code, able to rise above the supposedly sleazy interests of democratic politics, they will exercise more power in Blair's Britain than almost anybody who was elected.

IF YOU WERE THINKING OF PROTESTING against any of these trends, you have a problem. The new religion enforces a strict orthodoxy on what can and cannot be discussed. Thou shalt not make controversial statements, express strong opinions or otherwise offend against the new moral code. The bans and restrictions placed upon political broadcasts by the far-right, anti-abortionists and Irish republicans during the election campaign, along with Blair's plans to sterilise debate during prime minister's question time, give a flavour of what we can expect. There is no place for such a dangerous concept as free speech for all in Blair's campaign to clean up Britain.

Those who cross the line and step outside the increasingly narrow terms of 'legitimate debate' can expect to be excommunicated as

heretics. Those who even question the rigid moral framework of good and evil imposed on issues from Dunblane to Bosnia can expect to be branded as blasphemers. That is already the frequent experience of *LM* magazine.

The appeal of the new religion is that it keys into the deep mood of cynicism in society today. It chimes in with the widespread loss of faith in the human potential, which has in turn created a willingness to question basic human motives such as self-interest and basic civilised values such as democracy and freedom. Above all, the new religious creed of Thou Shalt Not is rooted in the contemporary prejudice that we are all weaklings in need of protection and guidance; that in the words of the actor Gary Oldman during the recent Cannes festival, 'We are a lot sicker than we think we are. Most people need therapy'.

In fact what 'most people need' is not therapy, but freedom. The freedom to live without having their aspirations and passions continually constrained by the new moral army of experts,

THAT WE ARE AND GUIDANCE

policemen and caring professionals. As James Heartfield argues elsewhere in this issue of *LM*, freedom from the state has always been a prerequisite for liberation and emancipation. And never more so than today.

That is why *LM* is making a stand for free speech, by launching the Fight for the Right to be Offensive. The cause of freedom demands that we insist upon our right to blaspheme against religions new and old, to speak the truth as we find it without worrying about offending public opinion, and to refuse to bend the knee before the inquisitors of the new religion.

When Tony Blair told the first post-election meeting of his MPs that New Labour were not the masters, but the people's servants, you knew we were in for a hard time. It was the false humility of a religious leader who holds all the real power in his hands, like a Pope kissing the dirt before telling the assembled multitude how they should live. Make no mistake, they are our masters, and they are going to let us know it. Anybody with any illusions to the contrary will not know what hit them as Tony Blair's commandments ring around the nation in the months ahead.

Volunteers for the alliance of amoral, offensive, blasphemous heretics, one step forward.

THE FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO BE OFFENSIVE

We might still have the formal right to free speech. But that can mean nothing unless we can exercise the right to be offensive.

Today it seems as if anything that can be adjudged offensive either to 'decent people' or to some delicate minority it can automatically be ruled out of order. Offensive opinions, language, gestures, films, books, art, TV shows, adverts and jokes have all been censored, cut, punished or withdrawn in order to protect public sensibilities.

Yet it is surely only the controversial and the offensive that we need worry about protecting. The mainstream and the conventional can look after itself.

Since Galileo was convicted of heresy for insisting that the Earth was not the centre of the Universe, the heralds of the new have always been seen as offensive. Every social or scientific advance worth having, from contraception and the railways to votes for women and the abolition of slavery, began by outraging the conventions of its time.

Offending the set prejudices of public opinion has always been the first step towards popularising a more forward-looking outlook. If a few had not insisted upon their right to be offensive, humanity might have nice manners but it would still be somewhere in the caves.

In the stultifying atmosphere of today, there is an especially pressing need for a full discussion of possible alternatives for a society which seems to be at a dead-end. Yet at the moment we require open minds, the insecure are seeking to close down debate, control what can be said and outlaw anything 'extreme' or 'offensive'.

It is only the CONTROVERSIAL that we need worry about PROTECTING. The conventional can look after itself

In response to this dire state of affairs, it is time for those of us who are concerned about freedom and democratic debate to insist upon our right to tell it like it is, to bust every social taboo, to blaspheme in the face of all religiosity and outrage public opinion. In short, we should fight for the right to be offensive.

Free speech should not be constrained either by bans, libel laws or 'responsible' self-censorship. In a world of adults, we should expect to be able to speak for ourselves, to judge for ourselves and to stand up for ourselves. Anything less is an offence against freedom.

THE PICTURE THAT FOOLED THE WORLD

I have only recently started reading your publication after being approached by someone publicising your 'campaign' to ban spoons. I am glad I subscribed when I did, as the next issue I received included Thomas Deichmann's article ('The Picture that Fooled the World', February) exposing ITN's portrayal of the war in former Yugoslavia.
I was only 14 when these pictures were broadcast, but when I saw the picture of Fikret Alic I recognised it immediately. I wish to pledge my full support for your campaign.
I genuinely hope a precedent is not set that allows the people who we rely on for news to silence those who point out when they have got it wrong; either through negligence, accident, or design.
CHRIS CLARKE *Birmingham*

I both subscribe to *LM* magazine and regularly watch the ITN news in the hope that I can reach some understanding of what is going on in the world. Andrew Hogg (letters, April) wonders at Thomas Deichmann's motives, but at the risk of providing an alternative 'greater good', Deichmann's article and the response to it have opened up a debate that has been enlightening and of value to those of us who simply want to know the truth.

It seems to me that the sniping and innuendo against Deichmann is a case of 'shoot the messenger'.
MARK TAYLOR *London*

Trnopolje (or Thornfield) is a thorny subject not just for ITN, but raises serious questions about the journalistic profession and its too cosy relationships with the money and power elites in Western societies.

In the former Yugoslavia there are other thorny fields: the Vatican's realisation of the nearly 80-year-old Intermarrium project and the new Croatia; events in Croatian Krajina and the absence of journalistic curiosity about the destruction of one of the oldest European cultures. Another thorny field, Srebrenica, can prove to be a major embarrassment. What has really happened there?

Many media organisations seem to hire journalists with the ability to become passionate on cue from their masters. Your magazine keeps the faith in a free press alive.
BIANCA SUSAK *Alexandria, Virginia USA*

NEW LABOUR, SAME OLD TORIES?

You talk about a 'Nightmare on Downing Street' (May) now that New Labour has come to power. But I think people are facing the recurring nightmare which they are already familiar with, ie, a continuation of what has already been done by the Tories, but with new scary monsters (Jack Straw for Michael Howard, Gordon Brown for Kenneth Clarke, etc) in the starring roles.

The Conservative Party has always been the first choice of the capitalist class. But on certain occasions—this is one of them; the last days of Ted Heath were another—the first choice makes such a mess of things as to put itself beyond selection. At which point the B team is brought on stage, in a flurry of fanfares and recommendations, eg, the *Sun*, which are normally denied it. And hey presto!, they get elected.

The 1997 general election strikes me as being another example of the B team being sent in temporarily to do the first team's job. In which case it is wrong to say that Labour will be worse than the Tories. It would be more correct to say that, for the time being at least, Labour will be doing the Tories' work for them.
STEVEN DEAN *Warwick*

ARRESTING IMAGE

There is growing concern about a rising paedophile movement in Stoke-on-Trent. My friend there, who is studying fine art, has had a sordid piece banned from her exhibition. She mapped a half-naked child onto a half-naked woman.

The irony is that my friend was trying to illustrate how a child grows up. Clearly such development is something the thought-police would like to arrest.
BARRY CURTIS *University of Kent*

HIGH-HANDED BANS

Channel 4 was widely praised for refusing to show the party political broadcast by the British National Party. As an Asian woman, I would like to say that I am more offended by Channel 4's high-handed attitude than by anything the half-witted BNP might have said to me.

I am offended because, firstly, Channel 4 is patronising me by suggesting that I would not be able to cope with the BNP's moronic message. Secondly, because Channel 4 has tampered with my right to have the full range of political policies presented to me, and to make up my own mind. Thirdly, because someone at Channel 4 clearly thinks they have the right to adjudicate as to what can be allowed into political debate, and what must be left out. This is a much greater threat to democracy than cranky John Tyndall and his pub-full of social inadequates.

Channel 4, I would like to know the basis on which you have formed such a high opinion of yourselves, and such a low opinion of me.
D PATEL *Ealing, London*

THE END OF CLASS POLITICS?

Frank Füredi makes me laugh ('Class politics cannot be rebuilt, regenerated or rescued today', May). After dismissing people today as fearful, atomised and anti-political, he asks us all to strengthen the conviction of our world-changing potential. The same effect can be achieved by declaring that the world is Sin and we must accept the Lord Jesus Christ.

Admonitions without *some* support in society or a *few* proposals about where to look for such are idealism. Save us *LM*. Your will be done.
MIKE BELBIN *London SW3*

Frank Füredi's article 'Class politics cannot be rescued today' has prompted me to raise the question 'Is it possible to make any difference at all today?'. I read and enjoyed *The Point is to Change It*—it is a thought-provoking critique of our times. But I fail to discern from it 'how we can set about changing society'. Frank is right that class politics cannot be rebuilt, regenerated or rescued today. But what this surely means is that your current campaigns or message cannot make a difference.

When I talk to people about the environment, food scares, victimhood and crime, I do not feel I am contributing to turning around the political situation. The barrier is objective. In the context of a situation without class struggle, I cannot make a difference. 'Those who are waiting and hoping for a revival of class politics or class solidarity have missed the fundamental changes at work', says Frank. But without a revival of class politics the project of social transformation is finished. When Frank says 'contemporary forms of consciousness in our atomised societies cannot be used as the foundation for a more developed politics of solidarity', he can only mean that it is not worth trying to make any kind of difference today.

How do you see class struggle re-emerging from where we are? We are left waiting for a rejection by wider society of the current political trends. Yet those trends themselves are founded upon the belief that there is no alternative (TINA). You speak of 'the demoralising consequences of Tina', but you cannot combat Tina by merely pointing out its demoralising consequences. The belief in Tina rests on recently experienced history. Tina is immovable. Does this mean that your Midnight in the Century thesis (*LM*, December 1990) was wrong all along?

The decline of subjectivity cannot be combated by selling *LMs* on the Dunblane issue. You can convince people individually that we are witnessing a decline of subjectivity, and that that is a bad thing, but they will experience it as an objective phenomenon. The logical consequence of Frank's article is that all we can do is wait—batten down the hatches until a new political trend sets in. He points out that class politics and socialism are abstractions, but then so is a struggle against the culture of limitations. How can you regroup 'all those who believe human beings should play for high stakes' in the abstract, without setting out an anti-capitalist stall? And yet how can you sell anti-capitalism when the labour movement has collapsed?
DAVID *Kent*

CONTEMPT FOR EQUAL OPPS

Jennie Bristow ('Storm in a melting pot', April) dresses up the incidents over the Bath University equal opportunities policy with provocative language, serving no other purpose than to vilify equal opportunities officers, and Emma Howard in particular. This article drips with a contempt that damages your integrity rather more than Ms Howard's.

STEPHEN WOOD *London E7*

CAR-IED AWAY?

I agree with Justine Brian's comments about public transport as it stands at present (letters, May), and as a motorist myself I can accept her acute observations about cyclists, but is the solution to traffic problems in London really to 'build more and better roads'? Her fix for the fact that cars are no longer allowed down Oxford Street would be presumably to say 'bulldoze Selfridge's and John Lewis' to make way for a couple of extra lanes'! Exactly how much of London would it be necessary to blitz before congestion could be eased?

I appreciate the comforts and (occasional) conveniences of having a car, but will Justine countenance the possibility that car use is a positional good?, ie, the benefits of having one decrease the more there are on the roads. There was, as John Gillott pointed out (October 1996) an 'anti-car bias' to the discussion last year about travel in London, but surely this was no more than appropriate in the circumstances. What is the point in large underground car parks in the centre of London if it will take two hours to get there?

I agree with all *LM* has said in defence of the car against the apocalyptic visions of it being the cause of untold pollution and death. Nevertheless, I would have thought that a magazine committed to a consciously planned society would be able to come up with a slightly more imaginative and less wasteful (time as well as resources) transport policy.

SIMON PORTER Fiat Panda, *London NW2*

GET A GRIP

Fred The Red (letters, April) suggests Newcastle United adopt the pull-yourself-together-man attitude advocated by Manchester United supporters and players.

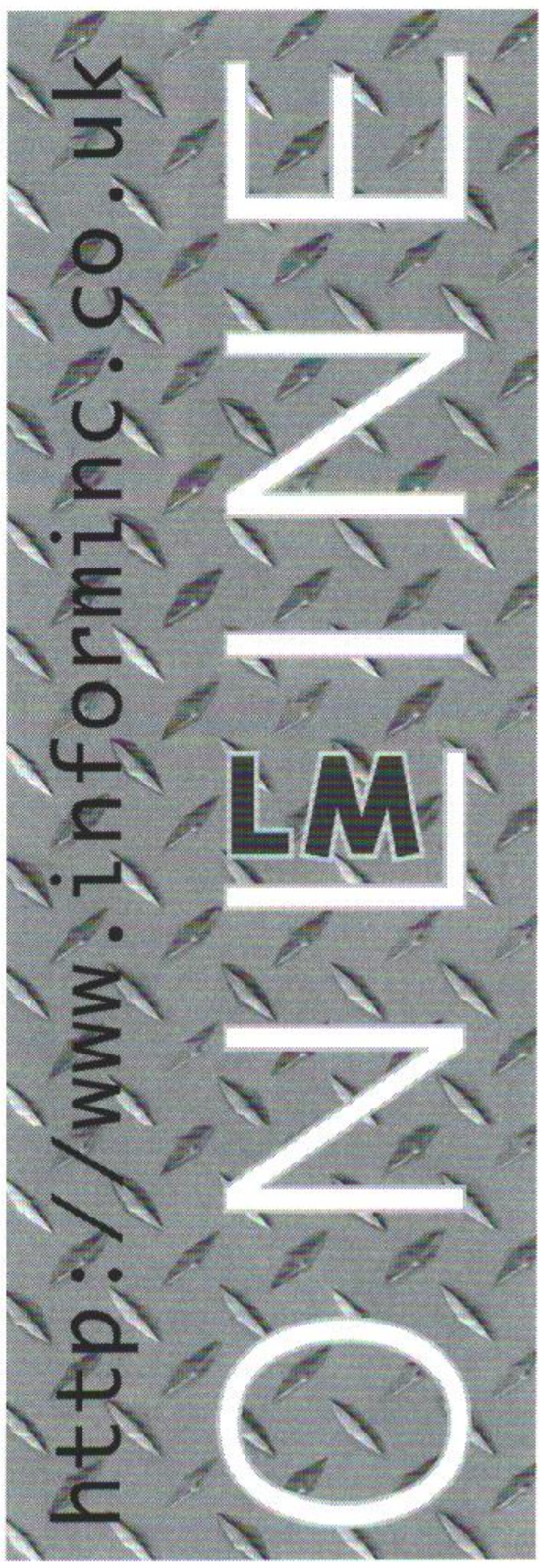
Is this the same Fred The Red who every Saturday dresses up as Satan, and jumps up and down shaking his backside at 50 000 men, women and children? If it is, can I offer some advice: *pull-yourself-together-man!*

CARLTON BRICK *London N22*

CORRECTION

'Things can only get better', the song which became New Labour's unofficial theme music in the run-up to the general election, was widely attributed to a band called D:ream. Allowed me to correct this misinformation. The band's real name must be D:ream On.

T RIVIA *London E17*



The what's NOT on guide

UP IN SMOKE The New Labour government was quick to announce a blanket ban on tobacco advertising, but the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) had already beaten them to the blue pencil, censuring an advert placed by tobacco giant Philip Morris which dared to question the (highly questionable) risks attributed to passive smoking. **FOR YOUR OWN GOOD** The ASA boasts that it banned 'overnight' a campaign for Diamond Zest cider for 'using models who looked under the age of 25 [!!] and who were engaged in anti-social and irresponsible behaviour' —riding around in supermarket trollies, for example. The ASA claims that bans of this sort are beneficial not only for the public but also for the alcoholic drinks industry which 'was spared the glare of further negative publicity'. Cheers. **BLOWN AWAY** The New Labour government has also announced plans to ban all handguns. Presumably the ban will extend to the most dangerous gunmen in Britain, the not-so-sharp shooting police who, according to a home office report, have been firing so wildly that they miss their target two-thirds of the time–even though they usually take aim from less than 10 metres. **SELF-LESS** Novelist Will Self was thrown off John Major's aeroplane and sacked by the *Observer* after snorting an illegal substance in the loo. This was the same Self who was never allowed to board Tony Blair's pristine election battle bus, even before the incident in Major's lavatory. **BARRED AND BLURRED** Sinn Fein was forced to cut two short sequences from its election broadcast. The British National Party were made to edit theirs and Channel 4 still would not show it. The Pro-Life Alliance broadcast was eventually shown on the BBC, with the 'offensive' aborted fetuses blurred beyond recognition. When this footage was transferred to a website, Enterprise, the Internet service provider, made the PLA remove it. A free and democratic election, as approved by the Great and the Good. **SCREENED OUT** Net-surfers reported that the Surfwatch Internet screening program blocked access to the *Guardian* election site on the basis that it featured a dirty word: 'sleaze'. **BLACKED BY *BLUE PETER*** The producers of children's TV-show *Blue Peter* dropped plans to feature the Rochester Sweeps Festival after discovering that children dressed as chimney sweeps would have 'artificially blacked-up faces' which 'might be misunderstood and cause offence to members of our audience'. **STUFFED** Museums are discarding their collections of stuffed animals. 'Some curators are embarrassed by such collections, not regarding them as very PC', explained Dr Sue Tunnicliffe, former head of education at London Zoo and spokesperson for the new pressure group, Save Our Stuffed Animals (aka the Tory Party).

WE WELCOME READERS' VIEWS AND CRITICISMS

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Letters may be edited for clarity and length

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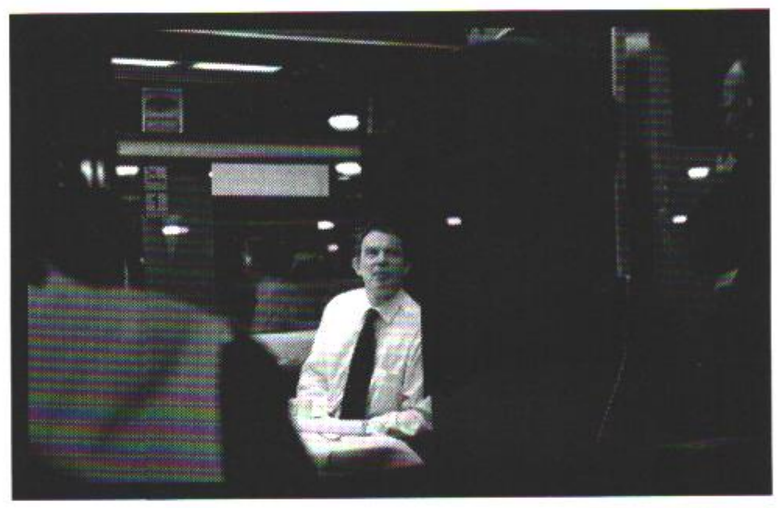


From the decision to dodge a television debate to the welcome in Downing Street, a spirit of caution and moderation dominated the Labour campaign

New Labour's electoral victory means a sea-change in the way Britain's political elite runs the country. Mike Fitzpatrick on what's new and what's not

NOT JUST THE NEW TORIES

From the moment the exit polls predicted the scale of Labour's victory on 1 May to the final confirmation of the wipeout of the Conservative Party the following day, the television pundits were lost for superlatives. It was the biggest swing in any election since the war, the heaviest defeat for the Tories since 1906 (or was it 1832?), the greatest ever victory for Labour. It was striking that the most experienced commentators, those who have spent years analysing the minor shifts of votes in post-war elections, appeared most awestruck by the apparently seismic electoral shock of May 1997.

In fact, the size of Labour's landslide was more indicative of the changing character of parliamentary politics in Britain than of any upsurge of mass popular enthusiasm for Tony Blair and New Labour. Indeed, in the long run-up to the election, numerous commentators noted the mismatch between Labour's big lead in the opinion polls and the lack of public interest in the campaign—as evidenced by posters in windows, turnouts at local meetings and involvement at constituency level. The fact that Labour's victory was won with the lowest turnout at a general election since 1935, despite considerable efforts at increasing voter registration, especially among the young, confirms the lack of popular engagement in the election.

In common with last year's presidential election in the USA, the British general election reveals the changing character of party politics in the post-Cold War world. Following the collapse of the familiar polarities of West and East, capital and labour, capitalism and socialism, the old parties have become detached from their traditional social roots and their distinctive ideologies. Of all the political parties in Britain, Labour has gone the furthest in cutting off its links with the past: this is the whole meaning of New Labour. As Peter Snow can confirm, a party without roots can swing in a way that threatens to unhinge the old swingometer.

When Labour wins back Basildon and Harlow, this can be understood according to the familiar rules of British politics. When it also wins Wimbledon and Finchley, Edgbaston, Romford and Enfield Southgate, then it is clear that the game itself has changed. (It is worth noting that, under the new groundrules, what swings so easily one way could soon swing another.) The 1997 general election marks a new era in which political allegiances may have become more volatile, but also one in which rival party machines have become much more similar in policy, personnel and style. As party politics has become more fluid, so the political realm itself has become more restricted. Real power has shifted further from elected representatives to the civil service, the judiciary and other state agencies. New Labour has won its biggest ever parliamentary victory at a time when the authority of parliament is lower than at any time in modern history.

What then did the results reveal? They showed, above all, the extent of popular hostility to the Conservative Party after 18 years in office. Not only was the average swing of 10 per cent against the Tories unprecedented, the swing was even greater in the Tory heartlands than it was in traditional Labour territory. The anti-Tory wave swept out government ministers, loyalists and Eurosceptics alike; even supposedly popular 'one nation' Tories in safe seats, like Edward Heath, suffered a dramatic fall in votes. Young people, the middle classes and women all turned decisively against the Conservatives. Though the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Nationalists also advanced on the anti-Tory tide, the major beneficiary was inevitably New Labour.

The arrival of New Labour's new MPs at Westminster has been warmly welcomed on all sides. The new faces are younger and more female—and everybody is delighted to see the back of many of the old faces of the Conservative Party. Yet, behind the impression of novelty lie strong elements of continuity with the old order.

The sentiment of 'time for a change' was the key to Labour's victory. In many ways this is ironic, given that one of New Labour's central themes has been its abandonment of the Labour Party's historic commitment to major social change. During the course of the election campaign Tony Blair reiterated his commitment to continuing many of the features of Tory Britain—such as anti-trade union legislation, privatisation, restrictions on public spending—which Old Labour had always pledged to reverse. Blair was careful to offer only the most modest changes, such as smaller class sizes and shorter hospital waiting lists—lest New Labour raise expectations of change. Fear of change is a much stronger sentiment in the ranks of New Labour than any commitment to innovation.

After Labour's victory, even the defeated Tories were full of admiration for the election campaign masterminded by Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson. There is no doubt that the New Labour machine was well organised and the candidates tightly disciplined. Yet, from the decision to dodge a head-to-head television debate between Blair and Major at the start, to the distribution of Union flags to a stage-managed crowd welcoming Blair to Downing Street at the end, a spirit of caution and moderation dominated the Labour campaign. While voters clearly wanted a change from the past, New Labour sought to reassure them of its devotion to Britain's traditions, a strategy that reached its nadir in the promotion of Fitz the bulldog in an election broadcast.

The spectacle of New Labour draping itself in the Union flag, and proclaiming itself the party of traditional family values, law and order, private enterprise and national defence creates a misleading impression of New Labour as the new Tories. But, as Blair and his acolytes never tire of repeating, New Labour is New Labour—while upholding much of the legacy of Thatcher's Britain, it has its own distinctive agenda. What New Labour stands for, above all, is the creation of new forms of regulation in British society, to replace the traditions and institutions weakened or destroyed in nearly two decades of Tory rule.

As I commented in last month's *LM*, New Labour's endorsement of Martin Bell's candidature ▶

New Labour MPs may present a younger image

BUT THEIR INSTINCT

is for tighter regulation

AND CONTROL

rather than liberation

◀ against Neil Hamilton at Tatton indicated the party's readiness to use the issue of sleaze to shift power away from discredited old institutions, particularly parliament, in favour of even less democratic bodies and less accountable officials. Both Labour and, more reluctantly, the Liberal Democrats withdrew candidates selected by their local parties in favour of a TV journalist appointed by a cabal of party fixers and endorsed by the *Guardian* and other pro-Labour newspapers in a spirit of sanctimony and patrician contempt for democracy. Bell's victory, despite a lacklustre campaign, has given fresh impetus to New Labour plans to turn the Nolan Committee into a permanent constitutional commission, an appointed quango literally lording it over elected MPs.

The key objective of Labour's proposals for constitutional reform is to bypass the institutions of Westminster in the hope of winning greater public approval for government policy through commissions or quangos, local assemblies or a reformed House of Lords. As Blair's pre-election gaffe of comparing the status of the proposed Scottish assembly with that of a powerless parish council revealed, New Labour is not pursuing changes that will make government more democratic or accountable, but the opposite. With Peter Mandelson, minister without portfolio, at his side, Blair is ready to step outside established structures and procedures to impose his authority on the nation, just as he has done on the Labour Party.

One of the first measures of the new government—Chancellor Gordon Brown's handing over of control over interest rates to a committee at the Bank of England—indicates the anti-democratic character of New Labour's much-vaunted commitment to constitutional reform. As the *Guardian's* Larry Elliott commented, 'last week more than 13 million people voted for a Labour government: the name of [Bank of England governor] Edward Arthur John George was not on the ballot paper anywhere' (7 May). Yet New Labour has no qualms about handing over operational control of monetary policy to an unelected and unaccountable body.

New Labour's anti-democratic and authoritarian instincts are not confined to constitutional issues, but extend across the range of its social policy. They are most familiar in the pronouncements of Jack Straw on matters of juvenile delinquency and crime and in the party's policies on education and workfare. Plans announced for Labour's first Queen's speech include measures to enforce curfews on young people and 'fast-track' justice for juvenile offenders.

With its substantial influx of young, female and openly gay MPs, New Labour projects an image of diversity and tolerance. However, on closer examination, it emerges that both these virtues are tightly rationed. Even before Blair had appointed a chief whip, all members of the parliamentary party had received a letter from him inviting them to a meeting. Blair told the full assembly of Labour MPs that strict discipline would be maintained and emphasised that dissidents faced expulsion. Never have there been so many Labour MPs—and never have Labour MPs been so regimented by the leadership.

New Labour may promote more women ministers and encourage more gays to try to become bishops or generals or policemen (though neither theme was prominent during the election campaign). But, outside this narrow range of concerns, New Labour displays an extreme intolerance towards sections of society which do not bask in the warm glow of its approval. Young delinquents have been scapegoated and stigmatised; they face the loss of legal rights, curfews and other restrictions. The homeless, beggars and squeegee merchants risk being rounded up and incarcerated. Indeed children and families in general face the prospect of more official interference and surveillance as the government promotes parenting and sets times for homework.

New Labour MPs may present a younger and trendier image, but their instinct is always for tighter regulation and control rather than for liberation and experimentation. The election has brought a younger generation into power at Westminster, but this is a new generation which echoes its elders' fears and apprehensions about the young to a much greater degree than it shares the energy and enthusiasms of youth. A party which trumpeted as one of its few pledges to the nation the promise that 'young offenders will be punished' seems spectacularly unlikely to realise the aspirations of young people.

New Labour's distinctive agenda is the quest to revive confidence in British capitalism by creating new institutions and new mechanisms for restoring the links between individuals and communities and the system. While Blair's landslide election victory gives him the authority to push through the New Labour agenda, the system itself imposes tight limits on what the government can achieve. It will not be long before it becomes clear that New Labour means austerity and authoritarianism. Challenging the anti-democratic and anti-libertarian dynamic behind the New Labour regime will be the key to building a new opposition. ●

ANN BRADLEY

Smoke in their eyes

I don't smoke. I have not smoked since my early 20s when I became aware that a 20 to 30 a day habit of Players No6 was having a very nasty affect on my lungs. I do not dispute that smoking is filthy, unhealthy and compulsive. But I resent the move to ban tobacco advertising just as much as I used to enjoy that first drag of the day.

The recent announcement that the tobacco industry will no longer be able to advertise sums up the willingness of the New Labour government to censor and illustrates the contempt in which they hold us.

In their eyes we are so naive and gullible that we look at the glossy, sophisticated images projected by the Silk Cut and B&H hoardings and accept the subliminal messages that by smoking we too can become sophisticated and debonair. We are so weak-willed in the government's opinion that for our own good we need protection from the mention of tobacco brands. Typically, health promotion pundits have whinged that banning adverts doesn't go far enough and that sports promotion and sponsorship from the tobacco industry must cease too. And typically the government has agreed to consider their case.

The only opposition to this blatantly totalitarian proposal has come from the industry, which has argued rather lamely that the government is indulging in 'gesture politics'. The likes of Imperial Tobacco argue that advertising does not encourage people to start smoking, rather it influences existing smokers in their choice of brands. Anti-smoking groups countered that even if adults are not seduced by the glamorous images children are.

Personally I doubt whether kids can make much sense of cigarette advertising. I have trouble interpreting what many of the billboards are trying to convey. For many years now, as a result of tightening regulations and self-censorship, the tobacco industry has relied on increasingly obscure messages to promote its products. Actual cigarettes are rarely in sight. Those wonderful images of Humphrey Bogart or Steve McQueen exuding sex appeal as they exhale smoke are long gone, as are the men in doctors' coats who used to explain the health benefits of certain brands. Instead the billboards are filled by arty pictures of frayed bits of cloth and empty bird cages. The only indication that most cigarette ads are advertising fags is a strap of enormous letters across the bottom warning you that smoking does serious harm to your health.

It does not seem plausible that anybody could believe that a picture of a gigantic pair of scissors cutting a purple sheet of silk could cajole a 12-year old into spending his pocket money on a packet of cigarettes. Already voluntary codes mean that tobacco products are not advertised in the immediate vicinity of schools. But even if kids were inspired by ads to buy a packet of 10, there are laws to prevent retailers retailing to them. The argument that Silk Cut ads should be banned because they might encourage children to smoke has no more weight than the argument that advertisements for Golf GTis should be banned because they inspire children to joyride.

There is something deeply disturbing about the argument that adults should be denied the chance to appreciate a company's attempt to promote its products in case children are inadvertently affected. It ends up reducing us all to the level of children with simple minds, unable to make rational choices about how we wish to live our lives. But then, in many ways, that is how the government regards us: impressionistic, easily led and inclined to believe the false promises of slick-talking advertisers. Cynics might say that the recent landslide Labour victory is evidence to prove their point.

The argument that cigarette advertising should be banned because they are bad for our health is also much more problematic than it sounds. When you start on that route where do you end up —banning the advertising of high-sugar products, slapping a health warning on butter ads, car commercials, lager adverts, what?

I think we need to take a stand for grown-ups and reject the argument that we, or our children, need protection from the messages of advertisers. I do not need a health minister to protect me from corrupting messages. I am capable of using my own judgement to reject or accept commercials. As for children—surely it is preferable for us to make it clear that there are things adults do and children don't do (like smoke and drink) and there are things children do and adults don't (like go to school and do homework). Protecting children from exposure to advertising does not protect them from exposure to the real world. Protecting adults from exposure to advertising is patronising, insulting and probably a taste of the future.

The only indication that these are cigarette ads is the enormous government health warning across the bottom

Sally Millard talked to New Labour women MPs about what the 'softer, more feminised' culture in the new parliament will mean for political life

'MEN HAVE MADE POLITICS A COMBATIVE SPORT'

One of the most commented-on results of the election was the record number of women elected to parliament—101 Labour MPs, 120 in all. While the tabloid headlines gave the new arrivals the usual patronising treatment ('Blair's babes', 'Backwenchers' etc), many commentators welcomed the fresh influx of women to a parliament which columnist Allison Pearson recently described as 'so male that the very walls seem impregnated with testosterone' (*Evening Standard*, 27 March 1997).

These days it is widely held that the grey suits and antiquated traditions of parliament are tied up with a 'masculine' style of politics that puts women off and gives politicians a bad name. As a recent report from the Fawcett Society argued, 'The culture of British politics is not supportive to women. The style is confrontational, with an emphasis on scoring points over the other party, rather than debating practical policies'. (Mary-Ann Stevenson, 'The best man for the job?: The selection of women parliamentary candidates', February 1997).

So, what can we expect from parliament, now that we have a record number of women MPs? I talked to two New Labour MPs, Kali Mountford (Colne Valley) and Dari Taylor (Stockton South), to find out exactly what they expect of a feminised parliament. Both of them were selected from Labour's controversial all-women shortlists.

Many people now see politics as a dirty word, particularly when it concerns argument and clashes of opinion. This adversarial style of debate is regarded with disdain by New Labour women, who see it as part of a masculine culture which should have no place in modern Britain. As Kali Mountford puts it, 'Much of what goes on in parliament is snideyness. Scoring points rather than genuinely seeking information'. Dari Taylor thinks that 'politics has become a combative sport, like going back to the Roman arena'. This is because, 'men's backgrounds in competitive and aggressive sports give them a more combative nature than women'.

Everything that these New Labour women think is wrong with politics today—self-interest, aggressive behaviour, an argumentative and forthright spirit—is categorised as masculine, and therefore as bad. We can expect the new intake of women MPs to lead the way in challenging this type of behaviour by creating what Dari Taylor calls, 'a softer and more feminised parliament'.

But what exactly will a 'feminised' parliament be like? The new buzzword is consensus. It seems that instead of politicians arguing over principled positions and standing their ground in debates, we are going to see a greater willingness to compromise and 'see the other side of the argument'. This is how Kali Mountford sees the politics of the future:

'Women MPs will be more prepared than their male counterparts to look for areas of consensus between the parties, and to develop policy in relation to this. This is particularly important today, when gaining all-party support for legislation is more popular than highlighting differences. Women are particularly adept at this. Their approach is one of consulting more widely and being prepared to listen to the arguments, rather than simply pushing forward an argument, no matter what.'

This might be fine for the new breed of women MPs, some of whom may feel too sensitive to cope with the rough and tumble of confrontational politics. But what does it mean for the rest of us? The promotion of consensual politics instead of 'pushing through an argument, no matter what', has implications that should concern all those who want to uphold the principles of democratic debate and accountable government.

The most obvious implication is that debate has to be confined to those areas of policy-making where there is broad agreement. The general election campaign has already given us a taste of what this means in practice, with politics being restricted to an increasingly narrow agenda and controversial issues notable by their absence. In an election where women were supposed to be to the fore, for example, such a major question as abortion was not addressed in any of the party manifestos. The attempt by the 'Pro-Life' Alliance to make abortion an election issue was met with calls for its television broadcast to be banned.

The effect of narrowing debate in this way is to turn politics into a purely administrative affair. Of course somebody, somewhere still has to make a decision about abortion law and provision. But decisions like these are now more likely to be made behind closed doors, away from public scrutiny. Debating them openly on the floor of the House of Commons is regarded as too risky. As Dari Taylor argues, 'Politicians tend to show off to the media by scoring points against one another rather than get on with the business at hand. It is in the committees, away from the media spotlight that the most constructive debates seem to take place'.

As the new-girl networks move into action, we should expect to see more legislative decisions being made in backroom committees, before arriving on the floor of the House of Commons to be rubber-stamped, without any of the controversial exchanges and airing of differences which women MPs are supposed to find so objectionable. Never mind that, as a consequence, public debate gets closed down and we

are denied the opportunity to hear the arguments or to see where MPs stand on the issues.

The election campaign gave New Labour plenty of practice at shutting down debate. A booklet from head office warned Labour candidates of the dangers of holding open public meetings with potentially hostile audience members, advising that 'it is far better to address a targeted group of people—Labour members and supporters, groups of weak Labour, or Tory and Liberal switchers in a key seat' (*Guardian*, 2 April 1997). The process of 'consulting more widely and being prepared to listen to the arguments', as advocated by Kali Mountford, only applies to a very narrow constituency of MPs in the backrooms of the House of Commons and New Labour supporters in the constituencies. It does not extend to anybody who might want to pose awkward questions or go against the consensual stream.

Reforming parliament to make it 'softer and more feminised' provides a handy rationale for removing controversial issues from the agenda and restricting debate. The notion of making parliament and politics more women-friendly also provides a pretext for imposing a strict new etiquette on public affairs, where everybody is effectively told to mind their p's and q's.

Anybody who feels passionate about an issue and is prepared to stand by what they think will realise that confrontation, debate and argument are part and parcel of getting your ideas across and convincing other people to take your side. This is what politics has traditionally been about, and it is the way the best ideas are developed. By pitting your wits and arguments against an opponent, both sides are forced to clarify an issue, justify their position, and in the process develop a more convincing case.

If New Labour have their way we will see little of this in the new parliament, as it smacks too much of an adversarial style now seen as out of date and unconstructive. Instead, a more friendly parliament requires politicians who are prepared to be polite and compromising, to 'wait and see' how the land lies before they speak. The 'feminised' Labour government has made clear its readiness to 'listen' and make compromises with the official opposition. But the new etiquette will ensure that MPs who want to challenge the government line will be open to accusations that they are being too 'masculine' in their style and upsetting the working atmosphere in the House. Tony Blair's plans to take the heat out of prime minister's question time symbolise New Labour's aim to sanitise commons debate.

So, how do we hold the MPs and the government to account? It seems that New Labour gets it both ways in government. If politics is about compromise and a willingness to concede the argument, they have a ready excuse for changing their policies at the drop of a hat. On the other hand, those who want to challenge the status quo will find themselves attacked as insensitive and offensive. The new feminised culture may sound like a radical challenge to the political system, but by denigrating political debate and public accountability, it lets politicians off the hook.

Argument, controversy and highlighting the differences between political parties may be unpopular with New Labour's women politicians, but they do imply that there is a potential choice about what policies are to be pursued by government. They also imply that some things are worth standing up for and defending, despite the possibility that they might upset other people's prejudices. After all, anything worth having has always had to be fought for. If it had not been for women like the Suffragettes fighting for equality in a very confrontational and aggressive way, today's New Labour women would not have the opportunity to sit in judgement on their male colleagues and attack the 'masculine culture' of adversarial politics.

The new Labour women MPs may be outraged by being patronised in the media, but I find it rather patronising to the rest of us to claim that women are put off by confrontational politics, that somehow we cannot handle open debate with no punches pulled. I would rather have politicians who want to stand up for their principles in public and 'score points' (that is, win arguments) than MPs who are happier in smoke-free committee rooms and who want to avoid confrontations that might offend their sensitivities. ●

Ladies' man Blair with the new intake of women MPs

PHOTO: MICHAEL CRABTREE/PA

Those seeking to impose a post-election agreement in Northern Ireland risk disenfranchising the electorate, reports Brendan O'Neill

'CONSENSUS' BY COERCION

'I have been trying to work out exactly what went wrong for me. I think that the people of West Belfast chose the general election to make a significant statement to Sinn Fein and the IRA, to say that they want peace and an agreed settlement.'

Dr Joe Hendron of the Social Democratic and Labour Party was not in a good mood when I spoke to him the morning after Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams took his Belfast West seat by almost 8000 votes. Yet Hendron continued to make demands of Sinn Fein as if he was still the MP. 'What we want from Sinn Fein is not just a ceasefire but a total cessation of violence. I just hope and pray that Sinn Fein rejects violence and takes part in the important process of finding an agreed settlement and reaching a consensus.' According to Hendron, 'the 25 000 people who voted for Gerry Adams are saying that they believe he can deliver peace by getting a proper and meaningful IRA ceasefire. There is now a massive responsibility on him and on the republican movement to do it'.

Does Hendron really believe that 25 000 nationalists in West Belfast voted for Gerry Adams (and presumably that 20 000 people elected Martin McGuiness in Mid-Ulster) to register their opposition to the IRA and their support for an agreed settlement? Next he will be telling us that a vote for Sinn Fein is actually a vote for the SDLP. It looks as though Dr Hendron is reading into the minds of the electorate what he himself considers to be the political priority for Northern Ireland—'reaching a consensus'.

Hendron is not alone. Increasingly, commentators, academics and wannabe politicians in Northern Ireland are ignoring the democratic wishes of the electorate in favour of finding an agreed settlement. According to the *Guardian* it is high time the people of Northern Ireland stopped voting 'doggedly along traditional sectarian lines as usual', and became 'outward-looking and modern' (9 May 1997). Adversarial politics are seen as relics of the past, and agreement and consensus is the order of the day. But a consensus on what, and between whom?

'What we need as a starting point would be a consensus on certain ways of doing things', says Belfast City Councillor Steve McBride. 'We might have to differ on long-term political outcomes because we have very tribal outlooks on a lot of issues. But we desperately need agreement on democratic methods, on the rejection of violence and on accepting that the people of Northern Ireland must decide their own future and not have anything imposed upon them.'

McBride, a former High Sheriff of Belfast, stood for the cross-community Alliance Party in Belfast South in the general election. He received 13 per cent of the vote, coming fourth behind Unionist and nationalist candidates.

'Democracy is flawed'

He sees the persistent and polarised voting habits of the Northern Irish electorate as a barrier to the key aim of reaching a consensus: 'I would be blunt about it: you can make an argument that what people in Northern Ireland want is civil war because that is what they keep voting for. In order to address the essential political questions we have to show people where they are going wrong. Ultimately we have to generate sufficient will amongst the people in Northern Ireland for consensus and for agreement.'

But what does trying to reach an agreement against the wishes expressed by the electorate have to do with democracy? McBride is unequivocal:

'The problem is that majoritarian democracy is always a flawed concept. Where majoritarianism becomes permanent because of social or communal divisions like in Northern Ireland, then it is simply one section of the community enjoying power over the other and that is a recipe for disaster.'

So the consensus being sought in Northern Ireland is not a consensus among people on how issues should be resolved and how society should be run, but a consensus among the great and the good on what method of government is most suitable in a divided society. According to the likes of Steve McBride the electorate in Northern Ireland has made a pig's ear of determining the political agenda and he and a few of the right kind of people would do a much better job. But surely this is anti-democratic?

'It is inherently anti-democratic and inherently wrong', says William Ross, Ulster Unionist MP for Londonderry East. 'All of these minor groups in Northern Ireland now have the opportunity to carve out a position of great power for themselves despite the fact that they are a tiny minority.' Ross was re-elected as MP for Londonderry East with 13 558 votes. He sees little potential for consensus politics. 'All the talk about reaching a consensus sounds very nice but it is all a load of fluff; whenever you try and grasp what these people are getting at, it just dissipates like the morning mist. The plain truth is that there are people who are nationalists on the island of Ireland and there are people who are Unionists who consider themselves to be British. For all the talk of consensus it is very difficult to see how anyone could reconcile those two points of view.'

It is telling that it has been left to die-hard Unionists like William Ross to defend the democratic principles of representation and majority rule, while the new-thinking radicals are busy demanding 'anti-majoritarian mechanisms'. 'I have always supported majoritarian democracy', says Ross. 'The good thing about democracy is that it makes people ask questions, and it asks people which particular way they want to go. Democracy should be about the will of the majority of the population or, as James Molyneaux (former Ulster Unionist leader) used to put it, 'the greater number'.

Of course, it is not surprising that Ross and other Unionists have 'always supported majoritarian democracy'. After all, Northern Ireland is

EAST DERRY 1
WILLIAM ROSS
UUP 13558 (36%)
MAJORITY 3794

FOYLE 2
JOHN HUME
SDLP 25109 (53%)
MAJORITY 13664

WEST TYRONE 3
WILLIAM THOMPSON
UUP 16003 (35%)
MAJORITY 1161

FERM & S TYRONE 4
KEN MAGINNIS
UUP 24862 (51%)
MAJORITY 13688

MID ULSTER 5
MARTIN MCGUINNESS
SINN FEIN 20294 (40%)
MAJORITY 1883

NEWRY & ARMAGH 6
SEAMUS MALLON
SDLP 22904 (43%)
MAJORITY 4889

UPPER BANN 7
DAVID TRIMBLE
UUP 20836 (44%)
MAJORITY 9252

LAGAN VALLEY 8
JEFFREY DONALDSON
UUP 24560 (55%)
MAJORITY 16925

SOUTH DOWN 9
EDDIE MCGRADY
SDLP 26181 (53%)
MAJORITY 9933

STRANGFORD 10
JOHN TAYLOR
UUP 18431 (44%)
MAJORITY 5852

NORTH DOWN 11
BOB MCCARTNEY
UKUP 12817 (35%)
MAJORITY 1449

EAST BELFAST 12
PETER ROBINSON
DUP 16640 (43%)
MAJORITY 6754

SOUTH BELFAST 13
MARTIN SMYTH
UUP 14201 (36%)
MAJORITY 4600

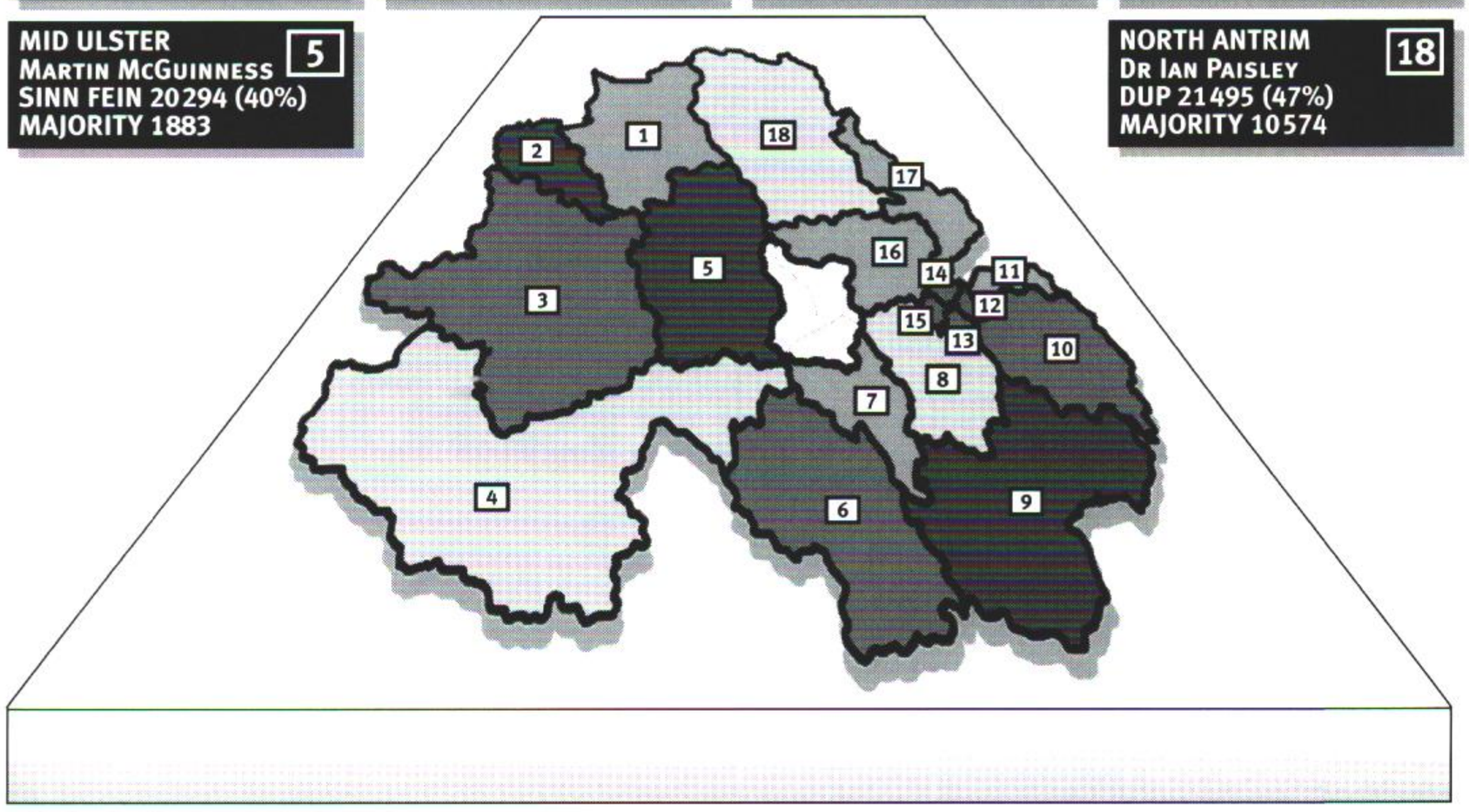
NORTH BELFAST 14
CECIL WALKER
UUP 21478 (52%)
MAJORITY 13024

WEST BELFAST 15
GERRY ADAMS
SINN FEIN 25662 (54%)
MAJORITY 7909

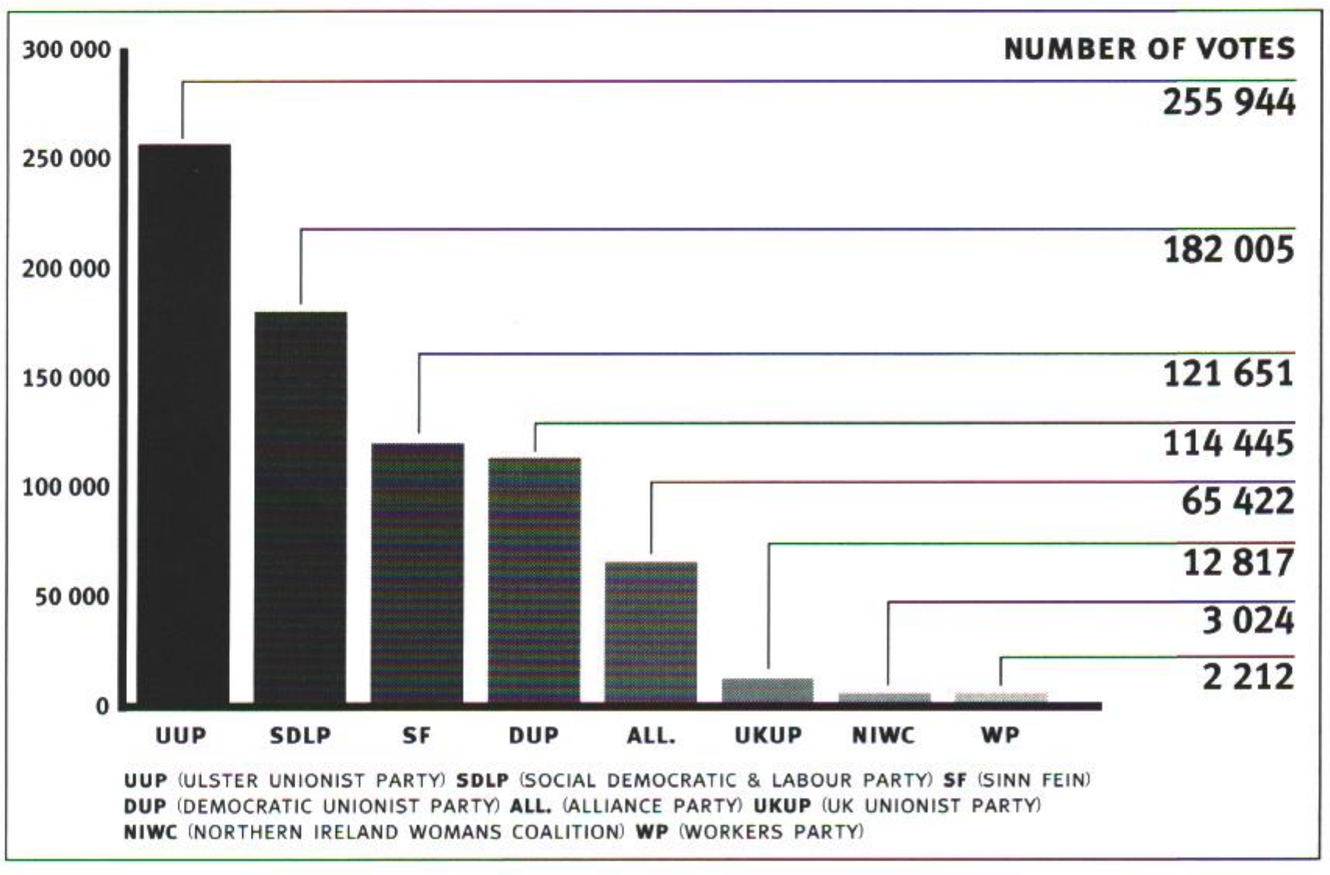
SOUTH ANTRIM 16
CLIFFORD FORSYTHE
UUP 23108 (57%)
MAJORITY 16611

EAST ANTRIM 17
ROY BEGGS
UUP 13318 (39%)
MAJORITY 6389

NORTH ANTRIM 18
DR IAN PAISLEY
DUP 21495 (47%)
MAJORITY 10574



'Tribal loyalties'? Northern Ireland's new MPs (above) and their parties' share of the vote



a gerrymandered statelet, founded to ensure a permanent Protestant majority. But whatever we might think of the bigoted politics of a Unionist like Ross, at least he expresses a desire to represent his electorate: 'I was elected to represent the best interests of the people of Londonderry East and to reflect the interests of the majority of the population in Northern Ireland and that is what I intend to do.' However, even Ross' modest aspirations could be scuppered if the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition has its way.

'Both sides of the political divide in Northern Ireland are guilty of going for the old, polarised, tribal votes in this general election', says May Blood, founding member of the Women's Coalition. 'We were hoping for a more open forum, more of a coming together for the good of the region and the good of the people, but it has not happened. What Northern Ireland needs now is to move away from the old politics and towards consensus.'

Despite a poor result in the election to all-party talks last year (7731 votes) and a worse one in the May general election (3024 votes), the Women's Coalition is already enforcing the politics of consensus. The NIWC had two delegates 'elected' to the talks under a rigged system which gave equal representation to all parties. 'When we stood in the election to the all-party talks', says Blood, 'we rather naively assumed that once we were elected we would be treated as equals. But when our two women went into the talks they were treated with the most appalling physical and verbal abuse. So we started up a very efficient campaign called the Name, Blame and Shame Campaign. When any of the traditional politicians got out of control or were disrespectful we put their name on a list up on the noticeboard, blamed their political party for their behaviour and we literally shamed them in front of everyone at the all-party talks. It is like what you would do with children, but then that's exactly how they were acting'.

Blood May flow

Surely treating elected representatives like children is an insult to the thousands who elected them? 'But consensus politics is about the political parties having respect for each other', says Blood. 'Some men in Northern Ireland have held power for so long that they think everything they say is right and we were determined to work against that.'

So not only does consensus politics exclude the electorate from having a say, it also seeks to overrule the political parties themselves. The only consensus being reached here is an anti-democratic one among a new unelected elite—and it is being agreed behind the backs of the electorate. It is a consensus on what is and what is not acceptable in Northern Irish politics, on what can and cannot be discussed and, ultimately, on how the country should be run. Northern Irish MPs who want to play a full role in the peace process will have to tone down their politics, watch their language and ignore the wishes of those who elected them. And if they refuse to comply they can expect to be punished like naughty school children.

Northern Ireland certainly needs a new political agenda. The old traditions of Unionism and nationalism are exhausted; the only reason people stick to them is because nobody has put forward a better alternative. The current alternative, the politics of consensus, has made things even worse. It effectively disenfranchises the Northern Irish electorate, and hands authority to a new minority who hold the people and their representatives in contempt. ●

GRAPHICS: ALEX CAMERON

Liberty is not the property of the right, says James Heartfield

WHO MADE FREEDOM A DIRTY WORD?

'When I was in England I heard no one saying the word freedom', was Canadian Director David Cronenberg's comment on the year-long ban on his film *Crash,* only recently passed by the British Board of Film Censors. Actually you can hear the word freedom these days, but the only people talking about it tend to be right wingers, cranks and others on the fringes of society.

In the general election the only people standing on an explicit platform of defending freedom were James Goldsmith's Referendum Party and the UK Independence Party—who were defending the freedom of the British government. In the midst of the election the far right British National Party stood up for the freedom to broadcast—their own, that is, as their televised election broadcast was threatened with a ban. Sportsman's Alliance candidates stood on a platform of the freedom to own firearms. But in the centre and on the left, nobody was talking about freedom—except to denounce it.

It is the radicals of the liberal left who have made 'freedom' into a dirty word. They are used to denouncing the idea of freedom when it is used by the right as a cover for their own sectional interests. So much so that the left now think that the very idea of 'freedom' is suspect. 'Freedom', according to them, is just an ideological disguise for the greedy rich, or worse for racists and bigots. 'Don't talk to me about freedom', they say, 'when people are homeless'; or 'when black people are subject to racial attacks'; or 'when women are being abused'. 'What use is freedom to the victims?' challenge the radicals.

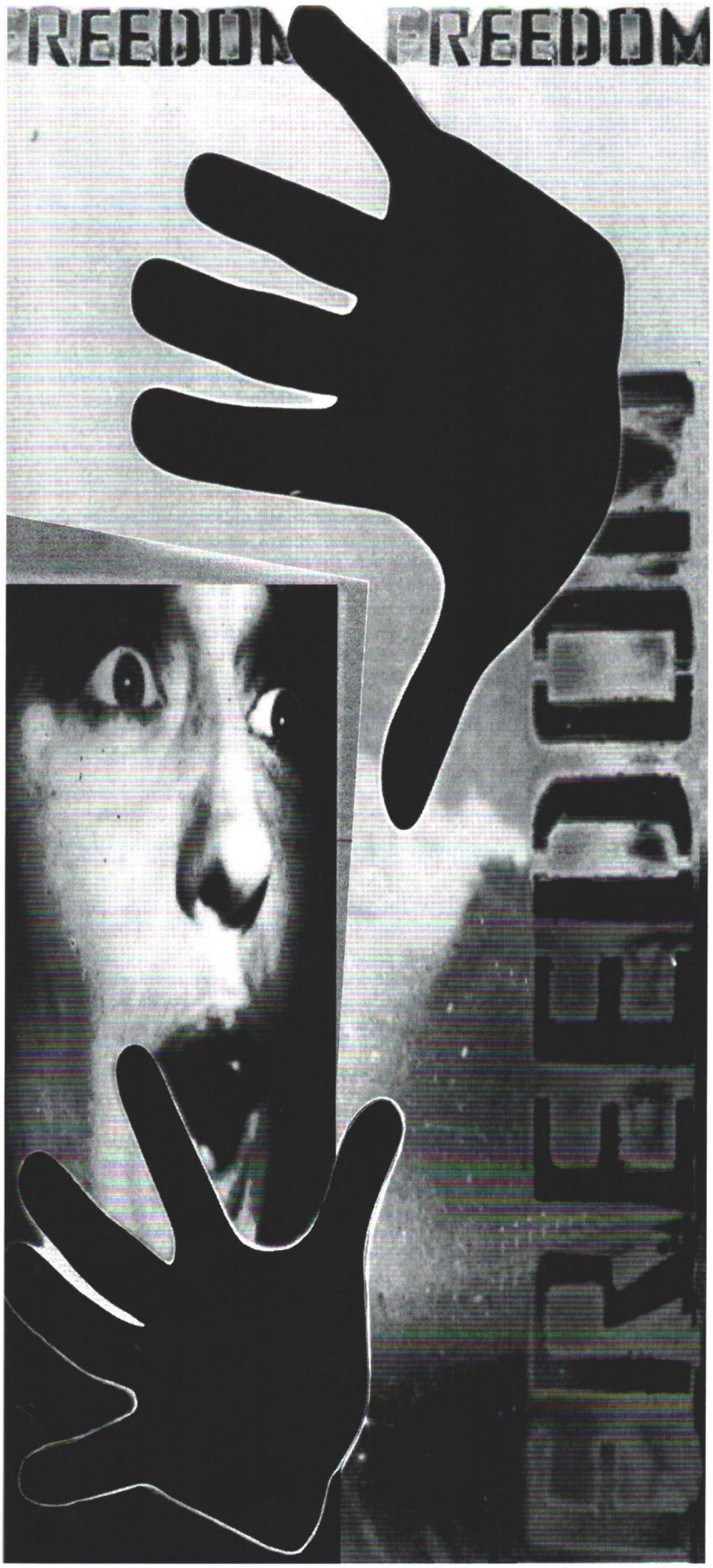
Quite a lot of use, actually. Indeed there is no possibility that social inequality will ever be challenged if people do not have the liberty to decide for themselves what the problems are, and to organise for themselves what they want to do about them. But radicals seem to prefer that people remain victims instead of taking control of their own lives.

Try this simple experiment with your friends: ask them to support freedom of speech. The answer you are bound to get is 'whose freedom of speech?'. As an answer that shows an astute sense of political scepticism, no doubt. It is always worth asking what lies behind a particular demand. But it also shows that the idea of freedom in general holds little appeal these days.

When people hear the word freedom being used, it is generally a grand slogan for a reactionary goal. The Pro-Life Alliance had their election broadcast banned outright on the dubious grounds of taste (not previously known to be the basis on which political choices are made). That is an attack on freedom of speech, they protested. But the goal of the Pro-Life Alliance is to take people's rights away. Specifically, they mean to take away women's rights to an abortion. Similarly the British National Party's complaints about freedom of speech ring hollow next to their programme of repatriation and authoritarianism.

But who was it that made the British National Party the authority on freedom of speech? It is not as if freedom is something that flows naturally from their programme. Rather, it is the radicals and the left that have made the far-right into the champions of free speech. They did it by abandoning free speech themselves. You can hardly complain that free speech is in the gutter if you are the one that left it there.

In the past, radical voices did campaign for free speech, as in the Zircon Spy Satellite affair, when journalist Duncan Campbell was prosecuted for revealing defence secrets. More recently the left has supported the McLibel Two, Dave Morris and Helen Steel, who are being sued for libel by McDonald's. But the examples are rare and becoming rarer. Much more likely is the case that liberals are the ones demanding curbs on free speech. So the Anti-Nazi League protested outside the television companies demanding that the British National Party broadcast be banned. 'No free speech for Nazis', they say. And when the Islamic society is banned from college, or the Pro-Life Alliance broadcast is banned they say 'no free speech for bigots'. When lecturers are



MONTAGE: DASTCO

banned for talking about sex they say 'no free speech for sexists'.

All the time they seem to forget that free speech is not free speech if you have to submit your views to a committee for approval beforehand. Being free to speak is like being pregnant—you are or are not.

What is really disturbing about the radical reaction to free speech is what it says about their view of the rest of us. In the event the British National Party broadcast was just boring. It was about as right-wing as the D-Day celebrations, which it resembled uncannily, being introduced by a BNP leader looking like the Harry Enfield character Mr Cholmondley-Warner. The idea that this sophisticated piece of propaganda would seize the imaginations of the masses was happily disproved on the day, by the desultory votes for BNP candidates. Who in their right minds would ban this boring rubbish? Only somebody who thought very little of the television audience, the voters, and who thought that their own arguments against the BNP were not all that convincing.

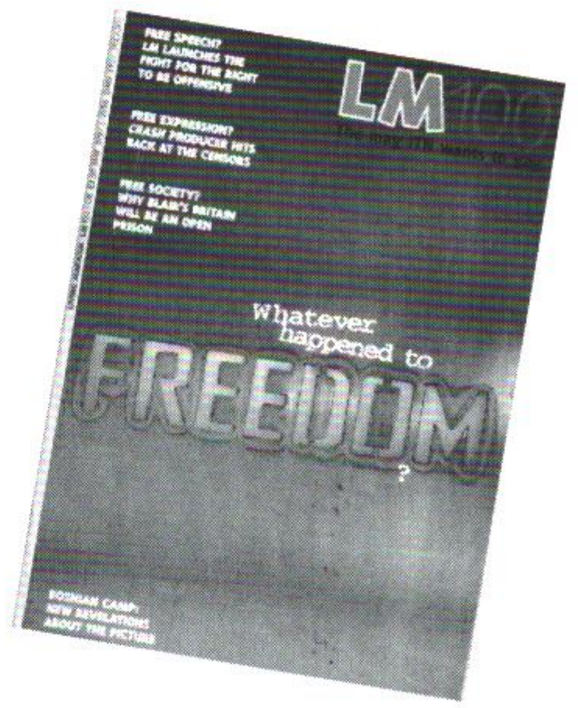
The knee-jerk reaction of the left is 'ban it', because they have so little faith in the ability of ordinary people to decide for themselves. No wonder they do not like the idea of free speech. They think that in any open argument they are bound to lose. It is not the rights of the British National Party that are curtailed—it is the right of everybody else to decide for themselves what they think of the BNP's appeal. As for the BNP, no cry of 'free speech' was heard from them when Sinn Fein's broadcast was censored, but tragically no cry of 'free speech' was heard from anywhere.

What holds for the particular case of free speech also holds for the general question of freedom: the left has abandoned the idea of freedom to the right.

Before being elected prime minister Tony Blair bemoaned the fact that under the Conservatives 'economic liberalism has often lapsed into greed, selfishness and moral irresponsibility' and that they have 'failed to provide security for this new world'. Of his own agenda he argued that 'socialism is based upon the moral assertion that individuals are interdependent, that they owe duties to each other, as well as themselves' (Giles Radice (ed), *What Needs to Change*, 1997).

In general New Labour takes the view that there has been too much freedom under the Conservatives and they aim to redress the balance. As Home Secretary Jack Straw says 'we all have responsibilities as well as rights, duties as well as freedoms' and he adds 'the concept of mutual responsibility is at the heart of the stakeholder society' ('Tackling the causes of crime: Labour's proposals to prevent crime and criminality'). In the nagging tone of Straw's remarks the message is clear enough: we have all had too much freedom, and we had better knuckle down and accept our responsibilities. ▶

INDEPENDENCE from the state has always been THE PRECONDITION of any kind of progressive change



◀ Too much freedom under the Conservatives? This was the assessment of the rights group Liberty of the Conservatives' record:

'Over the last 15 years, the [Tory] government has extended and concentrated the powers of the state. The rights of people to organise have been considerably constrained; the media censored, the powers of the police extended and the rights of defendants diminished. Basic human rights have been denied to people on the grounds of national security; local democracy has been weakened and unelected quangos are now responsible for more public money than elected local councillors are.' (*Human Rights, Human Wrongs: The Alternative Report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee*, Conor Foley for Liberty, 1995)

With this record of taking away our freedom you might have thought that the first thing a 'radical' government would do would be to set about restoring some of those rights. In fact New Labour has promised to go further in each of the areas outlined above. New laws are already being drafted to limit the media, give more powers to the police and further undermine the rights of defendants—all on the grounds of 'providing security'. And as far as undermining democracy by unelected quangos goes, Labour's Gordon Brown has already handed over the control of interest rates to the Bank of England.

With Labour promising a clampdown on freedom and the Conservatives defending a record of authoritarian measures, it is little wonder that freedom gets a bad press. But surely somebody would take a stand for civil liberties? Some on the left do feel disquiet about the drift towards authoritarianism. Veteran left-wingers like Vanessa Redgrave and Paul Foot pointed to the threat to civil liberties in the election. But the left are uncomfortable with the idea of freedom. As soon as the opportunity to campaign for a ban on the far-right appeared it was back to business as usual—picketing the BBC to demand that the broadcasters curtail freedom of speech.

The reason behind the left's fear of freedom is that it has always seen political action in terms of the state. The left in Britain has had a long education in the power of the state. All of its favourite policies are state policies: state intervention into the economy, nationalisation of railways, industry and utilities, welfare and public education; or more recently community policing and constitutional reform. Whatever the problem is, the left has always seen the solution as the extension of the power of the state. Today, the left finds it inconceivable that there could be any kind of action but state action. State-led reforms are to them the exemplar of what politics is about.

Invariably this orientation towards the state is an orientation away from putting your faith in people. After all, what is the state? It is not the bricks and mortar of Whitehall or the local social services department, nor is it the material of the policeman's uniform or the council letterhead. The state is an outside power exercising authority over people's lives. It acts as the public organisation of the collective interests not of everybody, but of the ruling elite—the businessmen and bankers, newspaper proprietors and investment fund managers, generals and police chiefs.

For most people the state is experienced as a loss of freedom. Its actions are arbitrary, operating according to some obscure pattern that is rarely fathomable, still less alterable. Its instruments are hearings and notices, awards and penalties, offices with queues, and telephone queues, and officers with arbitrary powers. And this is the left's chosen instrument for change.

At *LM* we have never agreed with the orientation towards the state. Independence from the state has always been the precondition of any kind of progressive social change. Whether it is the military occupation of Ireland or the Criminal Justice Bill, the politics of Aids or censorship, *LM's* guiding principle has always been independence from the state. Without the freedom to think, speak and act there can be no struggle for progressive change. The importance of taking up the case for freedom is all the more important when freedom has become a dirty word.

Worse still, freedom is in danger of becoming the property of a handful of right-wing cranks. The Conservatives claimed the banner of freedom with the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. Right wingers today still claim that freedom from the state means the same thing as the freedom of the market. As it turned out the 'free market' needed so many repressive measures to prop it up, that the Conservative administration became known for its authoritarianism—a reputation soon to be surpassed.

In practice the 'free market' meant the restriction of the rights of trade unionists so that they could not press their claims against the employers, and all the restrictions on civil liberties outlined above. These were not imperfections in the free market nor incidental to it, but a necessary outcome of it. Where a society concentrates all wealth in the hands of an elite, as the capitalist market does, then it needs to concentrate coercive power in the hands of the state, too.

The left's biggest mistake has always been to take the right's claim to be the champions of freedom as good coin. What they should say is that the market is a shabby parody of real freedom, and that the freedom of the few capitalists is not the same thing as the freedom of the many. But instead the lesson that has been learnt is that too much freedom is a bad thing. The habit of relying on the state to fulfil the left's ambitions has proved stronger than any sympathy for the underdog. The disaster looming is that we give up any aspiration to freedom at all. ●

James Heartfield is speaking for *Freedom and Law* on the Legalisation of Everyday Life course at *The Next Step* conference—see p23

YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE

After three years at college, I have become used to advice about safe sex, safe drinking, safe dancing and safe driving. But safe walking is a new one.

'Walksafe' is a scheme being piloted in Newcastle, which sells itself as 'providing a safe and reliable escort service across campus'. Any student scared of the dark can ring in between 6.30pm and 10.30pm and two well-meaning student volunteers (at least one of whom is a woman) will turn up and escort them home. For free. But why? What is it about Newcastle that makes students incapable of walking around on their own?

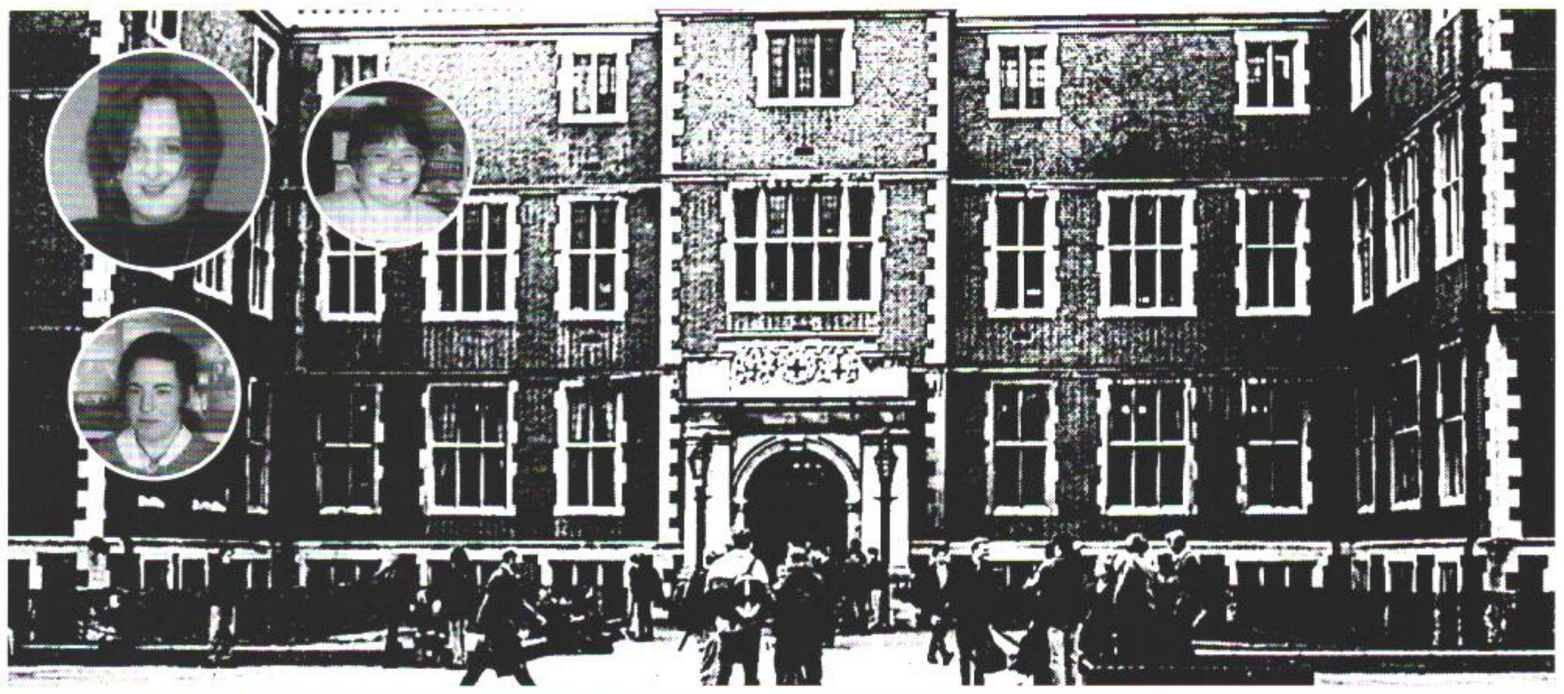
Walksafe is the brainchild of 27-year-old Canadian Sandra Dunkin, studying for an MA at Newcastle University. As an undergraduate at McGill university, Montreal, she was raped at a neighbouring college, and as a result became involved in the Walksafe scheme at McGill. When, earlier this year, Newcastle University warned students that somebody had been attacked on campus, she decided to set up a similar scheme. Walksafe has now been imported wholesale, and Dunkin has become a local celebrity.

There is nothing remarkable about schemes aimed at making British campuses safer. From CCTV to night-time minibuses to undercover cops on night-time minibuses, there has been a plethora of new measures to improve safety on campus—most of which are more hi-tech and imaginative than the Walksafe scheme. The only thing that is remarkable about the Walksafe scheme is that it really has very little to do with preventing attacks. There is something else going on here altogther.

All those who support Walksafe are keen to stress that Newcastle is not particularly dangerous. The local press has played up Sandra Dunkin's status as a rape survivor who 'could not bear to let another woman suffer the years of torment that she experienced' (*Journal*, 22 April 1997). But as she told me, 'Walksafe wouldn't have helped me in any case, because I was attacked inside a college building'. In three years in Newcastle, she has had no problems. What she values about Walksafe is less the prevention of real attacks than 'the reassurance of having someone else to walk with'.

More safe than most

Careful to defend Newcastle's reputation, the Walksafe volunteers I spoke to denied that the city was dangerous. Neither Rachel, a final year student, or Nikki, a second year, had 'ever seen any violence'—quite something if you live in a city like Newcastle. The student newspaper editorial began with the admission that 'safety is at the forefront of everybody's mind following the recent spate of attacks on students' and immediately qualified it by stating, in bold, that 'Newcastle remains by and large a safe city for students to live and study in' (*Courier*, 24 April 1997). Mary Barker, manager of the Newcastle Student City project which supports Walksafe, told me that 'although there is a perception that Newcastle is dangerous, the figures show that it is more safe than most large cities'. Common sense says that, unless students have chaperons constantly in tow, this scheme will never prevent the rare attacks that do take place.



Sandra Dunkin (top left) and her fellow volunteers act as 'eyes and ears' for the police at Newcastle University

But if the Walksafe scheme is not about preventing attacks, what is it about? Why are three academic institutions, a city development project and Student Community Action Newcastle so keen to pilot a scheme that will do no more than 'give reassurance' to a handful of insecure students? The press release promoting the scheme gives a clue: 'volunteers while providing a safe passage for clients will be acting as an "extra set of eyes and ears" for Northumbria Police and University Police.'

Visiting the Student Community Action Newcastle offices, where the Walksafe project is based, I realised that the scheme is less of a haphazard 'friendly escort service' than a highly organised group of auxiliary special constables. Volunteers are vetted and screened by the police, and have to commit themselves to between five and 10 hours per term. They are trained in the use of walkie-talkies and in self-defence, they are linked to the police CCTV network and when 'on duty' their radios are permanently switched on. They are under obligation to report anything suspicious to the police.

'The idea', says Nikki, 'is we are out on the streets and we are in contact with the police, so if we see anything that should not be happening, anything that looks dodgy, we will radio in. We are also connected with the CCTV people so if we say, you know, there is something dodgy happening outside Boots, they can zoom in and check out what it is'. In the second week of the pilot, there were about fifty volunteers and there had been one request for a walk. If the scheme was just about 'walking' people, 48 people would be sitting around bored in an office. Instead they are taking it in turns to prowl around town looking for trouble to report to the police. There is something slightly insidious about a scheme which talks about 'women's safety' and turns out to be about law and order.

To Rachel, the best thing about Walksafe is that the volunteers don't look like the law, because 'a lot of students have problems' dealing with the police. The student union had tried to set up a cop shop on campus, but 'students did not really like going in'. She thinks that students asking for walks because they have seen something dodgy 'will be happier telling us than they will the police'—even though they will effectively be telling the police, via the radio link. Rachel and Nikki recognise that more overt measures of campus safety—for example ID cards—would make students feel uncomfortable. 'It's a bit too much like Big Brother watching you' said Nikki. Yet isn't Walksafe simply a more nineties form of Big Brother, where you do not know that you are being watched?

No demand

The advantage of Walksafe for the authorities is precisely that it looks like a student-led, voluntary scheme. Sandra Dunkin says Walksafe is 'not as inhibitive as other security measures. It's students helping students. It's non-interference by the police, by mom and dad, by the university administration. It's up to you'. That was just before explaining that they were obliged to report incidents and that the police could be there in five minutes.

Walksafe has not been led by popular demand: of the Newcastle students I spoke to, few had heard of it and even fewer said they would use it. It is supported and funded not by students, but by the various authorities involved—all of which have an interest in creating more order on campus and in town. And while it might be 'up to us' to decide whether to be walked, it is not 'up to us' whether a bored and self-righteous volunteer with a radio and a camera reports us to the police because they decide we are doing 'something dodgy'.

Sandra Dunkin told me she was angry that the press had focused on her as a rape victim: 'That's the least relevant thing about Walksafe.' She was also adamant that Walksafe is not just 'for women', but for everybody. On these points, I agree with her.

Jennie Bristow

Ed Vulliamy of the Guardian *insists that the Bosnian Serb-run camp at the centre of* LM's *legal battle with ITN was a concentration camp. And he has the nerve to accuse* us *of rewriting history, says Mick Hume*

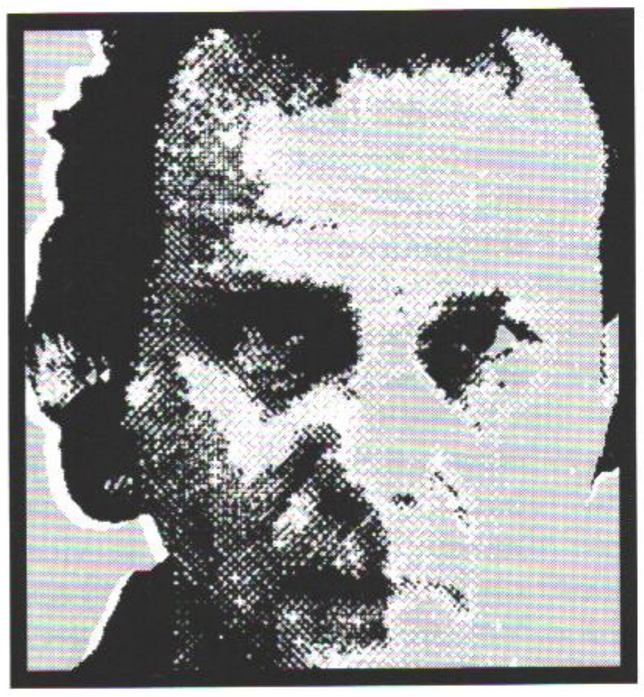
THERE ARE CAMPS, AND THEN THERE ARE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Ed Vulliamy got piles of awards for his reports on the Bosnian-Serb run camps which he visited with an ITN news team in August 1992. Not content with being the *Guardian's* star international reporter and chief crusader against parliamentary sleaze, however, he has recently expanded his range of talents to become a book reviewer, a film buff and an art critic. Why? Because writing about these things provides him with another pretext to pursue his obsession with smearing *LM* magazine and its writers, over our revelations about those famous ITN reports from Trnopolje camp.

On 20 April in the *Observer*, Vulliamy used a review of a book about the Bosnian camps as a platform from which to denounce us as 'lice' with a 'diabolical' mindset. On 25 April in the *New Statesman*, a review of art exhibitions about Bosnia gave Vulliamy the opportunity to accuse 'the apparently insignificant gang who publish *Living Marxism*' of trying to 'poison and slaughter' the truth. On 9 May in the *Guardian*, Vulliamy used an article about the film *Welcome to Sarajevo* to brand us as 'lunatics'. And so it goes on. He may not know much about art, but he knows what he doesn't like. You get the feeling that, if Ed Vulliamy wrote a food column, he would end up complaining that *LM* had put him off his dinner.

Reading between the bile, Vulliamy's central accusation is that *LM's* coverage of the Bosnian civil war, and particularly Thomas Deichmann's article 'The Picture that Fooled the World', is guilty of 'revisionism' and rewriting history. What he seems to mean by 'rewriting history' is that we disagree with his version of events. Does Ed Vulliamy now claim a monopoly on Bosnia's history? The notion that journalists' accounts should be accepted as historical record is highly dubious.

After all, Vulliamy himself has given several different 'eye-witness' accounts of what he saw at Trnopolje on 5 August 1992. First he said it was not a



Obsessed: Ed Vulliamy

concentration camp, then he recalled that it was one after all. His first report from Trnopolje failed to mention any barbed wire fence; his later book remembered that the camp compound was 'surrounded by barbed wire fencing'; and now (after Thomas Deichmann's revelations in February's *LM*) he remembers that it was not. Which report are we to take as the gospel truth? (For a full account , see 'Ed Vulliamy's recovered memories', *LM*, March 1997).

Vulliamy's 'I am the Truth' posturing, and his feverish attempts to discredit *LM*, cannot be allowed to distract from the major issue at stake in the debate about Trnopolje camp. That issue is not about the existence of camps during the war in northern Bosnia; contrary to what Vulliamy and his allies claim, *LM* has never denied the existence of the camps or accused ITN of 'fabricating' their pictures. Nor is the argument about whether or not Trnopolje camp was a pleasant place; as we have always made clear, there is no such thing as a 'good' camp and everybody at Trnopolje would undoubtedly have rather been somewhere else.

The issue is simply this: was the world right to interpret the ITN pictures from Trnopolje, centred on the image of Fikret Alic and other Bosnian Muslims behind barbed wire, as proof that the Bosnian Serbs were running Nazi-style concentration camps?

Vulliamy now insists that Trnopolje was a concentration camp, a symbol of the Bosnian Serbs' war of 'genocide' against the Bosnian Muslims. *LM* insists that there is a world of difference between a camp like Trnopolje, however grim, and a real concentration camp like Auschwitz or Belsen.

Trnopolje was a chaotic refugee and transit camp situated on the grounds of a local school in the middle of a war zone. At its peak it held about 7500 people, many of whom were under-nourished, and there have been reports of some beatings, rapes and killings there. Auschwitz concentration camp in occupied Poland was a huge industrially-organised extermination machine, with about 40 'branch' camps attached, where the Nazis killed between three and four million Jews, Poles, Russians, Gypsies, communists and others, mostly in mass gas chambers.

The respected Stockholm International Peace Institute estimates, in its 1996 yearbook, that a total of between 30-50 000 people died on all sides during the whole of the Bosnian civil war (not the 250 000 figure that is bandied around by journalists who

Despite the impression given by ITN's picture, Trnopolje (top) was not Auschwitz (bottom)

get their information from Bosnian government sources). The Nazis exterminated about 100 times as many at Auschwitz alone. There can be no intelligent comparison between that concentration camp and the ramshackle centre at Trnopolje.

The thrust of Thomas Deichmann's argument is that the ITN pictures of Trnopolje camp, showing emaciated Bosnian Muslims apparently caged behind barbed wire, gave the world the false impression that Trnopolje was a Nazi-style concentration camp—and neither ITN nor its journalists ever corrected that false impression. The Bosnian Muslims were not encircled by barbed wire at all. There was no barbed wire fence surrounding Trnopolje camp; the barbed wire actually encircled the British news team, who took those shots from inside an old fenced-in agricultural compound next to the camp (for the full story, see 'The Picture that Fooled the World' in February's *LM*).

In all of his hysterical attempts to rubbish *LM's* case, Ed Vulliamy has never once considered the actual evidence which Thomas Deichmann has amassed, instead confining himself to cheap insults and boring old Red scares, or trying to dismiss the question of the barbed wire fence as 'a detail'. But the amount of time and space Vulliamy has devoted to his campaign suggests that he knows it is nothing of the sort.

The picture of Fikret Alic behind barbed wire is the defining image of the Bosnian war, the one thing above all others which convinced the world that another Holocaust was taking place in Serb-run concentration camps. And that false interpretation has not only distorted the reality of Bosnia; it has belittled the real Nazi genocide against the Jews.

The notion that the Bosnian civil war was a war of genocidal aggression, with the Bosnian Serbs cast in the role of the new Nazis, served to justify Western intervention, as Vulliamy and his fellow breast-beaters demanded 'an end to appeasement'. In reality it was the interference of the Western powers which sparked off the Yugoslav civil war in the first place, and perpetuated it thereafter, to the detriment of all those on the receiving end—the Muslim, Croatian and Serb communities. The post-war pay-off from the moral crusade for Western intervention is that Bosnia is now effectively under foreign occupation (see Dave Chandler, 'You will be democratised', *LM*, March 1997).

Trivialising the Holocaust

The ironic twist is that Vulliamy's insistence that Trnopolje and another Serb-run camp at Omarska were concentration camps really has helped to rewrite history. Any attempt to speak of these camps in the same breath as concentration camps like Auschwitz and Treblinka can only serve to alter the historical record by trivialising the unequalled horrors of the Nazi Holocaust.

As the veteran Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal said when the camps in Bosnia first made sensational headlines, 'To call the camps "concentration camps" is a minimisation of Nazi concentration camps, because not even the gulag camps could be compared with the Nazi camps'.

Vulliamy himself once seemed almost to grasp this point. In the introduction to his 1994 book, *Seasons in Hell*, he explained how, at the time when the ITN pictures from Trnopolje first had the world's press screaming about 'Belsen 1992' , 'I declined to use the term "concentration camp" because of its resonance since the Nazi Holocaust'. However, Vulliamy went on, for some reason since then 'I have decided that "concentration camp" is exactly the right term'. The camps deserved 'the strict definition of "concentration camp", but there is no intention to draw parallels with the scale of the Nazi Holocaust' (pxii).

Tadic is not Goering

That's alright then, Ed. Never mind that the term concentration camp has only one meaning in the post-1945 world, or that it can only conjure up direct comparisons with Auschwitz and all that. So long as there was 'no intention to draw parallels' in your head, you cannot be blamed for the stupidity (or was it diabolical lunacy?) of people who thought that when you said concentration camp you meant concentration camp.

This same habit of implying bogus parallels with the Second World War infuses all discussion of the Bosnian conflict. The International War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague has been set up on the assumption that what happened in Bosnia bears comparison with the Nazi experience. In May the three Tribunal judges found Bosnian Serb Dusko Tadic, against whom Vulliamy gave evidence, guilty of 'crimes against humanity'—the same charge which was levelled against the Nazi leaders at Nuremberg. Yet how can anybody with a passing knowledge of history seriously suggest that a local militiaman like Tadic could be compared to the powerful Nazis sentenced to death for crimes against humanity? The notion that Tadic could really be another Herman Goering, Rudolf Hess, Martin Bormann or Julius Streicher takes revisionism to ridiculous lengths. (A full legal assessment of the Tadic trial will appear in the next issue of *LM*.)

Who benefits from the fashion for crying 'Holocaust' and 'genocide' every time a local war breaks out from Bosnia to Rwanda, a comparison which implicitly belittles the Nazi experience through the comparison? Vulliamy deludes himself that his Bosnian ▶

◀ crusade presents a radical challenge to the 'appeasers' within the Anglo-American establishment. In fact the powerful elites of Western society have good reason to be delighted with his Holocaust-mongering.

The argument that there are new Holocausts happening in the East or the South has helped to establish the moral authority of the West to intervene around the world as it sees fit, under the banners not of empire but of a righteous crusade against evil. This does not mean, of course, that Washington or Whitehall will answer every crank call for intervention, but it does mean that they have an almost open invitation to intervene in their pockets. Having liberal journalists scream at them to invade small countries, and denounce them as 'appeasers' for failing to do so, must be like music to the ears of the great military powers of the West, which are more used to being branded imperialists and told to get their hands off the rest of the world.

The Holocaust-mongering of the likes of Vulliamy also helps to relativise the Nazi experience, by reducing the great genocide of the century to the level of just another atrocity like those carried out today in the Bosnian or Rwandan civil wars. The German authorities are of course keen to encourage this process of relativisation, to rehabilitate their own global reputation . But all of the other Western powers have an interest in it, too. For half a century the Nazi experience has cast a shadow over them all, discrediting the politics of race and empire that are so close to the heart of Western societies and advertising the dangers of a capitalist system out of control.

That is why the Western establishment should be grateful to Vulliamy and his fellow Holocaust-mongers, for providing them with an opportunity to get off the hook and spread the guilt for genocide around. Better still, the focus on alleged concentration camps and genocide 'over there' in the East and the South allows the West to present itself as the potential saviour of the innocent. The great powers, who invented the politics of racial supremacy and put them into practice at the cost of millions of lives around the world, are recast in the role of Holocaust-busting super heroes. That is history not just rewritten but turned on its head.

The final little irony in all of this is that Ed Vulliamy, who has tried to win himself a reputation as a crusader for the truth against sleaze and the abuse of power, should now act as the mouthpiece for ITN's libel writs against *LM*—a blatant attempt by a mega-corporation to gag the press and buy immunity from criticism through the courts. ●

NEWS
FROM THE LEGAL FRONT

The battle between *LM* magazine and ITN, over Thomas Deichmann's article 'The Picture that Fooled the World', is starting to warm up as we spar over the legal details of the libel case.

Contrary to the impression given recently in the media, *LM* has not apologised to ITN or anybody else. The magazine is continuing to defend itself against ITN's libel writs and gagging orders.

All that happened in April was that Two-Ten Communications (a subsidiary of the Press Association) issued a High Court apology to ITN and two of its journalists, over allegations made in a *Living Marxism* press release promoting Deichmann's article. The Two-Ten case was reported in terms which gave the clear impression that ITN had won a major legal battle over Deichmann's allegations.

But there was no legal battle. Two-Ten Communications lawyers offered no defence. They simply made a short, formal apology (but paid no damages), and then ITN's lawyers read out a lengthy statement giving their own version of what happened at Trnopolje camp on 5 August 1992. The court made no examination whatsoever of Thomas Deichmann's counter evidence, and no jury passed judgement on who was telling the truth.

Two-Ten Communications is only a commercial distributor of press releases which, as its own solicitor's courtroom statement makes clear, 'does not make any comment or judgement on the content of such press releases'. For Two-Ten, apologising to ITN was strictly a business matter, to do with protecting commercial relations. For *LM* Magazine, however, the battle against ITN's libel writs is an issue of principle to do with defending press freedom. That is why *LM* is continuing with its defence and refusing to apologise.

As *LM* editor Mick Hume said after the Two-Ten case: 'Judgement as to who is telling the truth about the ITN reports will have to wait until all the evidence is finally made public. We have that evidence. We stand by our story. Watch this space.'

Meanwhile, another settlement relating to the case went unreported. In April the *Guardian* agreed to settle a claim made by former US state department official George Kenney, over the paper's 12 March article about the London Off the Fence rally where Kenney spoke. Luke Harding of the *Guardian* described Kenney as a 'leading apologist for Serbian aggression'. Kenney's solicitors, Bindman & Partners, complained to the Guardian Newspapers Ltd that this was a serious defamation of their client, and demanded an apology and payment of costs and damages.

Although the Guardian Newspaper Ltd claimed that the article was 'fair comment' they nevertheless were not prepared to see the case go to court. Instead they agreed to publish a letter from Kenney and to pay him in excess of £2250. Readers can draw their own conclusions about the strength of the *Guardian's* case. Kenney told *LM* magazine that in his view the settlement was 'a small moral victory, but a victory nonetheless'.

If we are to win a bigger victory for press freedom, we still need all the help we can get. Send messages of support, offers of help and *money* to the *LM* libel appeal, the Off The Fence Fund—see back page advert for details.

Helen Searls

the next step

FIVE DAYS OF DISCUSSION ABOUT WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

http://www.informinc.co.uk

Friday 25 July to Tuesday 29 July 1997

at the University of London Union
& the Institute of Education

Recent elections in Britain and the USA have revealed a narrowing of politics and a lowering of horizons. The apparent absence of any viable alternative to the mainstream politicians and political parties reflects a wider perception that we are living in a society that has reached the end of the road.

One of the central features of the prevailing 'culture of limits' is the diminished role accorded to individual initiative today. Far from setting people free, the demise of old collective organisations, such as trade unions and political parties, has had a paralysing effect on individuals. The result is a society in which the victim enjoys the highest prestige and self-pity is a predominant sentiment. In the course of the next step conference, we aim to examine and challenge different aspects of the degradation of subjectivity and to promote the active agency of human intervention.

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Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Women in the South: the myth of empowerment

Curriculum matters

Rwanda: the great genocide debate

Childhood and friendship in a fearful world

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The legalisation of everyday life

The citizen state: civil society and the community

Defending 'masculine' values

MEDIAting reality

Idealism, materialism and Darwinism

The economy after economics

Belief and modernity: the sense of mission in an anxious age

Children and the politics of international relations

Decadent capitalism and the post-material economy

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Sunday course: Monday course: Tuesday course:

DR MICHAEL FITZPATRICK

Fundholding, New Labour-style

I well remember the sombre moment when my old senior partner told me that he had broken the habit of a lifetime and decided not to vote Conservative. That was in the June 1989 election for the European parliament, when he opted, like many others, for a protest vote for the Greens. He returned to the Tory fold in 1992, but by May of this year, he had decided that enough was enough, that New Labour was indeed New Labour, and that it was time for a change.

It is a sign of the times that the medical profession—loyal to the bitter end both to Hitler and to Thatcher—has decisively abandoned the Conservative Party. As my colleagues celebrate the New Labour victory, there are high hopes of better days for the national health service.

New Labour's key promise in health is to end GP fundholding, one of the most controversial of the reforms introduced by the Tories. Even though more than half the population now attends a fundholding GP, Labour pledged to abolish this delegation of budgets to surgery level, which allows GPs to purchase services from hospitals and elsewhere on behalf of their patients. Labour is committed to suspending the internal market, to cutting the waste and bureaucracy and to restoring the NHS to its former glory.

Furthermore, Labour plans to do all this without spending more money; indeed it is committed to Conservative projections which mean a reduction in health spending per head of population. The key to squaring this circle is 'locality commissioning', a scheme which began as an alternative to fundholding, but has evolved into a complimentary programme.

To grasp the coming role of locality commissioning, we have to look back at the advance of fundholding. Fundholding took off in the shires and in suburbia in the mid-1980s among GPs keen to combine a traditional approach to medical practice with a more entrepreneurial spirit. The Conservative government zealously nurtured the early fundholders, many of whom were ideologically attuned to the values of Thatcherism.

Aneurin Bevan, the Labour health minister who introduced the health service in the face of fierce resistance from senior doctors, once explained that he silenced them by 'stuffing their mouths with gold'. The Tory government followed a similar method in popularising fundholding: the 'first wave' subscribers found that their budgets were calculated generously to give them substantial surpluses. While these could not quite be stuffed into brown envelopes, they did lead to the construction of new premises around the country of which President Mobutu could be proud.

Locality commissioning is a radical response to fundholding from inner-city GPs, who resent the consolidation of a two-tier health service as a result of the government reforms. The inner-city GP has abandoned the tweed jacket with leather elbow patches in favour of the woolly jumper and corduroy trousers. In place of the mentality of the small shopkeeper is a spirit of altruism and self-sacrifice, though the progressive GP is careful to maintain a good income. There is a strong commitment to moralising the masses through the gospel of the new public health: don't smoke, don't drink, take exercise, eat sensibly and have sex safely. In many ways the new wave GP was New Labour even before New Labour.

Locality commissioning means a group of practices covering a population of between 50 000 and 100 000 get together and organise the purchasing and provision of healthcare. Instead of having a budget for each practice, the funds are collectively administered and distributed by GPs and other professionals, working with the local health authority and the hospitals.

Locality commissioning is a godsend to New Labour. It offers a means of overcoming the fragmentation and the loss of strategic regulation and control that have resulted from the operation of the internal market. Above all, it offers a way of solving the government's problem of how to curtail healthcare expenditure without provoking public resistance.

It was already clear before the election that New Labour had no intention of abolishing fundholding. Locality commissioning provides a mechanism for incorporating fundholding. In the inner cities, locality commissioning will predominate, absorbing the few fundholding practices that exist. In suburbia and the country, commissioning will provide a discreet umbrella bringing fundholding practices into a wider framework for the purposes of budgeting and planning.

Locality commissioning is an ideal means of rationing resources. Even before the election, pressures to curtail expenditure on health were mounting. After the early days of plenty, fundholders have been increasingly squeezed: in West Surrey all fundholders had their budgets cut by 10 per cent this year. The health authority under which I work—City and East London—reported a deficit of £18 million last winter and imposed a series of cuts and restrictions on services as a result.

In East London, where GPs have been experimenting with commissioning for some time, the cash crisis revealed how the rationing process works. At meetings about the spending crisis, radical GPs who have been involved in the commissioning process found themselves apologising for the authority and urging their colleagues to take responsibility for rationing and for passing on the austerity message to patients. While the authority pursued extensive consultations about decisions that had already been taken, doctors drawn into what will become the full structure of locality commissioning were effectively endorsing drastic reductions in services.

Last September Tony Blair himself declared a 'crusade' to save the NHS. Meanwhile New Labour's academic advisers at the Institute for Public Policy Research and the London School of Economics proclaimed the virtues of fundholding—though a major study by the Audit Commission last year could discern no particular benefit. Though the NHS may be safe with Labour, so also is fundholding, in the modified form of locality commissioning. The casualties of this characteristic piece of New Labour cynicism will be those in need of healthcare, especially in the inner cities.

TABOOS

David Nolan thinks that the health promotion campaign around testicular cancer is a load of balls

THE TRUTH ABOUT TESTING YOUR TESTICLES

Two new health promotion leaflets have appeared in GPs' surgeries, Well Men clinics and branches of Boots throughout the country. 'A whole new ball game' and 'A message for men' have been produced as part of a Department of Health campaign to raise awareness about testicular cancer and encourage men to take steps to spot the warning signs.

The leaflets are alarming. Testicular cancer, we are told, is the most common form of cancer in men aged between 15 and 45, and the risk of developing the condition has doubled in the past 20 years. The Department of Health hopes that by making men more aware of what is normal, and what is not, about their bodies, more cases of testicular cancer will be spotted at the early, treatable stage. Just as women are supposed to be breast-aware and examine their breasts for sinister signs every month, chaps are being advised to be testicle-aware.

The leaflets advise all men to practice monthly testicular self-examination (TSE). This involves sitting in your bath and rolling your testes between forefinger and thumb to spot irregular or unusual growths, lumps, knobbly bits or anything else. The leaflets suggest that this may well save your life. The Imperial Cancer Research Fund, which is collaborating with the Department of Health's campaign and which wrote one of the leaflets, is concerned that only about three per cent of men regularly check their tackle.

Their figures may well be optimistic. How many men do you know who regularly examine their testicles? Probably none. (Other forms of bathtime handling do not count.) And I will wager it does not matter a jot. Testicular cancer is quite simply not a problem for young and middle-aged men. Distributing leaflets advising them about TSE is at best a token gesture to make men feel included in the current wave of health advice (nearly all of which is aimed at women). At worst, it is a way of encouraging health neuroticism among young men who have every right to feel indestructible.

When you take a careful look at the information provided about cancer of the testes you find a curious mix of facts which illustrate that the condition is not a problem, and advice that tells you to act as though it is. The facts that could be reassuring are presented in the most alarming way possible. Incidence of the condition, we are told, has increased by more than 300 per cent since 1911 among men aged 25-29. Sounds scary. But, despite that increase, the actual risk is still tiny. Fewer than 40 in every million men in their late 20s will get testicular cancer. To put this in perspective, one woman in 10 suffers breast cancer at some time in her life.

Testicular cancer may be the most common form of cancer in young men, but then cancer is generally an older person's disease anyway so even the most common form is likely to be extremely rare. One of the reasons that cancer rates have been increasing generally is because people are living to be old enough to develop it. Tragic definitely, for those involved, but surely increased longevity is better than the opposite?

Furthermore, even without widespread TSE, the annual number of deaths from testicular cancer is plummeting. Just 83 men died from testicular cancer in 1995, less than a third of the toll in 1978 when 273 men died of the disease. More men died of breast cancer in 1994 (the last year we have figures for) than died of testicular cancer in 1995, yet we never hear about male incidence of that.

CAUSES OF MALE DEATHS IN THE UK 1995

Cause	Number of Deaths
Total male deaths	272 709
Diseases of the circulatory system (incl. heart attacks)	116 127
All cancers	72 445
Diseases of the respiratory system	41 291
Cancer of the prostate	8 848
Diseases of the digestive system	8 523
Suicide	2 790
Various Accidents	2 183
Breast Cancer (1994)	88
Testicular cancer	**83**
Appendicitis	43
CJD (1994)	20
Meningococcal meningitis (1994)	7
Whooping cough	2
Measles	1

SOURCE: OFFICE OF NATIONAL STATISTICS

All in all, there appears to be no rationale to the idea that testicular cancer is a major killer of men, or even a serious risk to our health.

Even when men do get testicular cancer it is almost invariably cured. Of the ▶

PHOTOS: DAVE CHAPMAN

What the DoH might do is encourage prophylactic testectomies then the incidence rate will be down to zero

◀1200 to 1500 men who get cancer of the testes each year more than 90 per cent make a complete recovery. The introduction of new drugs and less toxic treatments has improved success rates phenomenally. In the 1970s fewer than 20 per cent of men with one form of testicular cancer, metastatic teratoma, survived. Now it is 90 per cent.

PERCENTAGE OF MEN SURVIVING FIVE YEARS AFTER AN INCIDENCE OF METASTATIC TERATOMA

Pre-1970	Early 1970s	Late 1970s	Today
Nil	17	79	90

If the cancer is caught early enough today, the survival rate is about 98 per cent.

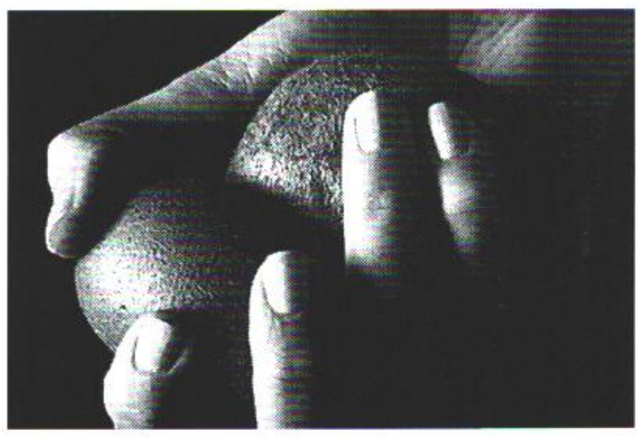
SOURCE: CANCER RESEARCH CAMPAIGN

Cancer research organisations insist that there are certain 'high risk' groups where testicular cancer is concerned. For instance, those who had an undescended testicle, or those whose brother has had the cancer, are considered to be especially susceptible. But they are not being specifically targeted. The approach is a blanket one aimed at alarming all men. The fact that other 'high-risk groups' singled out include such broad categories as white men, professional men, single men and young men gives an idea of how generalised this health scare has become.

Deep-seated fear

Even if the health promotion campaign did target specific individuals, the evidence to hand suggests that it is unlikely to have much effect. Dr Joan Morris, an epidemiologist from the Wolfson Institute of Preventative Medicine has worked out that if 50 000 men tested themselves regularly over 10 years it might save one life—and that was only if the screening cut the death rate by 50 per cent, which would be an unusually high result. She claims that the campaign was aimed at our heads more than anything else. 'The campaign seems to be mainly a psychological one and not a step on the path towards taking health seriously. The figures do not justify the campaign or its cost. There is a high level of misdiagnosis (as doctors are not always sure themselves as they see the condition so rarely) and can cause needless and extreme anxiety.' A localised campaign in Glasgow bears this view out. It had no effect whatsoever on the numbers of cancers found, but did a lot to boost the numbers of healthy men who became worried about their balls, visiting their GPs and wasting everybody's time.

We are not talking about prevention. Nobody knows exactly what causes testicular cancer. Some argue it is mainly genetic, others say it is hormonal and still more are inclined to suggest that it is environmental. The wise ones say that it is probably a mix of all three. Other, more specific and probably more absurd reasons have been put forward.



Over the years sexual activity, a variety of traumas, mumps, orchitis and even temperature variations have all been blamed. Even watching TV and riding motorbikes can result, apparently, in radioactive emissions affecting the testes. Synthetic oestrogens, contained in the old favourite, the contraceptive pill, which seems to be blamed for everything these days, also get a look in.

In short nobody knows, and while investigations continue, the scaring of men does too. The reality is if you already have had one testicle removed due to cancer, you may well lose the other one. If you have not you probably don't have to worry.

But the absence of a definite cause is one of the things that makes testicular cancer an ideal candidate for an emotive health promotion campaign on the cheap. There are no resource-consuming mass screening programmes, no expensive mass immunisations. In fact, apart from the leaflets, there is little involved in this campaign

Solution to hand

Gary Ward, spokesman for the Health Education Authority spells out clearly the justification for the campaign: 'Self-examination is something specific that men can do. It is a reasonably easy message to get across and it is not a complicated procedure. Men can do it in the bath and they needn't be embarrassed about it.' Ward also said that campaigns which called for specific action were likely to be more successful than others, such as getting men to reduce drinking. 'Where the health risks and benefits cross over is a difficult message to get across, getting people to understand units of alcohol and the way they affect different people is a complex message, whereas self-examination is perfectly straightforward.' In other words if you can get them to do as they are told by the professionals, who cares if it's necessary or not.

If these campaigns were simply a waste of time and money they would not be worthy of too much comment. But they are not benign. Needlessly alarming men about their testicles is one more drip into the pool of health panics in which society is drowning. The underlying message is that you, and you alone, are responsible for your health and well-being, and unless you change your lifestyle and personal behaviour, and become more aware about the workings of your body, you and your loved ones are going to suffer. I am just waiting for the campaign which pictures the crying orphan (as in past anti-drink-driving campaigns) with the caption: 'Her father never felt his balls. Have you practised TSE this month?'

Pocket billiards

TSE may not do much for health awareness, but it certainly can make you aware of—and worried by—your own vulnerability . Purely in the interests of research I tried it out. While I did not find anything unexpected, I did find the whole experience makes you uncomfortably conscious of how vulnerable you are, and starts you thinking about how many things you have not considered can go wrong with your body.

Some say that TSE might save a life. And it just might conceivably save a single life sometime—but the price is far too high. The increase in general anxiety shown in the Glasgow study alone would be enough to convince me that we would be better off without it. We all have much better things to do with our time than worry ourselves sick about non-existent health problems.

What the DoH might do is encourage prophylactic testectomies for us all, then the incidence rate will be down to zero and the Health of the Nation statistics will be in credit. But cutting the balls off the nation's manhood is hardly a feasible solution. Whatever happens this sort of health promotion campaign is set to continue, and indeed proliferate, under the New Labour regime. They are low resource, high impact propaganda campaigns which focus attention on self-awareness and endorse the completely wrong idea that good healthcare is about how we examine ourselves rather than the availability of doctors and treatments. But I suppose if we all walk around with our hands in our pockets, it stops us making trouble elsewhere. ●

Aid agencies and human rights campaigners cannot evade their share of the responsibility for the tragedy of the Hutu refugees in Zaire, writes Bernadette Gibson

BLOOD ON WHOSE HANDS?

According to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the security of the rare mountain gorillas made famous by the movie *Gorillas in the Mist*, has improved since the rebels took control of eastern Zaire. With funding from WWF, the rebels under the leadership of General Laurent Kabila have been improving conditions in the Virunga national park where many of the gorillas live. A gratified WWF representative told Reuters that 'prospects for the gorillas are looking a lot better than they were'.

Unfortunately for tens of thousands of people currently hiding out in the forests of eastern Zaire it seems that Kabila's enthusiasm for wildlife does not extend to human beings—especially of the Rwandan Hutu variety.

Aid agencies, the UN and the EU have all condemned Kabila's ADFL rebels for massacring large numbers of Rwandan refugees during their advance through the east of Zaire. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations. has accused the rebels of adopting a policy of 'slow extermination'. Emma Bonino, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, spoke of a 'deliberate strategy to wipe out the refugees in Zaire'. Médècins sans Frontières (MSF) condemned the rebels for targeting refugees, and a host of British aid agencies working in Zaire have called on the British government to use its influence with the rebels' allies in Rwanda and Uganda to end the killings.

Yet many of those who now bemoan the fate of these refugees cannot evade their own share of responsibility for sealing that fate. When human rights groups and aid agencies persuaded the world that the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis in Rwanda between April and July 1994 was a 'genocide', as distinct from the bloody finale of an all-too familiar African civil war, they helped to prepare the ground for the tragedy of the Hutu refugees in Zaire today.

The refugees stranded in eastern Zaire are those who avoided being herded back to Rwanda by aid agencies last November, when rebel attacks closed their camps. A claim repeatedly made by the Tutsi-run Rwandan government, and accepted by the US and British governments, is that the vast majority of refugees are now back home, and that those who did not return are almost all former soldiers and militia members and their families who took part in the slaughter of Tutsis now known to the world as the 'genocide' of 1994. But the facts suggest that, of the 1.2 million Hutus who fled to Zaire in July 1994 when the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front took control of Rwanda, only 700 000 returned last November. For months, many thousands of refugees simply disappeared into the dense forests of eastern Zaire. Many are still missing.

Those refugees who have turned up in makeshift camps, many malnourished and diseased, have brought stories of vicious attacks on men, women and children by Kabila's forces. One missionary priest from eastern Zaire distributed a detailed report to Western agencies and journalists, claiming that he had witnessed several massacre sites and had helped to bury 134 refugees killed by the rebels, some of whom had been burned alive, some shot in the back and others hacked to death.

Although these reports were largely uncorroborated, they are exactly the sort of eye-witness atrocity stories which the British media usually milks to death. Yet despite the appearance of these allegations in the French and Belgian media early this year, they were pretty much ignored in Britain. Only in April, when UN human rights investigator Roberto Garreton returned from Zaire claiming that he had substantial evidence of at least 40 mass graves, did the British media carry the story.

The plight of the Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire could be largely ignored because they have been characterised not as 'innocent' refugees, but as guilty participants in the Hutu 'genocide' against the Tutsis in 1994. With the world convinced that the refugees are murderers fleeing from justice, it is little wonder that Kabila's forces feel that they can get away with doing what they like to terrified Hutu refugees.

The irony is that aid organisations and human rights campaigners have led the way in judging and sentencing the Hutu refugees of eastern Zaire. Rakiya Omaar, from the human rights group, African Rights, has coined a phrase ▶

◀ for these refugees— the 'genocidaires'. Writing in the *Guardian* in April she made it clear that the suffering of Rwandan refugees in Zaire is the bitter harvest of 1994:

'Thousands of these men and some of the women orchestrated the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi. Soldiers, militiamen, politicians, ideologues, priests, doctors, teachers, students, and peasants with blood on their hands fled Rwanda in July 1994.' (30 April 1997)

Omaar questioned whether they should be entitled to refugee status at all: 'UNHCR's mandate is the protection of bona fide refugees, not of mass murderers fleeing justice.'

Of course, Omaar and other human rights activists would never advocate the killing or abandonment of Hutu refugees. But in arguing that many of them are 'mass murderers' who must be treated differently from other, 'bona fide', refugees, she gave credence to the widely-held belief that the Hutus had made their own bed and should be punished. UNHCR, not wishing to be accused of helping these refugees, sent a rapid response to Omaar's article. The letter spelt out that it had always seen 'the potential for further trouble' in the camps and that it was UNHCR that persuaded the UN Secretary General to ask 'the Security Council to send an armed force to clean up the camps' (*Guardian*, 2 May 1997). By 'clean up', UNHCR presumably did not mean sweeping the floor.

African Rights and UNHCR are not alone in their distrust of Hutu refugees in Zaire. The idea that large numbers of these refugees were genocidal killers, first popularised soon after they arrived in Zaire in 1994, produced an unprecedented debate among aid agencies about how to deal with the 'problem' of Rwandan refugees and the morality of delivering humanitarian aid to this group. MSF has now condemned the killing of Hutu refugees. Yet it contributed to their demonisation last year by publicly withdrawing from the Hutu refugee camps in Zaire on the basis that it could no longer feed killers. UNHCR stayed in the camps but implemented an 'aggressive returns policy' designed to chase the Hutus back to Rwanda by making life in the camps unbearable.

Before the mass return of last November, the report from the US Committee for Refugees had predicted that up to half a million Rwandans would not go home because they are probably guilty of genocide: 'A reasonable estimate is that 250 000 to 500 000 Rwandans in Zaire and Tanzania may never repatriate due to their guilt or their family ties to a guilty individual.' Even after the first pictures of the desperate refugees emerging from the forests reached our TV screens, the US ambassador to Rwanda urged the international community to withhold humanitarian aid from the dying refugees in Tingi Tingi camp, arguing that 'if we do not, we will be trading the children of Tingi Tingi against the children who will be killed and orphaned in Rwanda'. The ambassador was merely echoing a sentiment shared by many: that these refugees are genocidal by nature and will continue to kill people if they are allowed to return to Rwanda.

Given the pathetic state of the refugees barely clinging to life in the forest, it is hard to see how anybody could believe that they present any obstacle to the rebels' war effort, or threat to the Rwandan government. But the global consensus, that Hutu refugees are genocidal outlaws, has meant that there has been no serious debate about why these desperate people should have been subjected to attack by Zairian rebels.

In fact, the attacks on Hutu refugees are a cynical pay back for the support which the Zairian rebels get from the governments of Rwanda and Uganda. The fact that tens of thousands of Rwandans refused to return home after camp closures last October placed an uncomfortable question mark over the legitimacy of the Rwandan regime: a minority Tutsi government imposed by force with the support of Uganda and the West. That is why the Rwandan and Ugandan governments armed and trained Zairian-based Tutsis in Kabila's army to attack the camps, and why the British and American governments went along with it while hailing Kabila as the saviour of Zaire. And because the aid agencies were so unhappy about working with Hutu refugees they too expressed relief when rebel attacks succeeded where they had failed, by closing the camps and forcing the bulk of the refugees home.

When the presentation of Hutu refugees as murderous 'genocidaires' is added to Western support for the new Rwandan regime and Rwandan support for Kabila's rebel forces, it is clear why Zairian rebels should feel able to get

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees ordered this repatriation programme in Zaire. Ninety-one refugees were suffocated or crushed to death in an over-crowded train from Biaro camp to Kisangani (4 May 1997)

African Rights' spokeswoman Rakiya Omaar said 'UNHCR's mandate is the PROTECTION of bona fide refugees, not of mass murderers fleeing justice'

away with attacking defenceless refugees. In this atmosphere, killing Hutus who are subject to a blanket accusation of genocide could be rationalised as a means of ending what NGOs and journalists have all termed 'the culture of impunity' in Rwanda.

The 'culture of impunity' is a dangerous myth, which seeks to explain the Rwandan conflict as the latest example of a national tradition of Rwandans killing each other with impunity. According to this myth, the reason why Rwanda descended into 'genocide' in 1994 was because the Hutu militia keyed into a culture in which inflammatory radio 'hate speech' was sufficient to galvanise an entire population into an orgy of killing. The aim of ending the 'culture of impunity' by bringing the perpetrators of the 'genocide' to book has been endorsed by almost all aid agencies and international institutions. It has led to an international witch-hunt of those branded as Hutu extremists, culminating in the establishment of the UN International Tribunal on Rwanda.

Some, however, want to go further still. Gerard Prunier, whose book *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (1995) is widely regarded as the most authoritative on the subject, has few qualms about calling for the blood of 'maybe 100 men who have committed not only a crime against humanity but a sin against the Spirit by locking up a whole nation into the airless sadomasochistic inferno. They have to die. This is the only ritual through which the killers can be cleansed of their guilt and the survivors brought back to the community of the living' (p335).

When respected writers such as Prunier can casually call for a mass execution to cleanse Rwanda's spirit, it is easy to see why Zairian rebel forces do not worry that killing Hutu refugees marked out as probable perpetrators of genocide will attract too much international condemnation. And as international bodies, aid agencies and the Western media continue to treat Hutu refugees as different from any other refugees fleeing an African country after their defeat in a civil war, any attempts to speak up for the dignity of these refugees are treated as tantamount to apologising for genocide.

Any attempts to speak up for the DIGNITY of these refugees are treated as tantamount to apologising for genocide

PHOTO: WTN PICTURES

Amnesty International, for example, has already come under fire from the Rwandan government and some NGOs for daring to criticise the forcible repatriation of refugees to Rwanda in November, and suggesting that UNHCR's actions contravene international refugee laws which state that refugees must only return home voluntarily. Amnesty points to the continued human rights abuses carried out against Hutus by the Rwandan government as evidence that it may be unsafe for these refugees to go home. Around 100 000 Hutus are in jail in Rwanda awaiting trial charged with genocide—several thousand of whom were among those refugees forced home in November. The first Hutus were recently sentenced to death for the crime of genocide, after trials in which some had no access to a defence lawyer. The demonisation of Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire has left them completely without a voice in the debate around their own fate.

Three years ago, the presentation of the Rwandan civil war as a 'genocide' served as a useful cover legitimising Western intervention in the region. Now the presentation of Hutu refugees as genocidal criminals serves the same purpose. The rebellion in Zaire has nothing to do with the people of Zaire. It has been planned and implemented by Rwanda and Uganda with the backing of America, which now sees Kabila as a better bet than Washington's ailing and deeply unpopular Cold War ally, President Mobutu. The price for these diplomatic manoeuvres by the American and British governments and their allies continues to be the persecution and slaughter of an entire ethnic group.

When *LM* first took issue with the characterisation of the Rwandan civil war as 'genocide', the magazine was accused of 'Holocaust denial'. Yet the consequences of the moral consensus branding Hutus as a breed apart from other refugees—as genocidal, sub-human creatures less deserving of humanitarian aid than gorillas—can now be seen in eastern Zaire. As I wrote in these pages in December, when the Hutu camps were being closed and the refugees forcibly repatriated to Zaire, 'The criminalisation of these people as supporters of genocide has robbed them of a voice, and may well rob them of their lives'. For once I am sorry to say that *LM* has been proved right.

These issues will be the subject of an all-day course, 'Rwanda: the great genocide debate' convened by Africa Direct at *The Next Step* conference in July—see p23

FUTURES

Whatever you think of deer hunting, suggests Helene Guldberg, we should be far more worried by the 'scientific' assumptions supporting the National Trust's ban

DO DEER SUFFER LIKE US?

Professor Patrick Bateson's report, 'The behavioural and physiological effects of culling red deer' has been widely accepted as scientific proof that hunted deer experience unjustifiable suffering. But is it really science, or sentimentality?

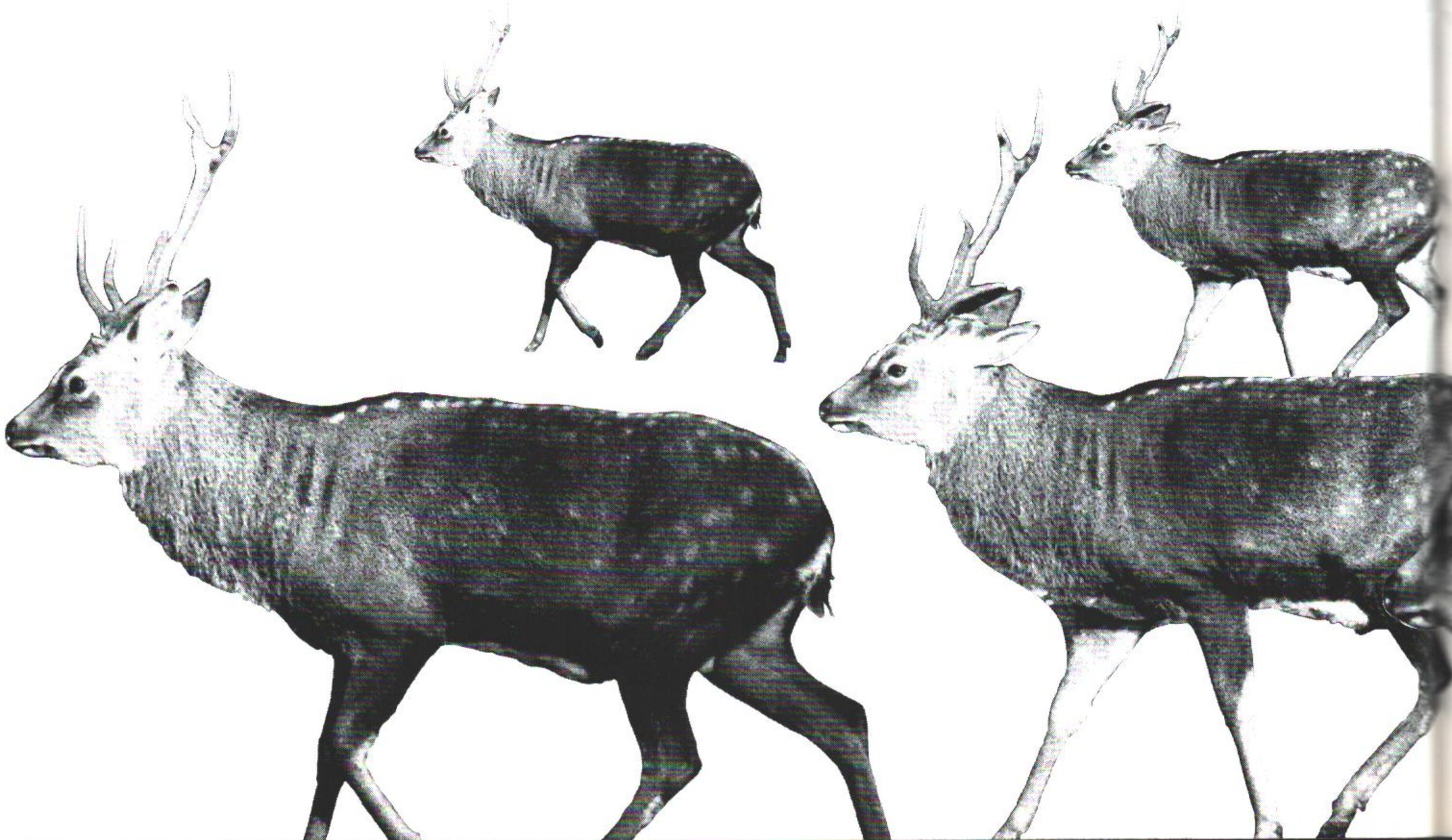
Over the Easter holidays my two-year-old nephew, much to everybody's amusement, panicked when he accidentally stood on a grape and cried 'Oh no, the grape's dead. I squashed it!'. His response of sheer horror was a healthy one considering his perception of the situation and belief that the grape was alive. If he had rejoiced at his accomplishment, or gone on to 'kill' more grapes, maybe even slowly peeling their skin off to prolong their ending, I would have worried about his state of mind.

Empathising with a grape is understandable, I suppose, in a two-year old. Many adults also have a tendency to empathise with all kinds of organisms—cats, dogs, even plants. We think our cat 'understands' us, our dog 'pines' for us, our plant 'needs some love and attention'. Although I must admit that I am no animal lover, I cannot see any harm in people treating their pet dog as 'one of the family' or even imagining that their pets share human emotions and human experiences. But I do see a problem with trying to rationalise such an outlook—trying to use it to understand animal behaviour, or taking it as a guide to public policy. Unfortunately, this is exactly what has happened with Professor Bateson's study for the National Trust.

The report, the outcome of a two year study, claims to show that deer hunted by hounds suffer extreme physical stress. The day after it was published, the National Trust, one of Britain's biggest landowners, moved to ban deer hunting on its land—despite a policy which held that it is up to parliament, and not the Trust, to make decisions on such matters. The people of Exmoor and the Quantocks, whose lives and livelihoods will be dramatically affected by the ban, were not consulted on the policy shift.

The National Trust argue that their decision was dictated by the science of the report. And Bateson argues that he went into the study with an open mind and a willingness to go wherever the science took him. That the human interests involved have been so casually brushed aside would have been bad enough if these claims were true. But the fact is that the science concerned does not back up the anti-hunting argument. Rather, a selective, at times wholly wrong, science has been used to legitimise anti-hunting sentiments.

What does the report tell us? The methodology Professor Bateson has used aims to provide objective criteria for measuring stress in animals. Not the kind of stress humans experience of course—such as worrying about losing your job or about the state of a relationship—but physical distress. Direct observations of the hunts and supplementary video footage provided data for analysing the deers' behaviour. Physiological profiles of culled deer are also presented, based on comparing blood



samples taken from deer killed in hunts, stalked deer, deer injured in accidents and farmed deer.

As an ethological study, the National Trust report is interesting. The behavioural and physiological profiles provide some insights into how red deer respond in particular circumstances. The results show that deer pursued by hounds over long distances are driven to complete exhaustion. The measurements of blood carbohydrates show that in short chases lactate levels surge. But after about five kilometres the levels begin to fall—not because animal stress levels are subsiding, but because the animals are burning lactate as a means of fuelling their muscles. The carbohydrate resources for muscles are found to be totally depleted in deer chased for 30 kilometres or more. Hunted deer are shown to undergo levels of physiological change similar to that which happens to deer which were injured so severely that they were destroyed for humane reasons. The data on hunted deer contrasts strongly with data on farmed deer and clean-shot deer. Levels of cortisol are 10 times higher in deer chased by hounds than in those shot by stalkers. Levels of the hormone B-endorphin, associated with pain-killing, are also much higher.

Darwinian evolutionary theory can help us to understand the affect of chases. Red deer evolved in wooded areas where attacks by predators were likely to be sudden and short lived. They are not well-adapted to prolonged pursuit. They are not equipped with sweat glands in their bodies which means that they overheat when chased for longer distances, and their muscle fibre type is not suited for endurance running. Chased deer are, if you like, being forced to operate outside their 'design criteria'.

Bateson summarises this science—and draws the conclusion that the observed changes in physiology are indicative of stress and pain in the animal. He asks: 'Does the culling method cause deer to experience conditions lying far outside normal limits for the species?', and 'Does the culling method cause suffering (including anxiety, pain and injury) in red deer?', and answers yes to both questions.

He is undoubtedly right on the first point, about the abnormal conditions encountered by hunted deer. But he is just as clearly wrong on the second issue of suffering. The fundamental mistake is uncritically to apply human categories to animals. Bateson explicitly uses human categories to understand deer:

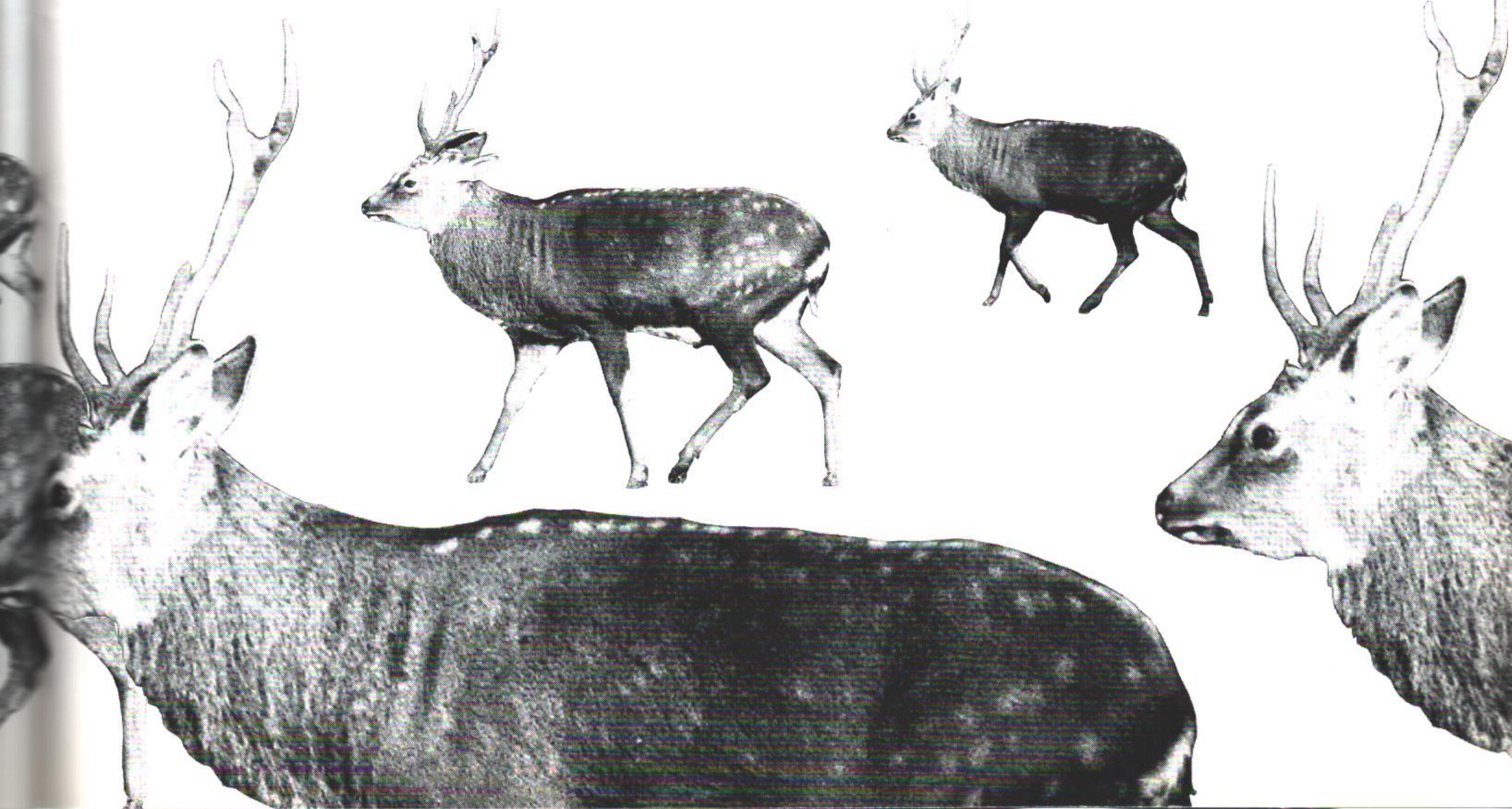
'Anxiety, distress, suffering and pain, as used in our study and in animal welfare legislation, are all defined in terms of human subjective experience. Such projection from human experience and emotions can be made transparent by building a profile of both the behavioural characteristics and the physiological processes involved when a human is in the specified state. This profile is used, with appropriate safeguards, when examining the characteristics of an animal exposed to similar stresses.'

The comparison is invalid precisely because animals lack 'human subjective experience' and 'human experience and emotions'. Undoubtedly, some animals are more complex than others, but none remotely approaches human mental states. As American biological anthropologist Kathleen R Gibson states: 'Other animals possess elements that are common to human behaviours, but none reaches the human level of accomplishment in any domain—vocal, gestural, imitative, technical or social. Nor do other species combine social, technical and linguistic behaviours into a rich, interactive and self-propelling cognitive complex.' (*Tools, Language and Cognition in Human Evolution*, 1993, pp7-8)

We can be sure that animals do not have the complex mental states of which Gibson writes because there is no behavioural manifestation of them. If animals had anything remotely resembling human subjective experiences they would exhibit the kind of intelligent behaviour, including the capacity for foresight and planning, that humans do. If deer, for example, had such mental states you would have expected them to have organised a little resistance to the hunts, or at least devised a means of escape, rather than waiting for the National Trust to move into action.

In the absence of such mental capacities we cannot specify any distinct 'experience' at all in animals. As the philosopher and Darwinian theorist Daniel Dennett explains, experiences must be the experience of a conscious ▶

PHOTOS: MICHAEL KRAMER



Animals have no concept of death nor an ability to 'imagine the worst'—which means no anxiety

◀ subject, which understands what is happening to it, otherwise they are not experiences at all. And in the absence of distinct experiences, states such as physical distress do not have any clear significance: 'For such states to matter—whether or not we call them pains, or conscious states, or experiences—there must be an enduring subject to whom they matter because they are a source of suffering....Every experience must be the experience of some subject.' (*Kinds of Minds*, 1996, p163).

What Dennett is getting at is this: a deer, like any other animal, has no sense of itself. It has no idea what is happening to it at any one time, and is unable to reflect on what is happening by comparing it to what happened in the past. A deer does not say to itself: 'oh no, I'm being chased by those people that got my mate last week', which is just the kind of reflection on a chase that would really cause stress and anxiety. Humans have experiences; things just happen to animals. So whereas it may be true that when animals, and humans for that matter, are forced to operate outside their 'design criteria' this has a detrimental effect on their biological well-being—manifested in physiological changes in blood pressure, stress hormone levels and the strength of the immune system—this alone cannot be referred to as suffering. Suffering, distress, pain and anxiety cannot be explained simply by physical changes. Rather, they are uniquely human experiences which arise out of the inter-action of such noxious stimulation and our ability consciously to experience it, to dread the consequences, and perhaps to fear repetition or even possible death to come.

Of course, the physiological basis of pain in humans can be explained in evolutionary terms just as the physiological basis of physical stress in animals can. But as intentional beings we make sense of and give meaning to physical processes, giving them a qualitatively different character from similar physical processes in animals. Humans are able to reflect on what they are doing and feeling. We contemplate our past and deliberate on what we might become. The behavioural aspect of what is so easily, but wrongly, called 'fear', 'pain' or 'suffering' in animals is in fact a simple adaptive response that can be explained through evolutionary theory and conditioning. There is no consciousness shaping the animals' reactions. Accordingly, we cannot talk about anxiety because there is no anticipation. Nor can we talk about pain because there is no self-awareness. Animals have no concept of death nor an ability to 'imagine the worst', which means there can be no sense of foreboding, dread, fear or anxiety.

The temptation to project human states onto animals is easy to understand: animals do appear to be 'suffering' and in 'pain' when they are subject to noxious stimulation. But two leading experts on pain theory warn us against even the idea that the animal is any way 'distressed' under the influence of such noxious stimulation. They point out that all the behavioural features we associate with pain or distress can show themselves even after the destruction of the cerebral cortex:

'Increased blood pressure, movements of withdrawal, dilatation of the pupil, increased depth of ventilation, attacking the source of noxious stimulation, and cries may be common to all mammals in the face of seemingly "painful" stimulation, but all such responses can be elicited after the cerebral cortex has been destroyed, in the probable absence of any subjective experience.' (A Jones and S Derbyshire, 'Cerebral mechanisms operating in the presence and absence of inflammatory pain', *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, 1996, 55: 411-420)

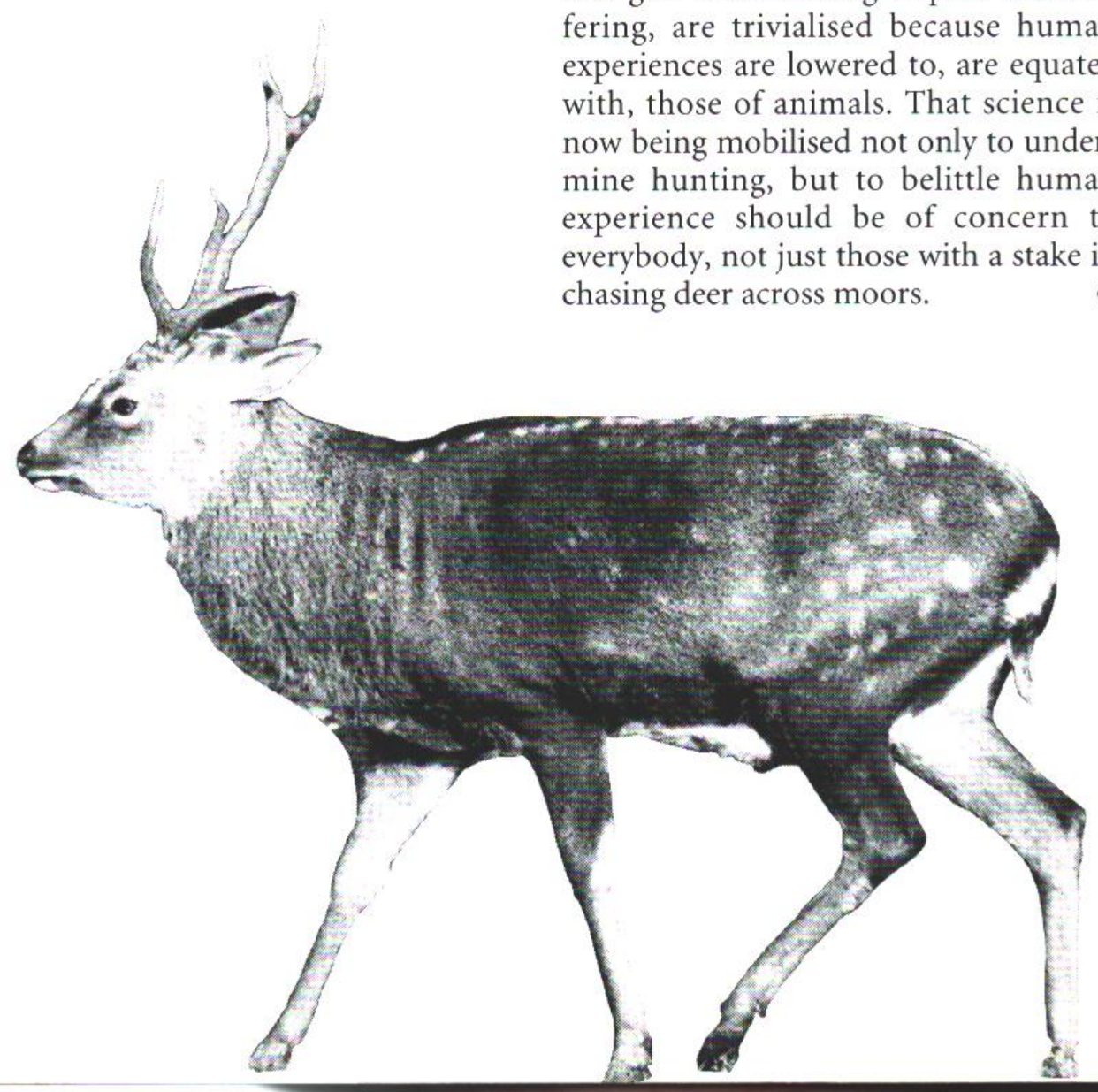
In other words, even with the parts of the brain removed that are key to the processing of noxious stimulation, animals can exhibit the behavioural responses that would superficially indicate suffering or pain. So, it must be wrong to imply that patterns of animal behaviour are accompanied by internal mental states such as pain and suffering.

Accordingly, Jones and Derbyshire warn us against anthropomorphism: 'human interpretation of what is observed in another species cannot be by extrapolation from human experience.'

As Professor Bateson made clear he is aware of the scientific literature that stresses the unique character of human pain experiences. But for the purposes of the report 'I didn't think it appropriate to go into the subtleties of this debate'. This must cast doubt on Bateson's claim to have let the science lead him where it would, rather than allowing any preconceived notions about the ethical rights and wrongs of hunting to guide the study. Even if Bateson is merely presenting the science he believes to be correct, the effect of not discussing critical material is certainly to give the report the character of a propaganda tract for the anti-hunting lobby.

This is bad enough. But it is the broader implications of his approach that worry me most. Bateson's bottom-line argument is that 'animals have to be given the benefit of the doubt'. This has worrying implications for the integrity of scientific enquiry. To give animals the 'benefit of the doubt' amounts to saying that a scientific investigation of pain is of little consequence—since anything which counts against the idea of animal suffering can be ignored. Bateson is not merely refusing to engage with certain scientific ideas he finds uncomfortable; he is saying that a clash of scientific ideas is not the way to investigate the issue.

Giving animals 'the benefit of the doubt' also has implications for how we see ourselves. The richness of human experience, all the psychological states that give real meaning to pain and suffering, are trivialised because human experiences are lowered to, are equated with, those of animals. That science is now being mobilised not only to undermine hunting, but to belittle human experience should be of concern to everybody, not just those with a stake in chasing deer across moors. ●



THE DEER HUNTER

Nine am, the second morning. Noiselessly and with a certain majesty the young buck picked its way through the brush, its movements well-suited to this country of thick bush, poplar and willow. At first just an outline obscured by the tangle of branches and twigs, it became wholly visible only when it moved between bushes, perhaps 75 yards from my tree stand.

I eased the safety off and moved the rifle quickly into firing position so I could see the deer in the crosshairs. I began shaking as I caught sight of the antlers—not large, but big enough to confirm it was a legal kill. 'Come on', I thought, as I willed the animal into a position where I could get off a good shot.

For a second it disappeared altogether, but came out of the brush into a clear patch, the early morning sun gleaming off its back. Crack! My first shot echoed through the forest. The animal kept on moving as if nothing had happened—a good sign as a near miss usually sends the deer sprinting for cover. I pulled back the bolt and pushed the next shell into the chamber of my Winchester .257 in one motion. As the deer walked between thick bushes I fired off another round. This time I saw the impact, but the animal still kept going. Now, only 50 yards away, it emerged into a clearing, limping. I squeezed off one more shot and it collapsed.

Before sunrise on the first day of the hunting season we had driven up through the wooded hills of Potter County, Pennsylvania. The headlights caught four or five deer at the edge of a field before they disappeared into the bush, flashing their white tails at us. When my guide dropped me off in the pitch-black, he assured me that I would see them again later that day.

Deer hunting requires several key ingredients. First, you must have a party of perhaps six or seven guys to drink whiskey and trade stories with after the hunt. One of our party seemed to have come only for this. My guide sneeringly referred to him as a 'social hunter'. Second, you need somebody willing to serve breakfast at 5am—preferably somebody whose hobbies include butchering deer. Next, you need patience. On the first day I spent nine hours in a tree-stand 15 feet above the floor. Deer have extremely good sight (do not move), hearing (do not wear anything that could rustle), and smell (do not piss, spit, or sneeze anywhere near the tree stand). And you need warm clothes: blowing snow and 10 degrees of frost went through all my five layers after a few hours of sitting still.

We enjoy it

After the deer flopped to the ground I waited for a few seconds to be sure it did not move; then, remembering the advice I had been given, carefully memorised its position. There is a chance that the deer will suddenly get up and bolt into the bush, necessitating a tracking expedition. I climbed down to the ground like a child coming down the stairs at Christmas, missing some of the wooden slats in my excitement. As I hurried over to the spot where I had seen the deer drop, I shoved another .257 Roberts shell into the chamber, just in case. For one panicky moment I thought I had lost it. But there it was.

Shivering in my tree stand, I had plenty of time to consider some of the discussions about hunting. It is a fallacy, I concluded, that hunters hunt because they are concerned about pest control and ecological hazards caused by excess populations of deer, foxes, bears etc. We hunt, first and foremost, because we enjoy hunting.

In pursuit of that enjoyment, hunters come to know their quarry and appreciate them more than any non-hunter. We have a purpose, and a reason to study their movements and habits—unlike animal rights activists, who seem to derive their understanding of nature straight from the script of Bambi. Moreover, to shoot a deer and turn it into a trophy is to enoble it. As our quarry, it acquires a significance beyond its own dumb existence. The only purpose in the life of the deer is that bestowed on it by the hunter. Without us, it would live and die uselessly in the forest, no good to anybody. However, I did resolve that if I heard one deer say to another 'Bambi, run and whatever you do, don't look back!', I would forswear hunting forever.

Deer widow

Discussions about animal rights are rare in Potter County. A million Pennsylvanian hunters abandon their jobs, wives and children for a few days every fall to harvest close to half a million deer. Schools close for the first day of the deer-hunting season, shops advertise 'deer widow' sales for the wives left at home. Stopping at a gas station in a university town, I expected abuse when two young women came towards the car. Had I driven a car loaded with two dead deer through an English campus, I might have been lynched. But when these women said 'awww' as they looked at the deer, it was only because 'my husband didn't get anything this year'.

As I got closer to the fallen animal I was struck by how large it was, perhaps 120-130 pounds. It was a four-pointer (four prongs to its antlers), a respectable size but no prize-winner. An experienced hunter might have been disappointed with this rack but I was just happy to get one at all. After admiring my kill for a few moments I became aware again of the icy winds and the temperature of minus 10 degrees, which I had forgotten in my excitement. As I gutted the creature, I found that the steaming entrails warmed my frozen hands, making the experience less unpleasant than anticipated. Then the hard part: dragging the carcass by the antlers a half-mile through the bush.

As my buddy and I strapped our two deer onto the roof of his car, we received the back-slapping congratulations of the rest of the party and the grudging approval of our guide. And we still had the triumph of driving past the thousands of hunters who had not yet bagged their deer. Besides taking home the sights and sounds of the Pennsylvania hills, I also took home 40 pounds of venison steak. Perhaps the greatest moment of the trip is still to come. Honey, get the red wine sauce ready. ●

Kevin Young

alt.culture.art?

TOO MUCH MONKEY BUSINESS

Signs of the times

'By June 1992 the markets [in Sarajevo] had nothing in them apart from dandelion leaves and stinging nettles. That's why I went to them: out of a spirit of solidarity for the suffering people of Sarajevo.'
Martin Bell (MP)

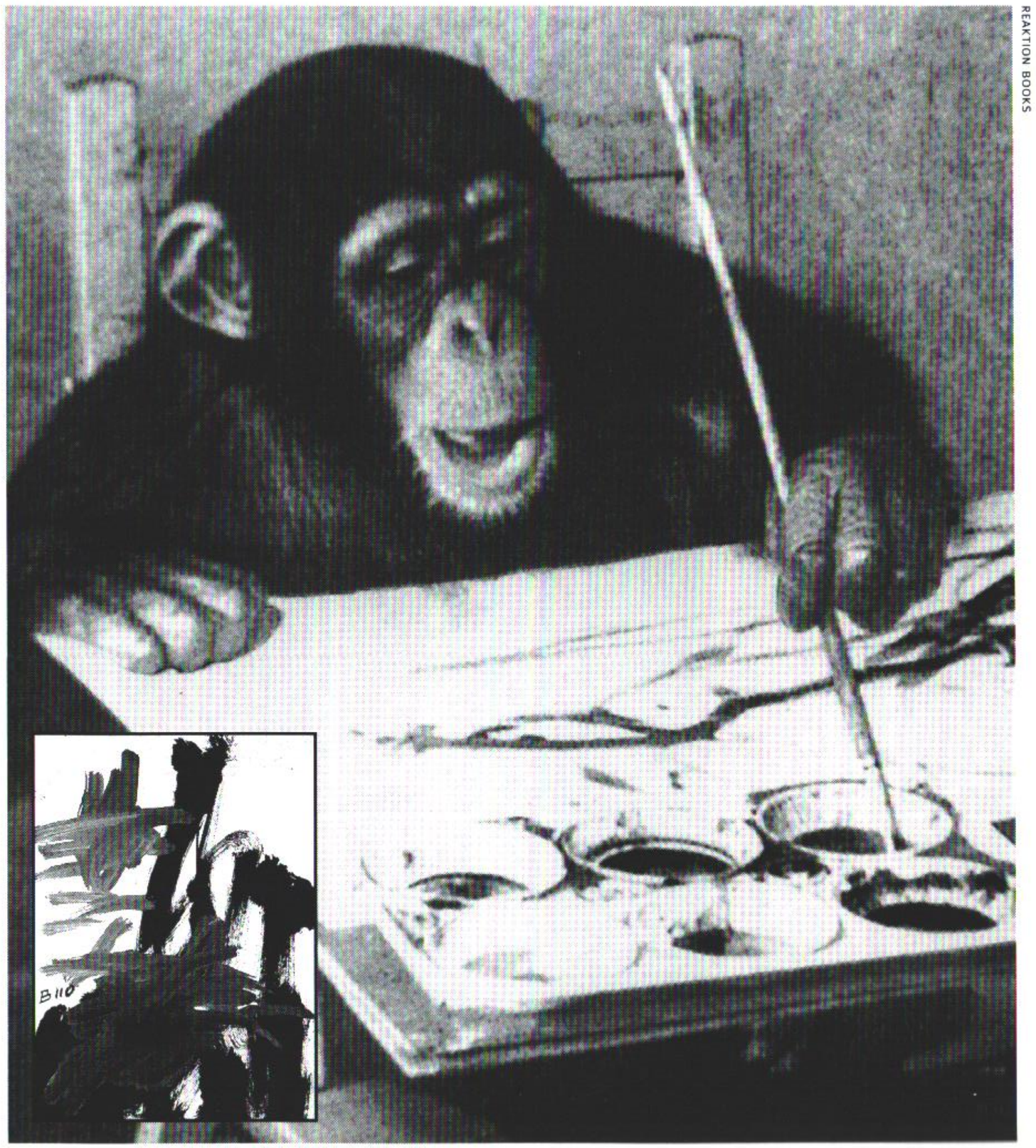
'I just couldn't believe it, they drank their coffee then strolled out.'
Brad Berridge, assistant manager of the Eagle Vaults pub, Witney, Oxfordshire. Douglas Hurd, the retiring local MP and former Foreign Secretary, dropped in with his supporters during the election campaign, then left without paying. After complaints, the new candidate eventually paid up two days later. Another horror story of Tory sleaze?

There is no artistry in apes, says Louis Ryan

Over a three-year period in the mid-fifties, Dr Desmond Morris (*The Naked Ape, Manwatching*), then of London Zoo, supervised a chimpanzee named Congo in the production of several hundred 'monkey paintings', of which a small selection was exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London, in September 1957, together with similar efforts by Betsy, a chimpanzee from Baltimore Zoo. The fortieth anniversary of that controversial show is to be marked by the publication of *Monkey Paintings* by Thierry Lenain, senior lecturer in aesthetics and the philosophy of art at the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Without a trace of irony, Lenain tells us that 'the second half of the fifties was a golden age for monkey artists'. But the reasons for this 'golden age' were entirely within the human domain: firstly, the adoption of the novel term 'human animal' in a number of scientific disciplines, which indicated growing doubts about the distinction between 'human and animal'; secondly, the new prominence of abstract expressionism, which meant that for the first time some plausible resemblance could be claimed between the exertions of a monkey wielding a crayon and the gestural compositions of contemporary artists.

Likewise, the revival of interest in monkey painting in the nineties is related more to the current intellectual climate, with its tendency to lose sight of human uniqueness, than to



REAKTION BOOKS

creation', as Morris has done, is to abort the meaning of creation and parody that of joy.

Monkey painters do not take the slightest interest in the product of their exertions. But there have been many studies of monkey paintings by humans, and Lenain's book provides a useful account of these. He finds himself in 'respectful disagreement' with Morris, and he concludes that monkey painting is not art in any real sense. However, Lenain tends to support the claims of Morris and others for a 'sense of order' among non-human primates.

One of the more well-attested observations made of monkey painters is that their marks or brushstrokes are influenced by prior shapes on the page. Morris found that, when confronted with a blank sheet or a sheet with a line down the middle, Congo distributed his markings fairly evenly over the page. But if the line was shifted to the right, the markings tended to cluster to the left, and vice versa. Evidence, it has been claimed, of the desire to balance the picture, and hence of a basic aesthetic sense.

It is true that the marks seem to act as a kind of sign-posting to the monkey's eye, brain and hand, sending him automatically to one or other side of the visual field. But the reactive nature of this process underlines the difference between monkey and man. Even the most rudimentary human efforts are characterised by freedom of choice in the available field. It is the inability to deal with choice in a controlled way that characterises primitive or childish pictorial expression, setting it apart not only from the mastery of the accomplished artist but also from the

The Bishop of Truro's investiture took place under a cloud, after his good character was called into question. It was discovered that he had been sent off during a 'friendly' hockey match against a team from the local Mothers' Union. The incident followed a disallowed goal by the bishop (then the Rt Rev William Ind). 'The umpire disallowed it and claimed I was offside. I confronted him and asked to be excused from the pitch for a few minutes. I said I wanted to go and feed his guide dog. He wasn't impressed and promptly sent me off.' The bishop defiantly declares he has no regrets about his behaviour.

'Starring in Citizen Smith hasn't done me any harm... Although the series was tongue-in-cheek, it was quite politically daring for its time. There were lots of references to Karl Marx and I began reading all his works.'
Cheryl Hall MP, formerly Wolfie Smith's girlfriend (and his wife in real life). Now part of Tony Blair's citizen's army. All Marx's works, Cheryl?

any fresh achievements by our biological, simian relatives.

In 1957, Morris' (or should it be Congo's and Betsy's?) exhibition proved an unexpected success. But there was also some negative criticism from those who scorned the aesthetic worth of the end product (monkey 'painting'); and those who drew attention to the human input into the process ('monkey' painting).

Lenain's book shows that the chimpanzees had more than a little help from Morris. Isolated from other distractions, the monkey was immobilised in a kind of baby chair, with the paper fixed before him. Pencil or crayon was placed in his hand, or, if he was painting, the brush would be given to him loaded with paint, then exchanged for other brushes when the paint was used up or the gesture discontinued. Alternatively, Morris would leave Congo with one colour and rotate the sheets on which this colour was used.

Morris' rotations of paint and paper raise the question of who decided when a given stage was finished, or when the painting as a whole was complete. 'Nothing could interrupt him [Congo] until he was satisfied with the balance of his painting', averred Morris. But Lenain says that 'Congo enjoyed covering a shape that he had just produced with "savage" brushstrokes; the best examples of circles produced by him were saved by removing the paper before he had completely finished'.

Lenain explained to me that 'Congo's temper changed during the two years of his career as a painter', becoming more restive and occasioning, it would seem, increased intervention from his minder. Yet it is to this 'later period' that Morris attaches the greatest 'aesthetic' significance, drawing particular attention to loops and circles which were only saved for posterity by his own timely intervention.

The question of a conscious finishing point is vital. With human activity there is always the before, during and after of conception, execution and assessment. 'Action painting' is an attempt to elide the distinction between conception and execution—but consciously so, and therefore vainly. With the monkey painter, however, there is only execution. This is not to say that monkeys may not be stimulated by the act of painting, as they are by other activities, but to liken this to the 'joy of automatic sign-posting experienced by the monkey.

Monkey painting may help us understand human creativity, by pointing up what it is not. As for the product of this strange activity, I feel that some of it has some aesthetic value, but that this derives from a combination of accident and covert human intervention. Ultimately there seems to be no good reason to regard the monkey painter's hand as anything other than a random instrument of the human experimenter. Though having said that, the fact that these paintings are in their gestural aspect the product of sheer unconsciousness, does make them intriguing.

Monkey Business is published by Reaktion Books, £14.95 hbk

alt.culture.pop art

FACTORY FODDER

PHOTO: BILLY NAME/FACTORYFOTOS

At the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, until 15 June, FactoryFotos brings together the work of Billy Name, house photographer at Andy Warhol's New York studio, The Factory, where his subjects included The Velvet Underground, Ingrid Superstar and Warhol himself. Name remembers The Factory in the sixties as being 'very free':

'It was a multimedia arena, a film-making scene and an art scene. It had all the craziness of New York with all the LSD and amphetamine. There was the sexual revolution, the black revolution, and New York had just become the centre of the art world. New American artists started using imagery that was accessible, like Andy's soup cans. It was like a democratisation of fine art, and people who had the courage to strike out on their own were recognised as dynamic innovators.'

All Tomorrow's Parties: Billy Name's Photographs of Andy Warhol's Factory is published by frieze, £19.95 hbk
Billy Name was talking to **Dave Chapman**

alt.culture.net

MORE THAN VIRTUAL

Melanie McGrath could have written an account of cyberculture based solely on surfing the Internet. But for *Hard, Soft and Wet* she travelled across continents as well as traversing the World Wide Web.

'There is a tendency to fetishise the technology and to see only the screen rather than the people who are behind it. From my point of view the people who are behind it are more interesting than the technology. It would have been much easier to write the book from the comfort of my own desk, and that has certainly been a very seductive idea for writers, because it means you do not have to go out into the messy world and meet uncooperative people who do not fit into your theory. But for me it was very important to get a sense of how the Net was impacting on actual reality, and in order to do that I had to travel physically as well as virtually.

'I was very interested in the idea, much talked about on the West Coast of America, that there is such a thing as a global culture, a global village, and that technology can facilitate it. But I saw no sign of it at all. There is no consensus on what the Internet is for. In Singapore, for example, the Internet is a business tool and no one talks about virtual communities. But in Czechoslovakia the Net is seen primarily as a political tool, because it was so important in disseminating information in the Velvet Revolution. I think the differences between cultures should be celebrated, not squashed.

'*Hard, Soft and Wet* is a memoir and a travel book, a Polaroid of a particular moment, which is as much as any writer could do, given the nature of the Net. I do not think it is possible to be objective about the Net, partly because it is a genuinely multi-cultural creature and partly because it is a creature of human beings. And, of course, it is not possible to be objective about the entire human population, is it?'

Hard, Soft and Wet: The Digital Generation Comes of Age is published by HarperCollins, £16.99 hbk
Melanie McGrath was talking to **Brendan O'Neill**

alt.culture.music

Talvin Singh told Andrew Calcutt why his Soundz of the Asian Underground are all the raj

Signs of the times

Teachers at Sir Graham Balfour school in Stafford are to stop using red ink in exercise books, in a bid to eliminate 'danger and male dominance' from marking. (Surely marking is in itself threatening and domineering.) They will now use green, the traditional ink of choice for deranged writers of letters to newspapers, psychopaths, etc. Apparently they believe it to be a 'more peaceful colour'. According to psychologist Penny Cullen, 'Red is an aggressive colour and red marks can be interpreted as failure, especially if there are lots of them. On the other hand, green gives off a more relaxed message of harmony, balance and universal love'.

PHOTO: PAUL RIDER

SINGHALONGA TALVIN

It is going to be an Indian summer. With Kula Shaker's Vedic chants, Red or Dead's Bollywood fashion collection, linen Nehru jackets on sale in the High Street, new books of pop sociology about Anglo-Indian music, and even an issue of *Granta* dedicated to the Indian sub-continent, we could soon be talking about Wakis (whites who want to be Pakis) alongside Wiggas (white niggers).

scene, after guest slots there by the likes of Björk and Afrika Bambaataa.

'We've done the ground work', Singh explained. 'People think it's all happening now but really it's been happening for a while.' He described the last few years as 'a nice build-up' which allows him to 'exercise some quality control' now the rest of the world is catching on. 'It is like with Indian restaurants—now people know where the good food is. It's not just about Asian music, but *what* Asian music. The perfect time for people to digest what we are doing.'

Singh has a track record as long as a Ravi Shankar raga: learnt to play tablas, Punjab-style, in India; performed with Sun Ra and Bristol's Massive Attack; and since the days when the Blue Note was an obscure jazz joint called the Bass Clef, Singh has been working with other DJs 'playing hip-hop on one turntable and on the other turntable playing an old Indian record'. This experience stands him in good stead now that 'there is pressure for Asians to crossover into the mainstream charts, and we are a bit more chilled out, with a bit more integrity'.

As demonstrated on the recent album, *Anokha: Soundz of the Asian Underground*, what Singh and his fellow musicians are doing

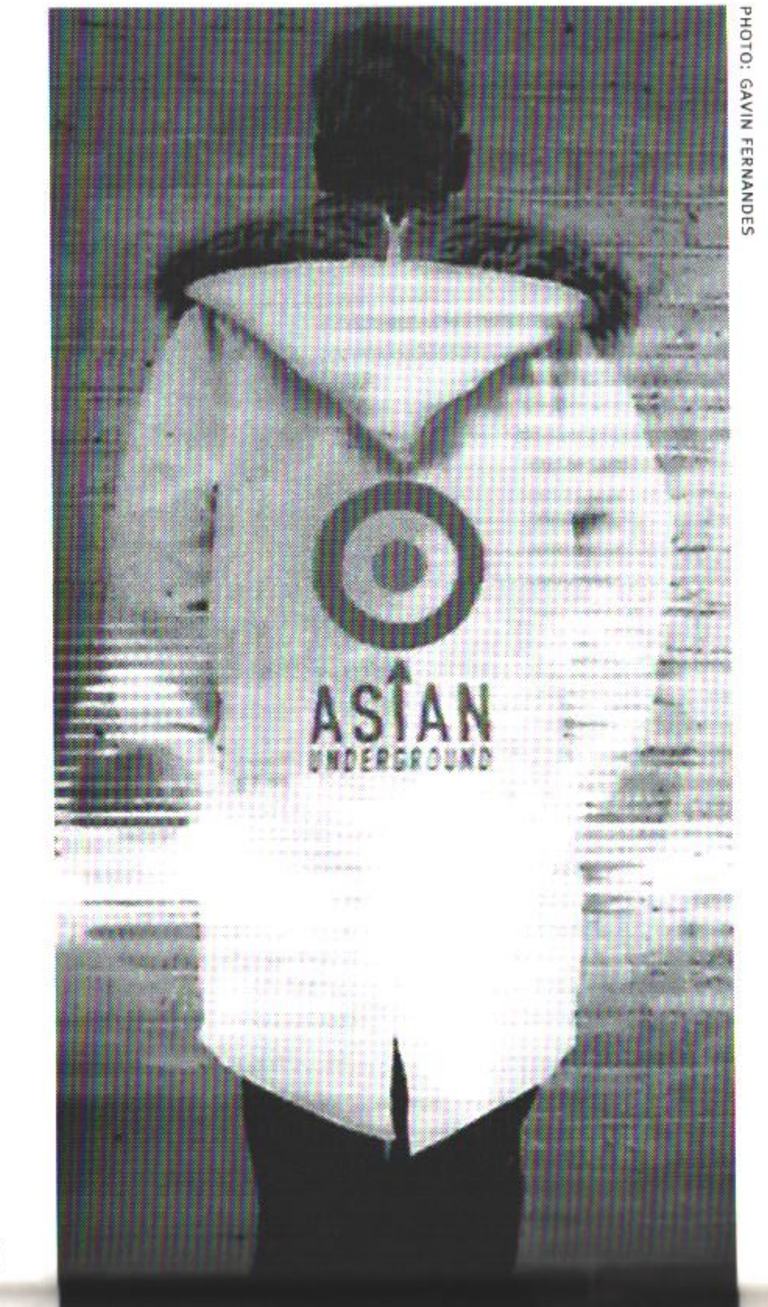


PHOTO: GAVIN FERNANDES

With house and techno, you can't get out of boom, boom, boom, boom—there's only a few Indian rhythms you can add. But drum'n'bass is more adaptable.'

Singh feels that being an outsider means his mix can be unusually wide-ranging: 'Asians are outsiders but we can use that to take liberties and borrow cultures and get away with it more than anyone else. If a house DJ starts making jungle, he won't get away with it. But as outsiders we can really break the rules.'

The result, Singh insisted, is not like 'global' music. 'When the global thing was kicking off six or seven years ago, people were getting hold of a sampler and a couple of CDs from Africa and India—it was like inviting someone for "global dinner" and you put rice, lentils and yam in with fish'n'chips. It's not going to taste good.' He was equally sceptical of the 'fusion' label. 'What we are doing isn't really fusion. Today we are living, breathing a lot of different cultures and you can't fuse them within you.'

Singh's sounds are also a long way from the late-sixties typecasting of Indian music as the mystical gimmick in commercial Western pop: 'We've taken it out of that hippy thing. It's fresh, it's funky, it's got clarity. You don't have to be doped out and getting visions of Lord Krishna. It is also to do with embracing new technology.'

For the Indian market, Singh is setting up 'the first virtual label dealing with Asian music. When I went to Bombay recently I realised that the whole multimedia thing is happening. We are not even going to bother about distribution, we're just going to do it on the Internet. We can have samples of music on our website and people in India can order the records direct from the label'. With Talvin, you can even Singh along in cyberspace.

'His language was shocking. He used the word "clitoris" four times in a minute and a half.'
A student at Lewes Tertiary College, supporting complaints about Bob Potter, a lecturer who is accused of being a 'sexual threat to students'. Perhaps the student in question should go straight into a fast-track career at BT, where some employees consider callers who use the word 'gay' offensive. His prospects seem dim in the pallet trade, though...

'Swearing is common in the pallet industry.'
Bob Whittaker, accused at an industrial tribunal of offending Janice Thomas with his strong language, to the point where she had to wear ear-defenders. He allegedly told one car dealer: 'You car people don't give a fuck. The car just cost me 30 000 fucking pounds out of my own fucking pocket and the fucking thing is fucking useless.' Sounds like an ordinary day in the *LM* office...

Riding high on this trend is Talvin Singh, who hails from Leytonstone, East London, where he grew up in a Sikh family. Singh is the DJ, tabla-player and record producer whose Monday club Anokha at the Blue Note, Hoxton Square, is currently *the* place on the London

'is not jazz, it's not drum'n'bass, or it is drum'n'bass, it is jazz, it is dance but it's close listening at the same time'. Drum'n'bass gives the flexibility to mix in other elements: 'Like free-form jazz, it hasn't got a rigid form so you can manipulate it with Indian instruments.

Anokha, The Blue Note, Hoxton Square, London N1 (0171) 729 8440, Mondays, 10pm-3am (not 26 May).
Anokha: Soundz of the Asian Underground, Omni Records (Island)

COUNTRY CLUBBER

If the body becomes tolerant to E, the feelings of euphoria, empathy and childlike innocence are less intense, and ecstasy becomes little different from having taken speed. So what should E heads do? Go clubbing, straight?

Probably not—it may not be a good thing to see and hear it as it really is. You could always try something else...like a country music festival.

Smitten by the Georgio Moroder/Donna Summer track 'I Feel Love', in the late seventies I bought a synth and got sequencing. Synth pop became Hi NRG, and as sequencers and samplers evolved, so, in the late eighties, acid house became rave. I had a 909, an SH101 and a couple of Junos, and I went raving.

It was simple then: turn up, hook into the DJ's aux output and you were off. But the rave scene changed. Sampled loops replaced drum machines and people did PAs miming to DATs. It was not my thing any more.

Then, out of the blue, a long-time musical associate phoned and asked me to play guitar in his new band. I remember saying 'yeah, so long as it's not country'. I turned up to rehearsal, and realised I had been conned when the first lyric I heard was 'I'm a country boy...'. I stayed for old time's sake and my friend promised he would replace me as soon as he could. He never did, and I have been gigging with Kane & Co ever since.

One thing that changed my perspective was spending time in Nashville recording an album. I have never been made to feel more welcome, and I experienced a level of unity that I never achieved while raving or clubbing.

There is a prejudice against country (I am only a recent convert myself), perhaps because it is associated with rednecks. Try dropping the phrase 'I quite like country music' into polite conversation and see how far you get. Country is frowned on by the intelligentsia, and so low down the ladder of acceptability that the music press does not even bother to slag it off.

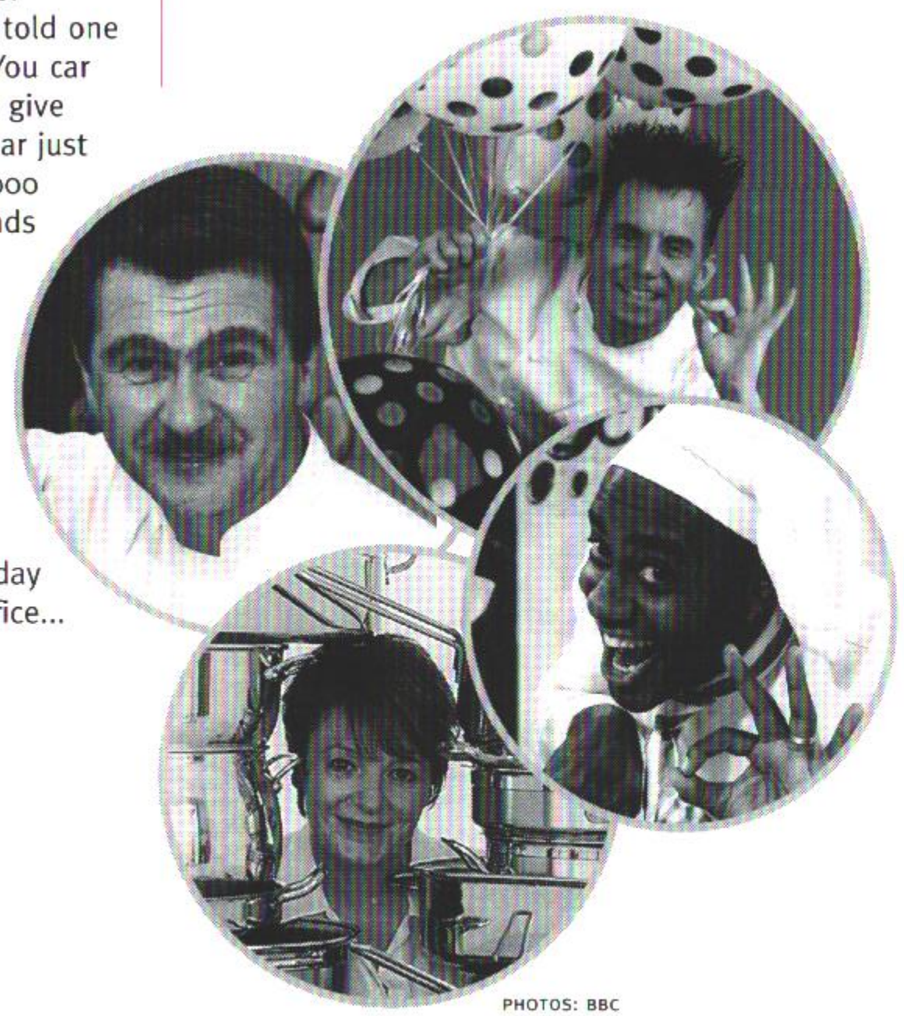
Maybe it is not considered rebellious enough for youth culture. Country does not promise to change the world. But it does not pretend that it will, either. I respect that. And if I want to dance all night to meaningless country music or mindless machine music, that is up to me.

How ravers and clubbers can enjoy a country music event: go with somebody who's been before; being sceptical is fine, but be prepared to have a good time; get into the spirit, much as you would at a rave; laugh with the crowd, not at them; dance—one type of dancing looks just about as silly as any other; respect the dads.

Warning: some hardened ravers may find that country gigs produce a mild feeling of nausea. Others may experience uncontrollable fits (of giggles). Both symptoms will probably recede after repeated doses, but if they persist either consult your doctor or sip small amounts of water and wait for the feeling to pass. You might even get to like it.

Russell Raisey is lead guitarist with Kane & Co

alt.culture.chef-TV



PHOTOS: BBC

TOO MANY COOKS?

TV cooks—mutton dressed as lamb? Neil Haidar, BBC1's Masterchef 1996, wants to have his cake and eat it too

According to the trade press, the catering industry is suffering from a shortage of chefs. Judging by the programme schedules, the chefs are all on TV. If it is not the cheesy game show with a couple of cooks competing to out-camp each other while patronising the contestants, then it is the überchef, complete with distinctive image, replica chef's kit for wannabees (part of the cookery show, book deal, supermarket tie-in), and minders to protect him from an admiring public.

In opposition to the chef-as-personality-cult, there is the cooking-in-easy-steps approach. In the same way as a car maintenance video would show you how to strip the engine, this method favours a pedestrian tone, complete with soporific soundtrack. Take eight ounces of self-raising flour (cue: flour being poured into a bowl, eight bars of elevator music), one and a half ounces of caster sugar (cue: packet of caster sugar, four bars of elevator music), etc. Of course it is true that having recipes which work perfectly is of enormous benefit to everyone who cooks. My beef, though, is that this makes for dull television.

Lest I appear too negative, I should say that, as a complete and utter food snob, any TV cook who can capture my imagination, inspire me and introduce me to new culinary ideas, will receive my undying loyalty. Although I hate to name names, let me give you a few examples:

Keith Floyd, whose exotic locations and palpable lust for the good life make for riveting viewing. Have you seen the one where he attempts to eat an ostrich in a field full of its relatives?

Raymond Blanc, with speccy scientist in tow, using a gas spectrometer in an attempt to demonstrate the superior flavour of a free-range chicken over a miserable battery hen.

Finally, the gastronomic prophet of our time, Rick Stein. He is reason enough to trade up to a widescreen TV—that much genuine enthusiasm cannot be contained within anything less. There he is, one minute, about to throw up over the side of a trawler; next, he is back on dry land, slicing his finger on a Japanese mandolin. What makes him come back for more? The fame? The fortune (he must own half of Padstow by now)? Or perhaps it is just the conviction that he has something to say that is worth saying? For example:

'My recipes reflect my enthusiasm. Most of them are easy to make and most of them are not over-endowed with ingredients. But they all require the very best raw materials and if you haven't got the very best raw materials, you'll wonder what all the fuss is about.'

If the production values were as good as Stein's ingredients, I could stomach 24-hour chef-TV.

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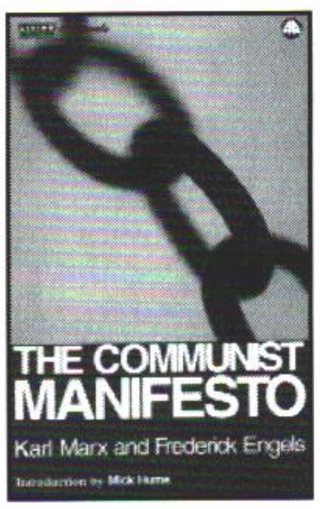

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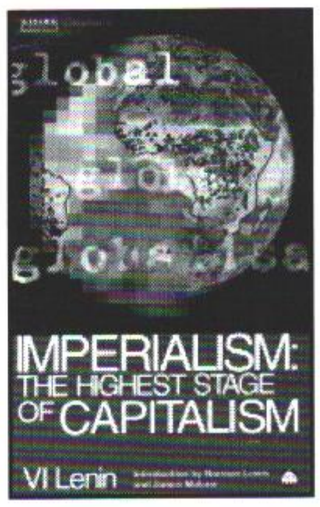

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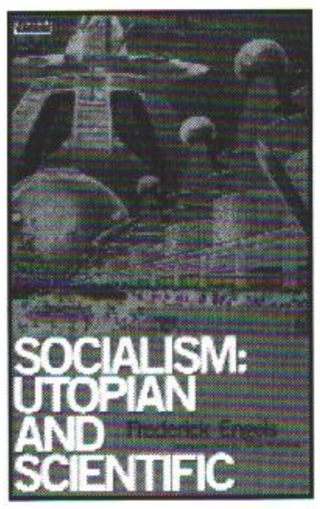

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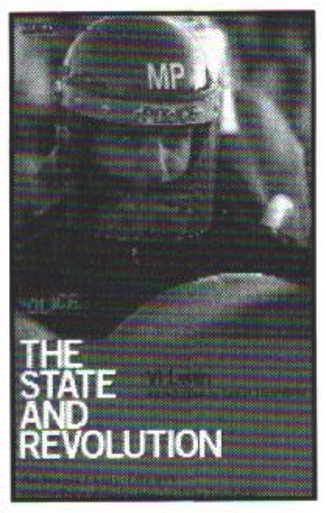

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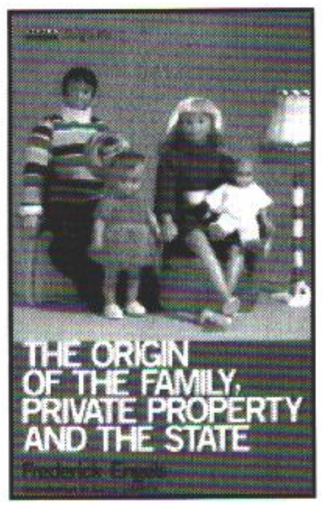

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READING BETWEEN THE LINES

ADAM BURGESS asks why pessimism is back on the international agenda

THE DECLINE OF THE WEST REVISITED

THE CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS AND THE REMAKING OF WORLD ORDER
Samuel P Huntington,
Simon and Schuster
$26 hbk

HARVARD POLITICAL SCIENTIST SAMUEL Huntington's 1993 essay 'The clash of civilisations?' unleashed an almighty row in foreign policy circles (*Foreign Affairs*, summer 1993). Huntington was known for his work on a 'third wave' of democratisation in the Third World. But according to his gloomy vision of the future in 'Clash', we were to look forward to a post-Cold War world shaped by confrontation between cultural blocs.

Huntington wrote that a decaying Western liberalism would have to defend itself against the multiple threats of Islam, 'ethnic fundamentalism' and the 'Confucian authoritarianism', which, for Huntington, is modern China. The article was heavily promoted by *Foreign Affairs* as their agenda setting statement for the nineties, ranged against the first 'big picture' thesis to emerge after the end of the Cold War—Francis Fukuyama's 'End of History'. 'The clash of civilisations' was one of several challenges to the supposedly self-satisfied optimism of Fukuyama's declaration that liberal democracy had triumphed, and therefore that 'History'—as a global struggle of ideas and visions—was at an end.

While heavily criticised in the academic world for his exaggerated and simplistic scenarios, Huntington has made an international name for himself on the back of his thesis. Endorsed by luminaries such as ex-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, he became a 'must know' subject for Wasp elite dinner party conversation in America, and a starting point for discussion among high diplomatic circles.

Huntington soon lost the monopoly on extravagant pessimism, as self-consciously dramatic competitors followed him into print. There was Robert D Kaplan's February 1994 offering, 'The coming anarchy', where 'scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the fabric of our planet' as it was subtitled in the American monthly, *The New Republic*. And this 'new pessimism' is by no means exclusively American. In the same year, the Frenchman Alain Minc entered the fray with his *Le Nouveau Moyen Age*. Numerous others have followed. At the end of 1996, even the venerable Royal Institute for International Affairs at Chatham House got in on the act, publishing *Unsettled Times* which offered a 'worst case scenario' for the millennium. It foresees a 'clash of expectations' where an ageing West burdened with outdated organisations, uncontrolled technological advance and unrealistic demands, struggles to maintain its position in a new balance of power in the world.

Driven, no doubt, by the desire to recapture the expressly pessimistic terrain he mapped out in 1993, Huntington has now finally extended his 'Clash of civilisations' thesis into a book of the same name. For Huntington, 'culture' is what makes the world go round; ▶

HUNTINGTON ARGUES THAT CULTURES ARE FORMED BY A UNIVERSAL HUMAN IMPULSE TO GROUP TOGETHER—SOMETHING WHICH HE THINKS CAN ONLY BE DONE THROUGH CEMENTING HOSTILITIES AGAINST 'OTHERS'

◀'culture' not in the sense of what we consume or produce, but the traditions—religious for example—bequeathed by our ancestors. This 'culture' explains everything. So he tells us that 'East Asian economic success has its source in East Asian culture, as do the difficulties East Asian societies have had in achieving stable democratic political systems' (p29). The 'civilisations' referred to in the title are only cultures writ large.

Huntington argues that these cultures are formed by a universal human impulse to group together—something which he thinks can only be done through cementing hostilities against 'others'. This poses the potential for conflict. Expressed crudely, something which Huntington is more than willing to do, 'civilisations are the ultimate human tribes, and the clash of civilisations is tribal conflict on a global scale' (p207). As the territories of these 'tribes' are imperfectly drawn, and because cultures go through life-cycles of vitality and decline, conflict perpetually looms—particularly along the 'fault lines' where cultures or civilisations meet.

Reading between the lines, it appears that 'culture' is merely a new vocabulary to articulate fears which have more traditionally been expressed through the language of race. For all the attempts to acknowledge the exotic contribution of other cultures, Huntington finds it difficult to conceal alarmist racial anxieties. Regarding population growth in Muslim countries, for example, his concern is that 'particularly the expansion of the 15-24 year-old age cohort, provides recruits for fundamentalism, terrorism, insurgency, and migration' (p103). The leap from demographic trend to physical threat indicates a very different subtext than that implied by the aesthetic category 'culture': these are elite fears of racial revenge, recycled as cultural insight.

SUPERFICIALLY, THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE between the original essay, and its subsequent elaboration. Here his vision is presented as warning rather than prescription. The coming 'clash' is not inevitable, so long as urgent measures are taken. The specific threats identified are the high levels of reproduction in Islamic countries, and the economic challenge of China.

His solutions are also cultural in character. These problems can only be addressed indirectly by challenging the intellectual climate which allows both the mixing of cultures at home, and the imposition of Western values abroad. For him, 'Multiculturalism at home threatens the United States and the West; universalism abroad threatens the West and the world' (p318). To address these twin evils, we must consolidate and batten down the hatches. To prevent a global Dark Age, we must properly reunite the Atlantic Alliance and create not just a 'Fortress Europe', but a 'Fortress West'.

The shift from prophet to policy adviser is not as much of a departure as it might appear. Huntington follows the course mapped out by his intellectual forebears. In Oswald Spengler, the German schoolteacher who wrote the infamous *Decline of the West* during the First World War, the historically determined rise and fall of civilisations was also something of a ruse. His was a thinly disguised call to (German) arms. So in Huntington, it is hardly surprising that he has gone beyond warning 'the end is nigh', to imploring we take steps to stop the cultural rot.

THIS SIMILARITY RAISES A NEW FEATURE OF Huntington's book: the acknowledgement of his intellectual roots in the 'civilisational' school of historical thinking. The cutting edge of Huntington's return—significantly the angle he chose to pursue in pre-publication excerpts—is that the West is 'unique, not universal'. Against the dominant consensus for democratising the non-Western world, he suggests this to be a waste of time, or worse; it is 'arrogant, false and dangerous'. In so doing, he is restating the doubts about the ability of the West to reproduce itself globally which have been articulated by a long line of 'civilisational' cultural pessimists.

Huntington's most recent predecessor is the British world historian Arnold Toynbee, leading light of the 'civilisational' approach. Further back, was Toynbee's own mentor, Oswald Spengler. He, like Huntington, dismissed the capacity of a decadent West to recast the world in its own image, although significantly, he envisaged a rather more drawn out and graceful period of decline as a consequence, than that foreseen by the besieged Huntington. Finally, and arguably the grand daddy of the doom-mongers, is the French *comte* Arthur de Gobineau, author of the seminal tract of modern racism, the *Essay on the Inequality of Man*. Gobineau insisted in the face of nineteenth-century optimism, that we could no more expect to see European achievements replicated elsewhere, than we could see gravity defied.

The bulk of Huntington's book is taken up with very particular interpretations of world affairs. Much of this is fanciful, unsubstantiated, and even plain wrong. While many go along with the idea of a revival of religion in the Islamic world, for example, the idea that such a development is 'dramatically evident in former communist states' (p96), has few takers. Certainly, as with so many of his sweeping statements, there is no real evidence to substantiate this claim. His categorisation of 'civilisations' (as with all the civilisational literature) is arbitrary; for some reason he has decided that China is no longer 'Confucian', but 'Sinic'. Despite difficulty in identifying his 'civilisations', Huntington, like his predecessors applies the irrational logic of elevating cultures to the point where he posits them as things with a life (and death) of their own.

THE MINORITY WHO RUN THE SYSTEM DO NOT NEED THE WORLD TO SHARE THEIR CULTURE TO EXCERCISE POWER. AND THOSE WITHOUT POWER CANNOT DO WHAT THEY WANT, HOWEVER STRONG THEIR CULTURE

Huntington's culturalist approach misses out the question of power. He makes great play for example of the recent summit at Davos in Switzerland of the most powerful people in the world—only to contend that their influence is illusory in the face of 'culture'. 'Davos people', he says, 'control virtually all international institutions, many of the world's governments, and the bulk of the world's economic and military capabilities.... World-wide, however, how many people share this culture?...[P]erhaps as few as one-tenth of one percent of the world's population' (p57).

But the minority of 'Davos people' who run the system do not need the world to share their culture to exercise power. And those without power cannot do whatever they want, however strong their culture. North Africans, even if they are lucky enough to get into 'Fortress Europe', do not have the liberty to carry out the 'fundamentalism, terrorism, insurgency' which Huntington anticipates. For him, though, such difficulties as powerlessness are secondary to the fact that they are driven by Allah and a desire for revenge against the West. In this telling, power relations are turned upside down, and a West now facing less real challenge to its global authority than at any time this century can appear to be facing potential oblivion.

Even Huntington himself does not seem entirely confident about his ideas. 'If not civilisations, what?' was the title of the reply to his critics in *Foreign Affairs*; a sort of 'Okay maybe it's nonsense, but have you got any better ideas?'. Peculiarly, however, these ideas are now taken more seriously than in the past. Spengler was a laughing stock in his day—his notoriety was based largely on the catchy title of his incomprehensible tome, rather than the popularity of its contents. Toynbee enjoyed rather more success, in the confused climate immediately after the Second World War—until his witty demolition by the historian Hugh Trevor Roper in the late fifties. Nevertheless, this whole school of thought has historically been regarded as marginal and eccentric. Even figures publicly identified with the 'civilisational' approach such as the American historian William McNeill, have subsequently sought to distance themselves from it.

ONE REASON FOR TODAY'S OPENNESS TO THIS civilisational approach is the invariably pessimistic interpretation of world issues which prevails today. Those agencies which provide the information upon which our picture of world affairs is based are particularly inclined to interpret everything as potentially disastrous. The discussion of Third World 'over-population' has set the tone for every United Nations and non-governmental organisation to present a picture of innumerable catastrophes waiting to happen. There is too little water—this may lead to conflict according to the UN. Cities are overcrowded—this too may lead to conflict according to the UN. The list seems endless, and it is hardly surprising that in this climate, the synthesising of the sensibilities which we see in Huntington, strikes a chord no matter how dubious its intellectual origins.

THERE IS A GREATER GENERAL RESONANCE for the importance of culture in the world today. Critics have certainly rejected the consequences of his argument—that there need necessarily be a clash rather than a coexistence of civilisations—but they have found it difficult to deal with its premises.

The assumption that 'culture' is important and that its integrity must be maintained at all costs (evidenced in everything from the disapproval of cross-racial adoptions to the obsession with protecting the way of life of indigenous peoples) is pervasive. Back in Gobineau's time it was a straightforward proposition that culture was neither fixed, decisive or indeed very important. He was something of a maverick in suggesting that it was a permanent and immovable beast. Even in the fifties when modernisation was the vogue, there was the belief that the world could be one as we moved inexorably to the Western model. Only a lack of development was seen to be standing in the way. Now that goal is seen as neither possible, nor, more significantly, even desirable. Instead, the failure of development seems only to have confirmed that cultural difference is more powerful than any artificial attempt to sweep it to one side.

Under these circumstances it seems hardly surprising that, whatever its apocalyptic conclusions, the elevation of culture at the heart of civilisational pessimism should be taken seriously. And despite the nominal optimism which now accompanies the consensus for a multicultural world of separate development, the residual pessimism which necessarily underlies the conviction that people can only be what they are made by their cultural make-up is quite conducive to determinism such as that of Huntington. Fatalism, whether of a cultural or racial character, must necessarily create a hearing for the doubt and fear at the heart of the dark world of Spengler and his supporters. In this sense, cultural pessimism's time has come. Huntington is assured of a greater hearing than the isolated figures of Gobineau and Spengler. While they could be dismissed as impossibly negative, today, the reincarnation of these pessimistic ideas is barely recognised as such.

Huntington's decline of the West revisited is likely to remain contested and side-lined. Many of its specifics stand contemporary academic wisdom on its head. In any case, ours is not an age for grand theories of any sort. This should not blind us to the fact that ▶

◀his dark vistas have already been treated with a seriousness which would have been unthinkable in the past, and that his critics have proven incapable of effectively demolishing his (almost non-existent) arguments. We now live in a world fixated with the worst possible motives and outcomes—especially the banal idea that we are driven inexorably to conflict by our 'tribal', or as they now say, our 'cultural' instincts.

Adam Burgess' *Divided Europe: The New Domination of the East* is published by Pluto this autumn

THE HUNGER

Knut Hamsun (translation by Sverre Lyngstad), *Rebel Inc*, £6.99 pbk

Knut Hamsun's 1890 novel *The Hunger* looks set to find a modern audience for this Nordic Dosteyevskyan gloom. Hamsun traces the decline of a young writer into homelessness and its accompanying madness. At first, the character of the writer is annoyingly pathetic and unengaging. He shakes his fist at God while trying to scribble down his thoughts in a series of unfinished articles. From here, events determine the 'hero's' decline, but it is in his descent that the novel's structure comes to the fore. Moving rapidly between first and third person accounts, the character's realtime experiences, distanced observations and paranoid ramblings create the tensions which drive his encounters with others. In the current climate where the homeless are indeed elevated to something approaching hero status, *The Hunger* will no doubt become a favourite among the Swampies and Animals of the world.

Dave Cowlard

POST-MARXISM AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Faleh A Jabar (ed), *Saqi Books*, £40 hbk

Despite the title, the one thing this book fails to do is comes to terms with the failures of Stalinism in the Middle East. Only four out of 15 chapters make any reference to the Middle East. Two attempt an analysis of what Marxism represented. For Fred Halliday, Marxism contributed to an understanding of the Middle East. But in the end, Halliday wants to say that imperialism has been talked up. It is time the Arab Hitlers took responsibility for their own mistakes—a view which will play well in London and Washington.

Faleh A Jabar's chapter touches on the Stalinist 'by stages' approach to the Arab revolution. Should communists support the democratic revolution led by the national bourgeoisie or socialist revolution led by the working class? All too often the Arab communist parties gave up their independence and supported the national bourgeoisie with disastrous consequences. Once in power, the new rulers ruthlessly suppressed their erstwhile communist comrades. Jabar and Halliday conclude that the central issue for the Arab left is democracy and the biggest obstacle is not imperialism but Islam. It is as if imperialism (and their memories) suddenly collapsed at same time as the Berlin Wall.

Eve Anderson

THE STATE TO COME

Will Hutton, *Vintage*, £4.99 pbk

'The eccentric aspect of British capitalism is how poorly its owners discharge their responsibilities.' Will Hutton's use of the term 'reponsiblity' against the property-owning classes is a welcome change to the commonplace lecturing of welfare mums. It certainly provides the basis for a trenchant criticism of individual capitalists from the point of view of society as a whole. But what is the point of view of a stake-holding society? It is summed up in the proposition that 'we need' investment fund managers 'to become committed family owners or patient paternalists'.

This kind of criticism is a plea for the property-owning class to behave like a ruling class. But a paternalistic dictatorship is just as pernicious as a disinterested one. Redirecting the system towards tomorrow's profits seems to mean saving the system of exploitation by reining in its worst excesses today.

All of the logical criticism of the market in *The State to Come* is hedged by the assertion that there is no alternative to capitalism *per se*, only a choice between capitalisms. Consequently any criticisms of the market are restricted. So after an eloquent denunciation of the commodification of labour, the limits are invoked: 'No economy, industry or firm can operate with a prohibition on making workers redundant.' In other words, buying and selling people is inevitable, because capitalism is inevitable.

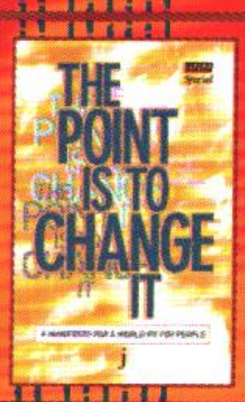
The State to Come is forthright in its defence of civil liberties: 'We do not need our civil liberties menaced and the authoritarian state strengthened as a substitute for forms of control that have withered away under the attack of the market.' But isn't that precisely what a paternalistic capitalism, a capitalism that is not prepared to brook any challenge would need: substitute forms of control? The desire for 'stronger social sanctions against the actions of errant men' (meaning perhaps redundant men) who are 'terrorising if not our lives, our imaginations' would seem to be an example of substitute forms of control. What's more, taking sanctions to prevent trespass on the imagination is a social control the Tories would not dare dream of.

James Heartfield

After the general election...

THE POINT IS (STILL) TO CHANGE IT

'Our reply to all of the pleas for caution and restraint is that until now humanity has only learned to crawl. We still live in a world that is not fit for people. Our problem is not that we are too ambitious, but that we continually hesitate about experimenting with new solutions. We need a revolution in outlook, so that we can continue to advance and give new scope to human creativity.'



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