

LIVING MARXISM

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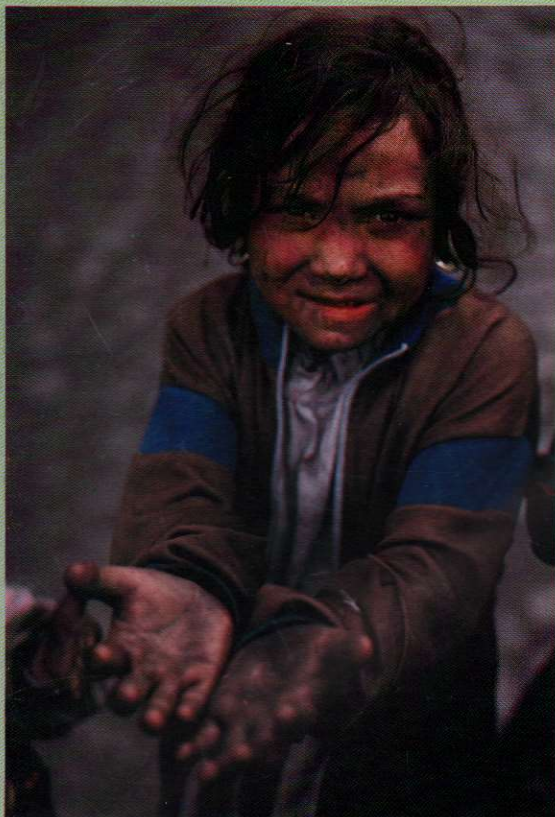


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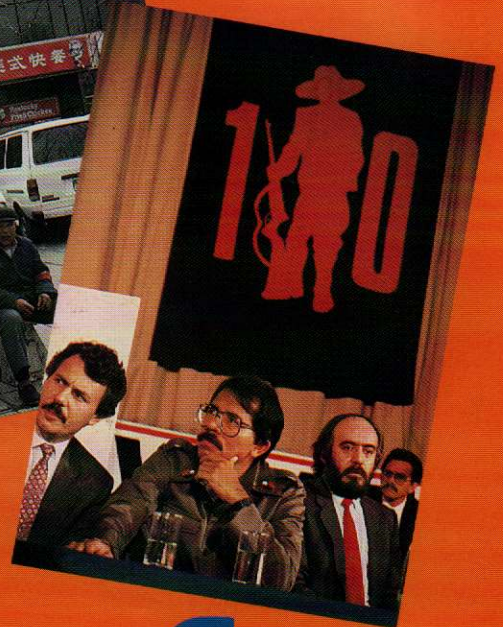
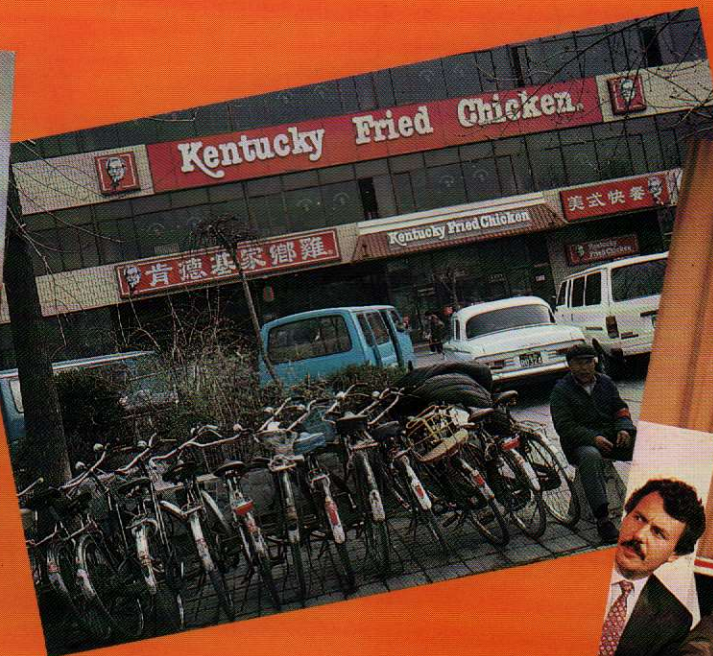
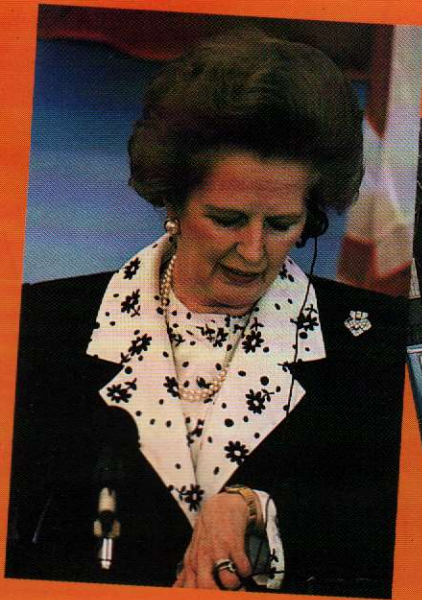
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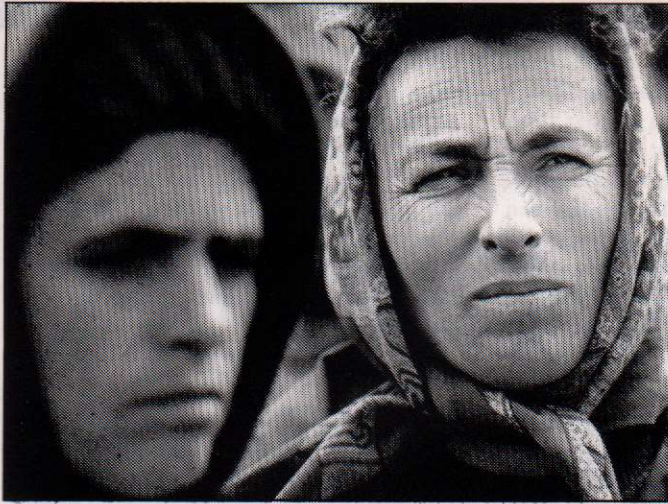
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Party

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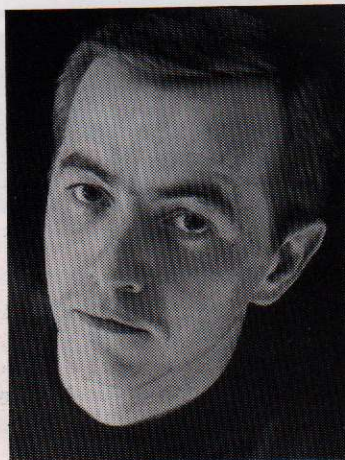
editorial

There is no future in the Union Jack

Some might think that they have spotted a deliberate mistake on our front page this month. The British are not listed as serious contenders in either the World Cup war or the world power games. This omission is certainly deliberate; but it isn't a mistake.

True, there is the slightest possibility that we might be proved wrong in excluding England, or even Scotland, from the top four teams in the World Cup; it is, after all, a funny old game. But you can bet your bottom deutschmark that we are right to count Britain out of the battle for world economic and political leadership, which is now warming up with a series of international summits and conferences, and which is featured in this issue of *Living Marxism*.

Throughout the summer we are being asked to commemorate, and even celebrate, Second World War anniversaries from 1940, most notably the Dunkirk evacuation and the Battle of Britain. Winston Churchill immortalised that moment as Britain's 'finest



editor
mick hume

hour', and its fiftieth anniversary will no doubt be marked by some pretty feverish flag-waving among the pressmen and politicians. Today's Tory ministers are always keen to associate themselves with the wartime legends—boasting, for example, that Margaret Thatcher's government has made Britain great again by reviving the spirit of Dunkirk.

In a sense they are right to describe the Dunkirk spirit as the defining outlook of the British establishment; but not in the sense that they mean. The evacuation of British troops from Dunkirk was, after all, not about winning, but about avoiding imminent defeat; not about launching a counter-attack, but about carrying off a retreat without being completely routed. British capitalists have been engaged in a similar damage-limitation exercise ever since, albeit on the economic battlefield rather than the beaches.

'special relationship' with the USA.

The special relationship was never the harmonious marriage of democratic soul-mates which our rulers would have us believe. It was a pragmatic arrangement through which the mantle of world power was finally passed from Britain to the USA (the alternative method of transition, which was seriously considered more than once, would have been an Anglo-American war).

Washington was the senior partner in every respect, taking over British spheres of influence and calling all of the important shots. Nevertheless, by acting as the international equivalent of the puny boy who pals up with the new bully on the block, the British establishment was able to survive the war and sneak a largely undeserved place in the front rank of post-war powers. But no longer.

has just been relegated from second to joint fourth position within the International Monetary Fund. By May, Britain was the only Western power lacking the clout to get even one of its citizens released from captivity in the Middle East.

The latest CIA-Pentagon report on the likely shape of the new world order divides Europe into three important economic zones; it excludes Britain (along with Portugal) from all of them. While other capitalist powers look for industrial investment opportunities in pro-market Eastern Europe, the British government offers to help Poland fix its unemployment statistics. And so it goes on.

As the geopolitical shape of the world starts to change, bringing it closer into line with the modern balance of power between the major nations, Britain stands to lose out on all sides. This goes a long way towards

A world order which seemed set in the stone of the Berlin Wall is breaking up, and Britain is a prime candidate for being buried in the rubble



Thatcher herself, for example, treats the ongoing debate about Britain's full integration into the European Monetary System as the latest little Dunkirk; the public subordination of the pound to the deutschmark, which would quickly follow such a step, is seen as the present-day equivalent of annexation by the Third Reich.

In 1990, as in 1940, Britain cannot beat its more dynamic Continental competitors alone. In 1990, as in 1940, the government's international manoeuvres are designed to maintain the appearance of independent strength and sovereignty for as long as possible. Of course the Panzer divisions will not be queuing up to come down the Channel Tunnel in the next couple of years. Yet, in some other ways, Whitehall's position seems even more perilous today than it was when the British army scurried home from France and the Luftwaffe followed close behind.

For a start the long-term decline of British capitalism is 50 years further advanced; it is now a full century since the Victorians were unquestioned masters of the universe, and Britain's economic standing has never been lower. On top of which, Britain no longer has the fall-back option which finally saved it from military humiliation in the forties—the

Suddenly a world order which seemed set in the stone of the Berlin Wall is breaking up, and Britain is a prime candidate for being buried in the rubble. Germany re-emerges as the powerhouse of Europe, while the states which have occupied German territory since the Second World War—primarily the USA, the Soviet Union and the UK—each undergo a crisis of authority. The deepest crisis is the British one, since it has the least power with which to make friends and influence important people.

Making special relationships is very fashionable this year, as the major powers try to bolster their positions in a changing world by forming fresh alliances and blocs. America is at the centre of a web of tentative relationships, trying to maintain close links with both Germany and Japan, while also consolidating relations with China and the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the French are shelving historical hostilities in order to operate as the Germans' sidekick in Europe. The one traditional power excluded from these arrangements, the one which does not have a genuine special relationship with anybody, is Britain.

On just about every international issue which arises today, the relative weakness of British imperialism stands exposed. Britain

explaining the Tory government's desire to maintain the ideas and institutions of the past.

Thus Thatcher and her defence secretary Tom King are at the forefront of those still arguing for Nato to keep nuclear missiles in Germany, while the foreign office sends Prince Charles to Hungary to make an old-fashioned Cold War speech about Soviet totalitarianism and Marxist prison camps. The British establishment sets up the heir to an hereditary throne as the spokesman for democracy, and then (in a *Times* editorial) suggests that kings might be the best defenders of freedom in the countries of Eastern Europe. And they accuse Marxists of being stuck in the past.

The crisis of authority suffered by the British ruling class does not make itself felt only on the international stage. It is also responsible for recent developments in British politics, particularly the problems encountered by the Tory Party.

The Conservative Party, political machine of the capitalist class, has lost direction as the government has lost control of the British economy. It is now faced with high interest rates, inflation and trade deficits, shaky currency and share markets, poor productivity, the prospect of rising unemployment, and more. These are dire problems, yet there is

relatively little that the Tories can do about them. British capitalism has now sunk to the point where its fate is largely dependent on developments elsewhere in the international economy.

The Tory government has no new policies of substance with which to tackle the historic crisis of British capitalism. It had exhausted the core of its 'revolutionary' programme by the time of its last election victory, and has increasingly had to resort to inventing or inflating artificial issues.

The further into Thatcher's third term we get, the more bizarre the government's chosen concerns seem to become. To see how little purchase Thatcher's cabinet has on the key political realities of the world in the nineties, you have only to compare its recent preoccupations with those of other, more influential, Western governments.

British exports more competitive. In other words, much of what passes for Tory policy today is irrelevant to the underlying problems facing British capitalism.

The government's loss of direction has helped to fracture the Conservative constituency, and allowed the Labour Party to make apparently impressive advances in the polls over the past year. It is important to recall, however, that the immediate cause of this shift is the crisis within the capitalist class. Whether about the poll tax or the EMS, public debate has been dominated by divisions among the Tories; the Labour Party has simply stood aside and benefited from the fall-out.

Neil Kinnock has deliberately removed any distinctive policies from his party, turning it into as bland a sponge as possible with which to soak up public discontent with the

Britain is now a country in which the number of people whose phones are tapped is rising almost as fast as the numbers who are positively vetted by police; in which the myth of a multiracial society is exploded by the racist nastiness of a Norman Tebbit; in which single mothers are treated like criminals and petty criminals are treated like psychopaths; in which many hard-up people face a choice between not paying their poll tax and getting convicted, or not paying their mortgage and getting evicted.

Yet, in spite of all this, the ruling class and its political representatives become louder and louder in their demands that we should be proud to be part of the British pageant. The ugliness of such British nationalism, however, is also more exposed today.

The authorities may try to distance themselves from, for example, the anti-foreign

Britain is now a country in which the number of people whose phones are tapped is rising almost as fast as the numbers who are positively vetted by police



In early May for example, while the West German, American and even French administrations grappled with major problems ranging from Lithuania to Lance missiles, what would a spectator of the British political and press scene have assumed was the issue of the moment? A little bank holiday punch-up in Bournemouth.

The Bournemouth incident became the latest example of the way in which the Tories now try to prop themselves up by reverting to the politics of panic. Bank holiday weekend violence by the sea has been a regular favourite of British headline writers for years. If anything was different about Bournemouth, it was the premeditated and militarised character of the police intervention. Yet the government and the media seized upon it as proof of a new hooligan menace to British society, trying to whip up the sort of hysteria against Leeds football fans which they would have reserved for the likes of IRA men just a few years ago.

Such law and order panics, launched ever more frequently on ever flimsier pretexts, have become the staple of government policy. They may still provide opportunities for ministers to strike statesmanlike poses and rally the loyal troops. But they do nothing to bring down the rate of inflation or make

Conservatives. So, despite all of their problems, the Tories still hold the political initiative. This has important implications. It means that Labour's lead must be indecisive and much of its support soft, as the May local elections suggested. While this is so, there will be scope for the Tories to overturn it.

More importantly, the Tory Party's domination of debate and Labour's acceptance of many basic Conservative principles—such as support for the monarchy, the flag, the armed forces, etc—means that the capitalist class continues to command centre stage in British politics. The governmental agenda of all major parties is being set in the boardrooms and gentlemen's clubs, as symbolised by Labour shadow chancellor John Smith's recent series of long lunches around the City of London. So long as this is the case, then the matter of who leads in the opinion polls, or even of who sits in Downing Street, will make little difference to the direction in which Britain is heading—into the darkness.

Never mind Dunkirk, British capitalism is approaching its Waterloo. As the economy's long-term decline reaches crisis point, the façade of British democracy and civilisation is fading, to reveal an increasingly repressive and ugly system.

excesses of British football supporters attending the World Cup. But it is not exactly hard to spot the links between the official patriotism accompanying the wartime anniversaries, and the informal flag-waving of 'the lads'.

During the post-Bournemouth panic about Leeds fans, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* ran a horrified story about anti-Italian World Cup t-shirts on sale in Leeds, 'illustrated by vicious-looking monsters'. Yet the slogans on these apparently outrageous shirts sound strangely familiar: 'We will fight them on the beaches', 'Your country needs you', etc. And the 'vicious-looking monsters' were, of course, good old British bulldogs.

Call it the bulldog spirit, the Dunkirk spirit or whatever, it should be clear by now that the noble-sounding slogans of British nationalism translate into racism and violent hatred of all things foreign. As the world changes and international competition starts to intensify, the nationalist message is set to become increasingly central to political life, as those in power prevail upon us to defend what remains of British imperialism against its enemies. But whichever party is trying to rally support round the Union Jack, there is no future for us in waving their tattered old flag.

preparing for power '90

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the personal column

Ever wanted to see your most strongly held views in print? Now's your chance. This month we launch a new feature—The Personal Column—which we want you to write.

The Personal Column is open to all *Living Marxism* readers, to provide a platform for your opinion on anything from pit bull terriers or the poll tax to Norman Tebbit or New Men. Write to us today—next month's Personal Column is waiting to be filled.

Send contributions (of about 1000 words) to The Personal Column,
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After the Strangeways riot Adam Sampson,
deputy director of the Prison Reform Trust,
argues for the reintegration
of sex offenders into
prison life

There is an established etiquette in prison riots. Once you have got hold of a set of keys and have established access to all areas of the prison, you raid the pharmacy for drugs and head off to the Rule 43 wing to beat up the nonces. In the riots that affected 22 prisons in 1986, this routine was followed scrupulously: at Wymott one prisoner was stabbed and another thrown from a window; at Northeye, an attempt was made to burn down a building in which a prisoner was hiding out.

The tradition is a long-established one. John McVicar talks of a disturbance at Durham 20 years ago, when one of the rioters' main aims was to break into the unit where Ian Brady was held and string him up. The prison custom of violence against sex offenders is well known. The death of Derek White and attacks on other Rule 43 prisoners at Strangeways were merely a familiar, if more extreme, demonstration of the curious conservatism of prison mores.

However, such violence against sex offenders is not inevitable, any more than was the riot itself. Dislike of sex offenders may be ineradicable—prisoners, much as many may wish to deny it, are part of society and share society's hatred of those who commit certain categories of crime—but dislike does not make brutality inevitable. The horrors of the Strangeways riot and the routine persecution of sex offenders and other prisoners on Rule 43 could have been avoided.

It is clear from research into Rule 43 that the Prison Reform Trust has recently been carrying out that the home office and prison staff have failed to challenge the tradition of persecution of sex offenders, a tradition that springs from the nature of prison culture itself. Prison culture is essentially a macho one, fiercely, even desperately heterosexual, where perversions have no place. Sex offenders, unless they can represent their crimes as evidence of their macho credentials, fail in their crucial test of manhood. Rapists may occasionally succeed in being accepted in prison; paedophiles will always be despised.

Moreover, persecution plays a practical role in prison life. For the prisoners, persecution of sex offenders allows them to feel powerful in a setting where all power is taken from them. For the staff, sex offenders provide a focus of prison discontent that might otherwise be directed at the authorities. Both staff and prisoners have an interest in scape-



Abolish Rule 43

goating nonces, and victims of attack have frequently alleged collusion of prison staff. Certainly, it has not always been apparent that all possible steps have been taken to protect offenders from harm.

The home office's response has been to employ Prison Rule 43 to segregate prisoners in danger of attack. Rule 43, one of the hundred or so rules by which the prison system operates, allows prisoners to be segregated from their fellows either for their own protection or in the interests of 'good order and discipline'. The expansion in the number of sex offenders in prison (up from 1100 in 1981 to 2692 by 1988) has led to a matching rise in the number of prisoners on the rule. In 1983 there were 632 adult males on Rule 43; by 30 April 1989 the total number of prisoners on the rule stood at 2438. In addition, there were another 600 or so prisoners in protected locations in what are termed 'vulnerable prisoner units'.

However, the use of Rule 43 has only made the problem worse. The need to provide parallel but separate regimes for Rule 43s causes almost insuperable administrative problems for prisons and results in extremely restricted regimes for most segregated prisoners. Rule 43 prisoners suffer some of the worst conditions that British prisons have to offer. They are frequently housed in cells normally used for punishment. They receive little or nothing in the way of work, education, and exercise, to say nothing of specialist provision to challenge their offending. Many of them emerge from the experience brutalised and bitter.

The home office's response to the difficulties of providing for a growing population of prisoners needing segregation has been to attempt to deal with it by administrative means. It has instructed prison governors to refuse the protection of Rule 43 wherever possible. It has also developed schemes

designed to provide sex offenders with cover stories, so that they can attempt to survive on normal location by lying about their offences. Yet both these expose prisoners to considerable risk: risk of discovery and risk of violence. Moreover, it is more than a little short-sighted for the home office to encourage to conceal their offences prisoners who, as those that work with sex offenders agree, need to have their behaviour challenged, not condoned. It has also been frequently alleged that sex offenders are given cover stories in return for acting as informers.

The future of Rule 43 itself is never questioned. Yet its existence is evidence that, as the chief inspector of prisons has said, the home office 'accepts this prejudice against the weak and inadequate'. Rule 43 institutionalises and perpetuates the persecution of sex offenders. It provides prisoners with a legitimised target for their frustrations and anger. It gives rise to the erroneous belief, common in many prisons, that Rule 43s enjoy better facilities than other prisoners. And in a riot, it provides a perfect target for prisoners out of their heads on drugs and excitement and bent on violence.

Of course, vulnerable prisoners need protection. Even if the wildest stories emanating from Strangeways about the treatment meted out to prisoners on Rule 43 have proved false, it is perhaps just as worrying that they were credible. Violence is regularly offered to sex offenders, and it is little comfort that in the case of Strangeways, it stopped short of castration and mutilation. However, protection can be provided without segregation. Other European countries do not rely upon such blunt instruments. Rule 43 is not necessary; careful integration can achieve the same effect.

It may appear somewhat paradoxical in the light

of the Strangeways attacks to argue for the integration of sex offenders into the general prison population. Nevertheless, at least four units in the prison system have shown that integration is possible. Grendon Underwood, a prison that deals with some of the most violent offenders in the country, has mixed sex offenders and non-sex offenders for many years. Littlehey has a wing housing mainly sex offenders, who mix openly with other prisoners. Similar schemes exist in Wormwood Scrubs, Aylesbury, and Northallerton young offenders institution. In all these units, violence is all but non-existent and verbal abuse rare.

Prisons such as these give hope that a more civilised solution to the antipathy towards sexual offenders in our prisons yet may be achieved. Their regimes are relaxed and decent, reducing the level of anger and anxiety among prisoners and the risk of violence. The staff appear to have a genuine commitment to making integration work, and crack down on any instances of persecution and discrimination. Sex offenders and other vulnerable prisoners can feel safe and accepted, yet enjoy the full range of prison facilities.

There is no reason why such units could not be duplicated elsewhere. No one who has witnessed the level of violence accorded to sex offenders in other prisons could imagine that the move towards integration will not have to be made slowly and carefully. But to shy away from the failings of the current system of dealing with sex offenders in prison is to invite the repetition of the attacks that took place at Strangeways.

- The Prison Reform Trust's report 'Sex offenders in prison' will be published in June and available from the Prison Reform Trust, 59 Caledonian Road, London N1 9BU, £3.45

After Trafalgar Square

Stop the riot show trials

Andrew Calcutt reports on the legal offensive following the Trafalgar Square riot

Since the riot at the anti-poll tax march in Trafalgar Square on 31 March, more than 400 people have been charged with offences ranging from threatening behaviour and theft to arson and attempted murder of a police officer.

Based at Cannon Row and commanded by chief superintendent Roy Ramm, 125 detectives are combing 90 hours of video and 30 000 photographs of alleged rioters. The *Sun*, *Mirror* and *People* have printed 'wanted' pictures. A computer is comparing film from Trafalgar Square with Special Branch mugshots of left-wing activists. Arrest squads are picking up demonstrators 'identified' in this way. Operation Carnaby has resulted in over 50 arrests so far, on top of 339 arrests made on 31 March.

Police are conducting an inquiry into how they lost control of Trafalgar Square and the West End. Metropolitan Police chief Sir Peter Imbert told an invited audience at St Botolph's church in the City of London that it will investigate why the first requests for mounted police and riot gear were turned down. 'Next time it will be different', he

warned: 'It is said of generals that they don't fight the next war with the last war's strategy. So it is with the police as regards potentially violent demonstrations.'

The crown prosecution service has set up a special unit to deal with the riot cases. Drawn from CPS branches nationwide, the unit's 13 prosecuting solicitors are specialists in public order offences. The walls of their offices in Furnival Street, Holborn, are covered with flow charts showing the first appearance, remand hearings and trial dates for all the accused. The premises are on constant black alert for fear of reprisals.

By mid-May, about 50 defendants had been sentenced in magistrates courts after pleading guilty. Spanish tourist Mario Acosta was jailed for 28 days for stealing two bottles of perfume; 21-year old secretarial instructor Ronald McDowall got 14 days for stealing a pen; a 57-year old housewife was fined £150 for breaking a ministry of defence window. Magistrates are issuing exemplary sentences for minor offences. If the crown courts extend exemplary sentencing to serious offences, some will face years inside.

Some defendants have opted to plead guilty and get it over with. Painter Ronald McCarthy could not afford to make repeated trips from Bristol to remand hearings at Bow Street: he pleaded guilty to obstruction and was fined £150. Defendants have been refused legal aid on arbitrary grounds. Some have been granted bail only on condition that they stay away from central London and take no part in any demonstration. Squatters have been refused bail, on the grounds that they are less likely to attend court. Magistrates have issued scores of arrest warrants for defendants who failed to appear in court. If police succeed in tracking them down, they will be held in custody until trial.

The media have blamed a black-flag waving unemployed underclass from London for the riot. Yet over half of those arrested on 31 March were from outside the capital. About a third were unemployed. The rest listed occupations ranging from despatch rider, law student and computer operator to charity worker, marine engineer and chef. A top lawyer described his Trafalgar Square clients: 'They are nearly all in full-time employment, including a couple of civil servants...not the sort of people you've been led to expect...what you could call "extremely respectable".' The defendants are a mixed bunch of mainly young working class people, every one of whom should be defended against the law and order of the riot squad.

- The Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign offers unconditional support to all those arrested. It is appealing for witness statements, news of court appearances, etc. Send information c/o the Haldane Society, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1. Phone (071) 833 8958
- *Living Marxism* demands that all the charges are dropped. We will be carrying regular reports on the legal clampdown: all information will be gratefully received

italia '90

Alan Harding looks forward
and (backwards) to
a tournament that makes

football much more
than a game
**The World Cup
war**



All roads lead to Rome. Or more precisely, to the Stadio Olimpico where, on 8 July, two football teams will contest the final of the greatest sporting spectacle on Earth. They will be the survivors of the 140 national teams that set out on the road to Rome two years ago, 24 of which have made it to the month-long final stages in Italy.

In Italy for the last 18 months the ubiquitous 'Ciao', the Lego man with the football head turned out in the Italian national colours of red, white and green, has appeared on everything from keyrings to boxer shorts. When I first saw him in Florence last winter he hadn't acquired his name. The Italian voting public eventually chose Ciao from a slate of four. Sounds simple but not so—the election was organised as a round robin with the top two names in the league playing off. Nothing is simple or small-scale in the World Cup. When the draw took place in December, more people watched it on TV than did the Moon landing. Pavarotti was there to raise the tone but it still had the ambience of a Eurovision song contest, with the added embarrassment of some of the world's greatest footballers playing walk-on parts and taking a ball from a Blackpool pier bingo machine.

The whole affair only came to life afterwards when Diego Maradona complained that the Italian hosts were cheating, since they had come out with a pretty easy draw (Austria, Czechoslovakia, and the USA). Maradona should have remembered the words of Italian hard man Claudio Gentile on the World Cup: 'No, signor, it is not dancing school.' If this is true of the action on the pitch it is truer still of world football's behind-the-scenes battles. Henry Kissinger described the Machiavellian world of Fifa after the rejection of the US bid for the 1986 World Cup: 'The politics involved make me nostalgic for the Middle East.'

The World Cup is a potent cocktail of big business, popular theatre and consummate skill and Italy is the perfect setting. We had better make the most of it because it may not only be the best but also the last of its kind. If the nations of the world are still on footballing terms with each other in 1994 the cup is scheduled for the USA. Good for the business end no doubt, but I think the San Siro edges the Houston astrodome for atmosphere.

In the USA I'm sure they would have finished the stadiums. In Italy they will be building right up to kick-off. The original costing of £230m has soared to £1350m and is expected to top £2 billion. Even so, anybody who saw the TV pictures of AC Milan's European Cup semi-final against

Bayern Munich will know that the San Siro playing surface looks like Wembley after the horses have been on it. Twenty-three construction workers had died and 700 been injured even before the final month of panic building began. But, as the Italians say, the crisis is grave but not serious. Organisation supremo Luca di Montezemolo insists it will be alright on the night. Despite having more than 7000 building projects to complete and a lot of backs to scratch, he is probably right.

If you look down the list of venues—the Luigi Ferraris in Genoa, the Marc' Antonio Bentegodi in Verona, the Comunale in Florence—no country in the world could provide so many high-class stadiums so close together and with such easy access. Remember in 1966 it was found that Highbury was too small for World Cup requirements; outside Wembley, London matches had to be played at White City athletics stadium. Arriving for his short stay in Milan, Luther Blissett was struck by the contrast between the San Siro and his home stadium at Watford: 'Where's the dog track?'

'The best hooligans'

The business agenda has been set and so too has the political agenda. For the last two years we have been warned of major confrontations between tribal bands on the streets of Italian cities. But hooliganism is a non-issue. The bar owners of Cagliari who have refused to be declared dry await the Brits with the same equanimity as a Greek taxi driver I once met in Salonika: 'It's a pity your hooligans aren't coming. We like your hooligans. We think that you have the best hooligans in Europe.' Indeed if you give it a moment's thought you might almost (but not quite) feel sorry for the average British yob who gets stropky in Sardinia. The island is not famed for genteel manners and forgiveness.

Nor will there be any 'invasions' of Italy. For all the enthusiasm about the World Cup, most people in Europe, let alone South America, can get no closer to the tournament than their TV set. The largest travelling contingent in Spain 1982 were the 12 000 Danes. All in all not a major logistical problem; in Rome they could get lost in the queue for the Sistine Chapel.

The England football team has, however, done very nicely out of the hooligan scare that elevates a handful of boors into Alaric's Visigoths marching on Rome. England were named as one of the top seeds for policing rather than footballing reasons; it allowed the organisers to base the English team and its supporters on the island fortress of Sardinia. Meanwhile, the other teams in the group—Holland, Ireland and

Egypt—have to shuttle back and forth to Sardinia to play the privileged English. Despite this advantage, I cannot see England doing anything except wilt in the heat of Italy.

If this is the case, some foreigners will need to be found to blame. Everybody knows that this is the only conceivable explanation for an English failure. It is difficult to envisage the Soviet Union taking the field against Germany with its fans sporting 'European Tour 1941-45: Stalingrad to Berlin' t-shirts; or the French getting their own back for West German goalkeeper Harald Schumacher's hospitalising foul on Patrick Battiston in the 1982 tournament by demanding the reoccupation of the Rhineland. Not so with England: 'Two world wars and one World Cup' is the very least we can expect to hear should England come up against West Germany.

During the last World Cup in Europe, Spain 1982, the British press dropped its hooligan scare stories and led the mob baiting the Argentinians in the aftermath of the Falklands War. 'Argies sunk' smirked the headlines after the holder's early defeat at the hands of Belgium. The fans responded with chants of 'Argentina, Argentina, what's it like to lose a war'. What has made the English football team and the travelling fans almost universally unpopular is not English football as such or that England keep winning. Even the boorish behaviour is only a secondary factor: what really riles the world is the unthinking assumption of superiority. (And those who think that the Scottish version of British chauvinism is any better would do well to listen in on some of the progressive opinions on all things foreign being voiced by betartaned visitors to Italy.)

Greater passions are engendered by football elsewhere. After all a war started between El Salvador and Honduras over a World Cup game. And nobody could accuse the Italians of being non-partisan. But only in Britain is national arrogance translated into such parochialism on the pitch that the other side are always cheats, and nothing can be learnt from a superior opponent who may have some fancy footwork but lacks bottle and stamina. Twenty-four years on, it's surely time we said Ciao to World Cup Willy.

Another world

Italy is the place to be this month. Football is not going to change the world but for the month of June it may well stop it. It wasn't always like that with the World Cup.

The first World Cup, played in Uruguay in 1930, caused little excitement internationally. Just four European teams travelled to join seven South American sides plus the USA and Mexico. But even then, it mattered

PHOTO: Pandora Anderson



italia '90

to the Latins. Uruguay beat Argentina 4-2 in the final in front of 90 000 fans. Such was the rivalry that each half of the match had to be played with a different ball, one manufactured in each country. Defeated Argentina broke off footballing relations with Uruguay.

The 1934 competition was held in Italy but Uruguay did not travel to defend their trophy. The Argentinians brought a weakened team since they feared that their best players would be poached by Italian clubs. This much hasn't changed. Brazil and Argentina were beaten in the first round of what was then a straight knock-out competition. The host nation won again, Italy beating Czechoslovakia 2-1 after extra time.

'In Italy 1990, the standard I hope to see is that of Brazil 1970'

When the Italians beat Hungary 4-2 in France to retain the title in 1938, there were still only 36 entries and no Uruguay. Argentina was too deep in economic crisis to send a team. Spain had a civil war. The British teams were not there for more prosaic reasons. They didn't see the point as they knew they were the best anyway. In England's case this had been reinforced by a 6-3 victory over Germany in Berlin earlier in the year, a game less famous for its result than for the Hitler salutes given by the England team beforehand. The result itself was put in perspective by Germany's exit in the first round of the World Cup, but England's international day of reckoning was postponed by national parochialism.

After a 12-year break for the Second World War, the international community resumed fighting on the football pitch in the 1950 World Cup in Brazil. The host nation carried all before it right up until half-time in the final, played in a still unfinished Maracana in front of 200 000. But Uruguay equalised and then scored a winner a minute from time. This was the main show for everybody except the English, for whom the story had ended much earlier when, making their first appearance in a World Cup, they were humiliatingly knocked out 1-0 by the USA.

England were the only British representatives having qualified as Home Nations champions. Fifa had

allocated two places from this competition but the second-placed Scots refused to travel as also-rans. It hasn't stopped them since.

Before the next World Cup in Switzerland in 1954, English football had been comprehensively put in its place by the best team in the world. The Hungarians came in November 1953 with an awesome reputation. They left a legend, the first overseas team to win at Wembley, 6-3. The following spring in Budapest they beat England 7-1. By the time the Hungarians arrived in Switzerland they were unbeaten for four years, through 25 games in which they scored 104 goals. They became the best team never to win the World Cup. On the way they became the first team to beat Uruguay in a World Cup match.

After a gruelling series of games (including the infamous 'Battle of Berne' against Brazil, when three sendings off and two penalties were followed by punch-ups in the changing room), Hungary limped into the final with their star, Ferenc Puskas, playing against medical advice. Their West German opponents were fit and fresh and, although Hungary were two up in eight minutes, the Germans fought back to take the lead in the eighty-fifth minute. A minute later the injured Puskas had the ball in the net, but referee Mervyn Griffiths ruled the great man offside.

The Brazil of 1982 or Johann Cruyff's Dutch team of 1974 were unlucky losers, but this Hungarian team, soon to be scattered to the winds by the 1956 revolution and Soviet invasion, had no peer. Puskas found a new career in the number 10 shirt of Real Madrid which ruled European club football. The story goes that exiled Hungarians queued to see their hero and he gave them his medals. But there was one winner's medal he could not give them.

Bar games

By 1958 economic boom, stable international relations and satellite communications made the tournament a more genuine world event. Participation may have been confined to standing in a crowded bar in Rio, Rome or Rheims, but it was the making of the World Cup. The Brazil side that beat Sweden 5-2 in the final made the tournament completely international by becoming the first team (and still the only one) to win outside their own hemisphere. They did so, moreover, with a style and control that astonished and exhilarated and with which Brazil are still associated. The 17-year old Pele announced his arrival on the world stage with a memorable goal in the final, flicking the ball from thigh to thigh and then over his head before spinning to volley it home.

The World Cups of the 1960s were in comparison disappointing affairs. Chile in 1962 was a competition of poor standards, defensive football, and vicious tackling. Brazil won beating Czechoslovakia 3-1 and provided the great moments. But Pele was injured early on and the rest of the team was in decline, for all the talent of Zagalo, Zito and Didi in midfield and Garrincha (the little bird) with his unpredictable dribbles on the wing.

What was true in 1962 was even more so in 1966. Pele was cynically kicked out of the tournament by the Bulgarians and the Portuguese. The Germans achieved a record for the number of people sent off while playing against them, putting on the first major international display of the art and science of diving. Both Uruguay and Argentina blew their chances by disregarding their own superior technical skills; in the quarter final in particular, Argentina made the mistake of trying to strong-arm an England team which they could have run rings around (Rattin, the Argentinian captain, was sent off via an interpreter).

'It is now!'

A workaday England team with only three world class players—Gordon Banks, Bobby Moore and Bobby Charlton—won the tournament, with the assistance of a Russian linesman. It meant a knighthood for manager Alf Ramsey, immortality for hat trick hero Geoff Hurst—and, as Hurst crashed in his third goal in the dying seconds, for BBC man Kenneth Wolstenholme: 'Some people are on the pitch. They think it's all over. [Hurst scores.] It is now!' There were golden moments. No foul in the first 20 minutes of the England-Portugal semi-final and Charlton running rampant, to such effect that if you use his name judiciously in southern Europe you can still get a free bottle of wine (remember to praise Gianni Rivera). And more than this, the Goodison crowd chanting for Hungary's Florian Albert as he cut through the Brazilian defence in a match played for the joy of it.

But in Italy 1990, the standard I hope to see emulated is that of Mexico 1970. This is not to deny that great football has been played in recent years. In 1974 the Dutch did everything but win, playing total football before politely letting their West German hosts back into the final. In Argentina 1978 one group brought together Italy, Argentina and France in a superb series of matches. When Italy beat Argentina (who eventually won the tournament), the field became a mesmerising cross between a chessboard and a gymnasium. In 1982 a brilliant Brazil were denied only by the inspired opportunism of Paolo

Rossi's hat trick for Italy. But for all this and Maradona's excellence in 1986, 1970 was the year.

The Brazilian side of 1970 was the best since the Hungarians of the fifties. The only team to come near them was England, beaten by a Jairzinho goal in a group match in Guadalajara. On that day Moore's tackling and defensive positioning were exemplary, Jeff Astle missed an open goal, and Gordon Banks pulled off a top-of-the-little-finger save from Pele's downward header. When it was over, and he and Moore had sought each other out and exchanged shirts, Pele said 'At that moment I hated Gordon Banks more than any man in soccer. But when I cooled down I had to applaud him with my heart. It was the greatest save I have ever seen'.

England fell by the wayside in the quarter final after they led West Germany 2-0. Some blame Peter 'the Cat' Bonetti for diving over a weak shot from Franz Beckenbauer; but the big mistake was Ramsey's, in taking off Charlton and Martin Peters when he thought the game was won. It wasn't, Germany won 3-2, and England have never recovered from the trauma.

The tournament, however, belonged to Brazil: to Gerson and Tostao, to Rivelino and Jairzinho, and most of all

to Pele playing through a World Cup for the first time since 1958. In the final they took a decent Italian team apart, 4-1. Pele scored the first but the one to savour was the fourth. Pele in the penalty area, facing a shellshocked Italian defence, passes to his right without looking. Why should he look? The world knew that there, running in at full tilt, would be captain Carlos Alberto to hit the pass into the opposite corner of the goal without breaking stride.

Italia '90?

Who will win this time? Unless the pressure gets to them early Italy will be worthy favourites. They are scoring few goals at present; but Paolo Rossi had been substituted twice before his hat trick against Brazil in 1982. They have a wonderful defender in Franco Baresi; but can Giannini play far enough forward to put pressure on opposing defenders, and can they find a role for Baggio? The best news of the spring has been the recovery of Ruud Gullit to accompany Marco Van Basten, which turns Holland from a team that just won't make it into real contenders.

Maradona could still inspire Argentina to become only the second team to retain the trophy; that is in the hand of God. Three months'

preparation will make Brazil a more formidable proposition than the team England defeated at Wembley recently. The Soviet Union could handle anybody but probably don't have the stamina. West Germany will be hard to beat but look like losing semi-finalists. No team towers above the rest but half a dozen are in the highest class. Even in this year of sporting upsets, history suggests that there is little chance of an outsider winning the World Cup; only six nations have ever won it in 60 years.

Football is a spectacle. It engages, it excites and at its best it generates a shared knowledge of high skill at the limits of physical endeavour. Nobody has summed this up better than Ferenc Puskas: 'These are players; ones who play with their heads and their hearts.' That is enough to justify spending warm summer evenings in front of the TV this month. If we are very lucky we will see something like Puskas' Hungarian side, and it will elicit something like the same response. After the Wembley game in 1953, as Puskas returned to the Cumberland Hotel, a small boy approached him in the foyer. 'Please sir', he said, 'take me to your country and teach me to play football!'



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for progress

The embryology
and infertility debate

Who needs the Embryo Bill

Ann Bradley

puts the case against
legal controls
on embryo
research and
infertility
treatment



ILLUSTRATION: Susannah

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill sparked off several controversies over recent months. Should embryos be given added protection by amending the law on abortion? Should human embryos be the subject of experimentation? If so, can they be created specifically for research? Should research be developed that would allow putative parents to choose the sex of their children? Should single women, in particular lesbians, be allowed access to donor insemination?

But while each of these specific issues polarised opinion, the principle of the bill—the need to regulate by law scientific research and medical treatment involving human sperm and ova—was accepted. Anti-abortionists, professional medical bodies, and all shades of political opinion from the Conservative Party to the Socialist Workers Party have supported the introduction of legal controls on such practices.

Until now there have been no laws either to forbid or permit embryo research or infertility treatment. Like all other aspects of medical research and treatment the work is subject to voluntary controls based on professional guidelines. (The one exception is abortion, which is

controlled by the 1967 Abortion Act.) In practice clinics and research establishments have been 'policed' by a Voluntary Licensing Authority (VLA) which has the power to withdraw its approval from clinics stepping outside of its agreed code of conduct. But the VLA has had no legal powers; the law has never said what experiments can and cannot be done on embryos, or which clinics can provide infertility treatment, or which clients can receive it.

The lack of control over the work of scientists and doctors in this field has been a cause of some recent concern. The 'kidneys for sale' scandal at London's prestigious Humana hospital demonstrated that the ethics of some doctors are only as deep as their pockets. Many people distrust their doctors and are suspicious of scientists—and quite rightly so. In our society healthcare and research are about marketing commodities. Treatment is developed on the basis of whether or not it will be profitable, drug companies compete to get doctors to prescribe their products. And the entire medical profession is shrouded in secrecy and professional mystification.

Cowboy clinics

Many observers, particularly feminists, feel that fertility treatment is especially open to abuse. Couples desperate for a chance of a child will pay a small fortune for fertility treatment with only a slight chance of success. In the USA there are already scandals involving fertility clinics which set up in one state, sign up dozens of women for astronomical fees, then close down overnight and reappear in the next state under a new name. In some clinics the level of expertise is reputed to be so low that they have never achieved a pregnancy.

There is no doubt that lack of regulation can lead to malpractice in all areas of medicine. It is understandable that this should lead to a consensus supporting the main proposal in the bill—a licensing body, accountable to the government, to oversee fertility treatment and embryo experimentation. But is the law a desirable mechanism for medical regulation?

Most of us would be more concerned about having a lobotomy than undergoing fertility treatment—yet there are no laws governing the circumstances in which lobotomies can be carried out. Medical treatment is usually a matter of clinical judgment; a condition is diagnosed and doctors decide on the appropriate treatment. Why should fertility treatment be different?

The authorities have argued that embryo research and fertility treatment need to be covered by legislation for three reasons: because embryos represent the start of life and as such should be a special legal case; because the speed of scientific developments in this field is running ahead of established moral codes; and because there is major public concern about the issue. None of these explanations stands up.

The idea that the government is concerned about embryonic life is a difficult pill to swallow. In March, the *Sunday Times* featured staff from intensive care wards in major hospitals who admitted that they often have to decide which premature babies should live and which should die because of lack of intensive care equipment. The paper reported that one of Britain's largest units for the intensive care of premature babies was having to turn away half the babies brought to it. Today 90 per cent of all equipment in intensive care units for newborn babies is funded by charities, and many hospitals run their own 'Save the baby' funds. 'Society wants us to save the lives of these very premature babies', Dr Simon Bignall from St Mary's hospital in London told the *Sunday Times*, 'but it doesn't want to give us the resources to do it'. When the government takes this attitude to saving the lives of premature babies, it's hard to take it seriously when it claims to value the potential lives which embryos represent.

Circa 1790

The argument about needing legislation to cope with the rapid pace of scientific advance in these areas is also difficult to accept at face value. The medical and scientific establishment and the popular press all like to project an image of scientists on the brink of new discoveries which raise ethical issues never previously confronted. However, the development of the techniques of central concern in the Embryology Bill are anything but recent. For example, the bill seeks to regulate artificial insemination, a technique which first went into medical records in Scotland in 1790, when a linen draper's sperm was used to inseminate his wife. The first recorded use of donor sperm was in 1884 to impregnate the wife of an infertile man in Philadelphia. The removal of an embryo from one animal to implant it in another also dates back to the late nineteenth century.

While the panic about the need for legal control lags behind the development of some techniques, it races ahead of others. The heated parliamentary debates about the

licensing of embryo experiments up to 14 days after fertilisation bears no relation to the current level of medical science. No scientist has been able to sustain an embryo in vitro for longer than eight or nine days and some believe that it could be decades before they can grow embryos beyond the 14-day stage for research. Other techniques which will be prohibited when the bill becomes law have not yet left the realms of science fiction. Cloning, ectogenesis (maintaining embryos in artificial wombs) and the creation of human-animal hybrids will all be banned long before they have been invented.

Lastly, the government has persistently maintained that its Embryology Bill is a response to public concern. The white paper which formed the basis for the bill described the genetic manipulation of embryos as 'one of the greatest causes of public disquiet'. Yet surely only the very naive could believe that the government introduces legislation simply to alleviate 'public disquiet'. After all, the poll tax has provoked much more 'public disquiet' than any aspect of embryo research, yet the government has refused to ditch it. Even in the field of scientific development there are issues that produce a higher degree of public outrage than experiments which, the government concedes, scientists could not yet do even if they wanted to. The irradiation of food, for example, has caused considerable 'public disquiet', and so have leukaemia clusters among children living near nuclear power stations.

Family matters

Behind all of these excuses lies a much more cynical explanation for the government's concern with human fertilisation and embryology. The issues dealt with in the Embryology Bill cause moral problems for the authorities not because they manipulate biological human life, but because they manipulate the social institution of the family.

In his recently published book on embryology, *Life Before Birth* (1989), professor Robert Edwards writes that 'it was evolution, rather than a one-off act of God, that bound the transmission of life to the sex act, and...the connection is therefore always open to modification and abandonment'. The development of reproductive technology could lead us to draw the same conclusions about the family. It is society rather than nature which binds human reproduction to the family; therefore the family institution is always open to modification and abandonment.

The family is a social institution upon which capitalist society relies. It

for progress

allows the rich to pass on their property. More importantly, it operates as a service unit for the system, fulfilling the domestic responsibilities which are needed to keep us working, but which the government and employers will not provide. The authorities, however, explain the family as a natural institution, biologically given and based on the assumption that people will *naturally* want to care for their children and pass on property to them. If family arrangements are based on nature then it follows that, if the natural processes which create families are interfered with, the fabric of society will be at risk.

'False strain'

The concern about reproductive technologies leading to the dissolution of the family is as old as the discussion of the technologies themselves. A legal judgement in 1921 ruled that artificial insemination by donor (AID) was grounds for divorce, since the defining feature of adultery was not 'the moral turpitude of the act of sexual intercourse' but the possibility of introducing a 'false strain of blood' into the husband's family. In 1960 a government inquiry, the Feversham committee on human artificial insemination, reaffirmed that children born by AID should be registered as illegitimate: 'Succession through blood descent is an important element of family life and as such is the basis of our society. On it depend the peerage and other titles of honour, and the monarchy itself.' (Quoted in L Birke et al, *Tomorrow's Child*, 1990, pp249-250)

Thirty years ago the Feversham committee concluded that AID was entirely undesirable, but did not want to make it illegal for fear of driving it underground out of medical control. The government is faced with a similar but rather more complex dilemma today.

Ever since the birth of Louise Brown, the world's first test-tube baby, in 1978, governments have been under increasing pressure—not from the public in general, but from backwoods MPs and moral crusaders outraged at the potential for the 'abuse' of these technologies. The powerful anti-abortion lobby has thrown its weight behind a total ban on embryo experimentation. Enoch Powell won widespread support for such a proposal in 1985 before his bill fell foul of parliamentary procedure.

The government has had to balance conflicting concerns in responding. On the one hand it is genuinely worried about the challenge to the family, and the availability of AID to women outside

normal family arrangements. On the other hand, the government has not wanted to see the reproductive technologies, or embryo research, banned altogether.

Test-tube babies and donor insemination can be a challenge to the natural basis of the family—but if used in a controlled way they can also be used to strengthen the notion of family bonds. The government has never been against helping women to fulfil their duty as mothers. It is all for heterosexual women in stable relationships (preferably married) getting whatever help they need to have children—including donor insemination.

Likewise, embryo research is a muddy issue. The government has come under pressure from the 'life begins at conception' lobby which would like to outlaw embryo research. But the government is aware that blanket bans on research would be a commercial disaster. Developments in genetics are big money. It's not simply for the good of humanity that the US government has recently invested \$3 billion in a 15-year project to map the 100 000 genes that determine every human trait. This kind of research can lead to the development of highly profitable treatments. Britain is currently one of the world leaders in the field of embryology, and there has been concern in establishment circles that highly restrictive laws on research would lead to a brain drain of scientists to countries with less control.

Licensed to ban

The aim of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill is neither to ban research or reproductive technologies, nor to allow them to be freely practised. It aims to bring them under state control. Practices which meet official approval (or which are expected to be commercially successful) will be licensed. Those which provoke disapproval in high places will be banned.

In some respects this law is very similar to the 1967 Abortion Act, which was passed to control a situation where abortion was illegal yet widely carried out. Parliament recognised that it had neither the means to outlaw abortion, nor the desire to do so. Most parliamentarians and medical professionals conceded that there were circumstances in which abortion was a preferred solution, but were hostile to the notion of abortion on request. The 1967 Act was the best solution for the state. It reaffirmed that abortion was illegal unless two doctors agreed that a woman fulfilled strict criteria. This allowed for

abortion in cases where the authorities approved, while keeping it illegal in other circumstances. In effect decisions about abortion were handed over to the state, mediated through the medical profession.

Why did the authorities make abortion the only medical operation controlled by parliament? Because it challenges the sanctity of the family and women's natural role as mothers. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill aims to bring research and fertility treatment under similar control for similar reasons.

Some feminists have argued that legal control is better than the arbitrary diktat of doctors who use their 'clinical judgement' to decide who receives fertility treatment and who does not; for example, some doctors already refuse to refer lesbians for artificial insemination, on the grounds that they are not technically infertile. It seems unlikely, however, that the state will have a more progressive approach to these matters than the medical profession. You may not trust your doctor, but would you really put any more trust in Kenneth Clarke—or a licensing authority appointed by and answerable to him?

It is ironic that many women who have campaigned against state controls on abortion have been leading the calls for legal policing of research and fertility treatment. The restrictions on our right to abortion imposed through the 1967 Act should warn us against calling for state control of fertility treatment. In many ways the issues are even clearer. Before 1967 abortion was illegal and it was legitimate to demand that parliament removed the restrictions. Today the practices that the state wants to control are legal; there are no restrictions to remove, and any government intervention can only make things more restrictive.

We should oppose attempts to restrict those who can practice and receive infertility treatment, and call for it to be made available to all on the NHS. That would be the best way of putting the charlatans out of business and dealing with discriminatory doctors.

We should also reject the need for government controls on embryo research before or after 14 days. Experiments on embryos need no more nor less legal controls than research on other human tissue. We should be suspicious of state attempts to bring science and medicine under its jurisdiction. By all means, let us mistrust the men with test tubes; but let's extend the same treatment to the government ministers, judges and other moral policemen.

You may not trust your doctor, but would you really put any more faith in Kenneth Clarke?

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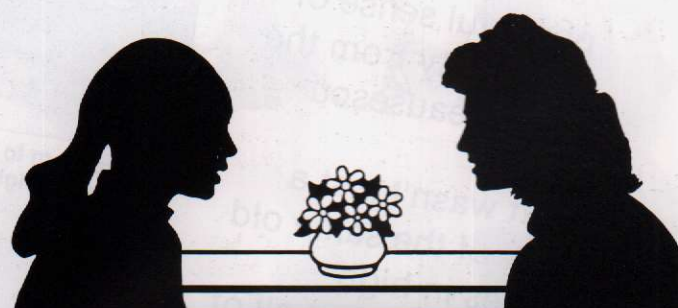
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a british marxist in eastern europe

Travelling through Romania in the run-up to the May elections, Joan Phillips found an unstable and divided country. But beneath the political flux there remained a powerful sense of continuity from the dark Ceausescu years.

It wasn't just a few of the same old faces in high places; almost all of the tyrant's state machine and social system, which Romanians fought and died to destroy, seemed to be intact



The freedom to queue for food remains an unalienable right in post-Ceausescu Romania

Romania six months on

What revolution



PHOTOS: Simon Norfolk

Revolt in the ranks

A land fit for heroes?

The revolution has changed nothing for us', a young conscript told me bitterly. He was one among hundreds of soldiers on an angry demonstration in Bucharest's Victory Square. 'Where is our justice?' they chanted at the cordon of police outside the ministry of justice. 'We're here because they cheated us', said another young soldier. Back in February the government had decreed that soldiers would no longer have to work in construction, on the railways and in other manual labouring jobs as they had in the past. The authorities also promised to improve the conscripts' abysmal living conditions. The soldiers were spending the night in the square because none of these promises had been kept.

The army is the only state institution to enjoy popular respect in Romania, and soldiers are widely seen as heroes. But while the generals have been given seats in parliament, the common soldiers who are credited with defeating Ceausescu's Securitate are still treated like dirt.

Fearing retribution, the soldiers in Victory Square declined to say which army units they belonged to. Many had come straight from the construction sites. Some said they were working from four in the morning until 10 at night, and could not rest until after the final headcount at 11pm. They did not receive a wage, only 'lei symbolica'. Figures ranged from 150 to 400 lei a month: a couple of quid at most at black market exchange rates.



Up in arms: protesting conscripts, Victory Square

The soldiers get a change of clothing once a month if they are lucky and clean underwear every two weeks. Their uniforms were filthy and torn. They complained that they do not have baths or showers, that their bedding is dirty and infested with bugs. 'The food they give us is rotten and full of worms. We have to eat stale bread and tea with salt in it. We hardly see meat.'

Officers have responded to the revolt with a mixture of cajoling and threats. 'They say "Please be patient and in a few days you'll be free". But it never happens', one soldier told me. 'Now they've started inventing reasons why we have to stay on in the army', said another. 'Off the record they say "There are big problems with the Hungarians in Transylvania" or "We need you to defend the Front in case there's trouble in the elections". It's the past all over again. The army should exist to defend borders, not to police the people and be involved in politics. Then when we started protesting they accused us of being hooligans and tramps.' Those singled out as ringleaders have been told they'll be imprisoned if they organise more demonstrations. The soldiers in Victory Square were closely watched by their officers. A colonel would not accept that they had legitimate grievances: 'What's happening here is a disgrace to the army.'

The deep rift between the army rank and file and their commanders must be a source of concern for the authorities, who may yet feel the need to use force against their opponents.

'F

SN = RCP' said the graffiti in Bucharest. Months after the overthrow of the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, many Romanians were fearful that the provisional government of the National Salvation Front (FSN) was carrying on where the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) left off. 'I was ready to die here', said Monica as we stood between the Hotel Intercontinental and the Societe Generale, where scores of young people were shot dead by the army and the Securitate in December. 'But we didn't make a revolution so that we could have the old system with the Front.'

It is impossible to have a conversation in Romania without mention of 'our revolution'. Yet Bucharest bears few signs of the sort of dramatic changes which are the stuff of revolutions. Some things are different: the scaffolding encircling the bullet-

scarred buildings in the city centre, the hordes of newspaper sellers on the streets, the ubiquitous black market. But the bloody events before Christmas have wrought little or no change in the grim lives of ordinary Romanians.

Bucharest is one of the dustiest cities in Europe. But there must be better ways to keep the streets clean than handing out witches' broomsticks to housewives and pensioners. In the past, people were put to work sweeping the streets because nobody was allowed to be unemployed in the socialist utopia decreed by Ceausescu. Today, hundreds of women are still compelled to spend their days sweeping piles of dust from one place to another.

The past lives on in the present too for the army of construction workers and soldiers still toiling in the shadow of the Palace of the Republic. The gigantic building project begun by Ceausescu was continued under the government of president Ion Iliescu. The rows of penthouse flats were meant to house the vast bureaucracy and security apparatus which serviced the Ceausescus. Some are now occupied by the same people, who have simply switched allegiance to the National Salvation Front.

Make-believe shops

Other symbols of Ceausescu's corruption survive. To impress visiting heads of state that his people wanted for nothing, Ceausescu had the shops on the Avenue of the Victory of Socialism stocked with luxuries the likes of which his subjects never saw. He even arranged for people to buy goods from the shops while his foreign guests were being shown round; but they had to hand everything back again once the dignitaries had departed. The bored shop assistants still stand behind the counters pretending to be on call for customers they know will never come.

While these make-believe shops stand empty, most of Bucharest's three million inhabitants spend hours a day queuing for whatever's going. You become accustomed to queues everywhere in Eastern Europe. But in a country where people are prone to forget that some things even exist because they are unavailable for so long, queuing is a way of life unaltered by the change of government.

The shops stay open later in Romania than most places in Eastern Europe, simply because people have to queue for so long after finishing work. There is no shortage of jars of tomato paste, pickled vegetables, syrup juice and jam, accumulating dust on the shelves. The queues are for the scarcities: decent meat, cheese, olives, deodorant, toilet rolls. So rare are such things that when people do find them they buy in bulk. Eating meat is a



RIGHT: 100 days on from the overthrow of Ceausescu, a widow weeps for her husband in the Graveyard of the Heroes of the Revolution (top), while the old generals plot how to hold on to power in the provisional parliament (bottom)

national obsession. My young host, Laci, had just spent a month eating steak and chips after getting hold of some meat destined for export to France. I arrived as he was distributing two catering size packs of cheese to his family as precious gifts.

What you can't get in the shops, you can buy on the black market—if you have the money. One group who have profited from the fall of the old regime are the money changers and black marketeers who now operate openly. Speculation, as it is known locally, goes on everywhere: on the streets, in the hotels and restaurants, at the university, in the factories. Bribery and corruption are rampant, and 'connections' are the key to open all doors.

One of the latest scams is the trade in Bulgarian Marlboros. The 99 per cent of the adult male population who smoke don't do so because of the quality of the cigarettes in Romania. The cheapest and nastiest, which come untipped in a flimsy paper packet

incongruously embossed with the image of a skier, are known as 'Death on Skis'. Not surprisingly, the sharp operators with the Bulgarian Marlboros are doing brisk business. American cigarettes are only available for scarce dollars. But the enterprising street hustlers sell the Bulgarian Marlboros for large amounts of Romanian lei, and exchange the lei for dollars on the black market.

The thriving black market is a sign of the backwardness of the society created by Stalinism. Bucharest is more like a third world shanty town than a capital city which used to be known as the Paris of Eastern Europe. Something of the old grandeur remains in the classic architecture which has survived amid the Stalinbaroque. But the streets are full of beggars, drunks, derelicts, lunatics, thieves, hustlers and black marketeers.

On every corner there is a little old man touting lottery tickets, a one-legged beggar sprawled on the pavement, Gypsies selling Dandy



chewing gum and plastic bags bearing the Marlboro, Winston or Camel logos which are flaunted as status symbols. In the lobby, bars and restaurants of the plush Hotel Intercontinental, foreign journalists and businessmen rub shoulders with racketeers and petty crooks. The bar staff and waiters pimp for the dollar prostitutes on the twenty-sixth floor.

'*Jos communismism*' ('Down with communism') say the slogans on the walls and shopfronts all over the city. The Stalinists who ruled Romania from the forties laid claim to the communist tradition of Marx, Lenin and the Russian Revolution. But they presided over a system which negated everything that communism stands for. A police state which protects the privileges of a few but cannot provide its population with food, clothing or medical treatment, and which works people to death, destroys the environment and rules through terror, has nothing to do with Marxism.

After 40-odd years of being told that they were living in a socialist paradise, however, it is hardly surprising that Romanians want nothing more to do with communism. The crimes of Stalinism have made the peoples of Eastern Europe hate anything associated with the Soviet system. In Romania, that hatred exploded in a bloody popular revolt last December.

The overthrow of the Ceausescu dictatorship inspired people with hope that they could build a new and better Romania. Most Romanians embraced the leaders of the National Salvation Front as liberators from an era of tyranny and looked to the new provisional government to lead them into a brighter future. Today, the 'revolution' is still the point of reference for all political discussion in Romania, only now there is more disquiet about what it achieved. The cynicism which infects especially the youth and students who were at the forefront of the December revolt points to the limited character of the changes which have taken place.

'*Jos Iliescu*' was the slogan of the moment among students while I was in Bucharest, on demonstrations against president Iliescu (a former Ceausescu minister) and the clique of old Stalinists who installed themselves in power at the height of the uprising. 'Iliescu is another Ceausescu' shouted protesters, accusing the Front of 'hijacking the revolution'.

Immediately after the overthrow of Ceausescu, *Living Marxism* went against the grain when it challenged the view that there had been a revolution in Romania. An editorial in the February issue argued that, despite the heroism of ordinary Romanians, the changes in the way the country was run were more like a bureaucratic purge of the ruling elite than a popular

Copsa Mica

Black hole

The journey to Copsa Mica is like a descent into another age. Dantesque is the only word to describe this small town in Transylvania, known throughout Romania as 'the black city'. A plague of black dust has settled over the town and its 6000 inhabitants. Copsa Mica is in a valley: the hills are black as far as the eye can see; the stunted trees look like they've survived a fire; the sheep, the horses and dogs are all coated in fine black powder; even the little pig I saw being castrated was pitch black; the children who came begging for sweets looked like chimney sweeps and their parents could have been miners. For 40km around the town, the blighted landscape is drenched in blackness. 'Nature has become a beggar', said one local, 'begging for life'.

The cause of the blackness is the Carbosin factory, which belched out 30 000 tons of carbon powder from its chimneys in 1989. Inside, the factory is like a ruin, its 2000 workers toiling in nineteenth-century conditions to produce their quota of carbon black. The floors are throbbing, the ancient, cracked boilers seem set to explode, sulphuric acid drips from the pipes overhead and the air is thick with sulphuric, formic and oxalic acid. A worker grabbed my pen, scrawled $H_2SO_4 - H_2C_2O_4$ on my notepad, and pointed to the pool of acid I was about to step into.

The graffiti on the walls said '1990 Libertate'. But my guides said Copsa Mica was still awaiting liberation. 'This place is like Cambodia', said Gligor, as I prayed that his lighted cigarette would not cause an explosion.



Maria Boarici works in the ruins of the Carbosin factory

The Carbosin factory is an industrial nightmare, but the black dust is not the worst problem in Copsa Mica. Opposite the blacking factory stands the IMMN lead and zinc smelting plant, which has been slowly killing its workforce since it opened in 1959. Much of the lead produced here lines the walls of Ceausescu's monstrous palace in Bucharest, intended to provide the dictator with protection from a nuclear war or an explosion at the country's one nuclear plant at Cernavoda. It was fitting that he died of a more dramatic form of lead poisoning.

Some 4000 work in horrific conditions. I quickly lost my sense of smell and didn't get it back for weeks. In a big shed where workers were distilling sulphur the dust was so thick that you couldn't see two yards ahead. It was hard to believe that anybody could work here for six hours at a stretch. The masks the workers wore looked like relics from the First World War. One took his to pieces to reveal a filter that was about as much use as a pair of plastic sunglasses in tropical sunshine.

On to the hellish furnaces, where workers were carrying lead sludge to the ovens in their bare hands and the heat and fumes made it almost impossible to breathe. Johann Schnell, a Saxon like a lot of the other

revolution. The central structures of Ceausescu's state machine had been left intact, under the control of old Stalinists.

We concluded that the challenge to the old order had not been forceful enough or gone nearly far enough. At the time, this interpretation of events was regarded as heretical. From February, as more Romanians questioned the Front's authority, Western commentators too began to cast doubts on the substance of the 'revolution'.

One of the first things that angered people was the trial and execution of the Ceausescus. Romanians were delighted to see the hated pair put to death. However, many regret the fact that they were not given a proper trial; not because of any liberal notions about fair play, but because they wanted the crimes of the past 40 years fully investigated. 'We wanted it to be like Nuremberg', explained Christian. 'Everybody wanted it to last a long time, so the whole truth would come out. Now we don't know any more than we did before. Certain people could not risk a real trial because they have got too much to hide.'

Securitate survives

Many people were also critical of the government's attitude towards the Securitate. Leading figures in the secret police were allowed to escape abroad; the Austrian government even felt obliged to issue a decree closing the border to any more Securitate men. Few Securitate agents have been arrested and brought to trial. Those who have appeared in court have been charged only with offences relating to the events of December.

Officially, the Securitate has been abolished. But everybody knows that it is still operating. 'The Securitate still exists. I recognise their faces on the streets', insisted Tania Siperco of the *Asociatia 21 Decembrie*, an organisation set up to publicise the truth about those who died at the hands of the army and security police in December. 'They are reorganising, moving their players about like in a game of chess.' Tania Siperco has good reason to fear the Securitate: 'Three weeks ago I bumped into the man who was beating me on 21 December. He was dressed in a distinctive suit, like the ones they used to wear on parades in honour of Ceausescu. I looked at him and he looked at me. He recognised my face because when he was hitting me that day, he kept pulling my hair and telling me to look him in the eye. The Securitate took my ID: they know my name and address.'

The Front seized the opportunity provided by the recent explosion of ethnic conflict between Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania to extend the activities of the secret police. In the

wake of the ethnic violence in Tirgu Mures (see last month's *Living Marxism*) the government announced the creation of a new secret police service to deal with further unrest. This decree was a rubber stamp for the continued operation of the Securitate.

The Front also caused bad feeling through its flagrant manipulation of the election campaign. After first declaring that it would not contest the elections, the Front suddenly changed its position, brought forward the poll to 20 May, gave other political parties just five days to register, monopolised television coverage of the election campaign, and obstructed opposition attempts to organise in the towns and villages outside Bucharest.

'They don't think'

In the months leading up to the elections, Romanian politics became an increasingly polarised, unstable and unpredictable affair. Students and the intelligentsia came out forcefully against the Front; outside of Bucharest, the biggest demonstrations were in the university towns of Timisoara, Cluj and Iasi. Middle class intellectuals had come to hate the Front because its monopoly on political power excluded them from the influence now enjoyed by the intelligentsia elsewhere in Eastern Europe. But these intellectuals reserved their most bitter hatred for the working class, whom they blamed for propping up the Front.

'They deserve another 40 years of dictatorship for supporting the Front', said Vladimir Lungu, sitting in the restaurant of the Romanian Writers Union, 'That's the only way they'll learn'. Liana, a university student, was equally contemptuous of the working class: 'Iliescu gave them a bit of food and some electricity. They don't think. They need a father figure.' If the intellectuals had left the cafés and gone to speak to some workers, however, they would have found that things were not so straightforward.

Certainly, many of the more downtrodden workers expressed the blind belief that, despite the queues and hardship, 'Iliescu has made everything good for the people'. This sentiment also seemed prevalent outside Bucharest, in rural areas where people had not even heard of the opposition parties. It was strong enough to lead many foreign correspondents to predict that the Front could win a comfortable majority in the May elections.

But other workers were bitter about the Front. 'The workers here want a five-day week, but nothing is changing for us, nobody heeds our voices', said 28-year old Nicolae, who has a hard, hot job in a factory on the outskirts of Bucharest: 'The Front are coward communists, pretending they are

something else. We're free now to talk, but I wonder for how long.'

The miners were prominent on the pro-Front demonstrations in Bucharest in February. But by late March, they were still waiting for improvements in hours, pay and conditions promised by the government and had turned against the Front. Strikes by miners, postmen, power workers, dockers and others all pointed to disenchantment with the government of Ion Iliescu.

As election day approached, the ferment increased, the government became more paranoid, and rumours spread that the polls would be cancelled. The National Peasant Party quit the interim parliament, complaining that the Front had 'introduced terror into the elections'. Iliescu denounced opposition demonstrators as vagabonds, thugs and criminals, slipping back into the Stalinesque which was the stock-in-trade of Ceausescu. 'The elections will be like a communist election', said Liana. 'The Front is controlling everything just as they did under Ceausescu.'

Whatever the results, one thing seemed certain: all of the 80-odd parties contesting the elections were a reactionary hangover from Romania's past. The Front belongs in the Ceausescu era; the most prominent opposition groups date from the pre-Stalinist days of monarchism, fascism

RIGHT: Workers still await improvements in pay and conditions (top); shoppers buy rare toilet rolls in bulk on the booming black market (bottom)





Copsa Mica's skyline on a 'clear' day

workers in Copsa Mica, had worked in the factory for 31 years and it showed; he was 54 going on 74. '*Grosse schmutzland hier*', he muttered as we came choking out of the furnaces. 'The whole place should be pulled down.'

Most workers are cynical about the chances of that happening. There had been a few changes since December, but these were cosmetic. The Carbosin factory has been allowed to work at 50 per cent capacity and the lead and zinc works at 25 per cent. Shifts have been cut to six hours, five instead of six days a week and workers have been given 10-20 per cent above the average wage. The people get a little more fresh fruit and milk.

But none of this can compensate for the slow asphyxiation of life in Copsa Mica. Dr Alexandru Balin has been treating the casualties of industrial pollution since 1977. He is bitter: 'Thanks to media coverage of Carbosin, Copsa Mica has come to the attention of the world. But the real problem is the IMMN factory. You can't see or smell lead, but it is a bigger killer than carbon.' The amount of lead in the air in Copsa Mica is 3000 times the acceptable level. Sooner or later, every worker spends the standard 15 days in a sanatorium recovering from lead or zinc poisoning.

Balin showed me a table measuring lead concentrations in urine: 0-6mg is normal, 6-20mg is high, 20-30mg is excessive and anything above 30mg is considered dangerous: 60 per cent of workers at the factory are suffering from excessive and dangerous levels of lead poisoning. One worker had 117mg of lead in his urine. Since no Western country has ever had to confront lead poisoning on this scale, Balin expects little help from the international medical community.

Many workers suffer from anaemia and stomach cramps. Others have problems with their nervous systems; Balin has five or six cases of paralysis of the right forearm every year. Lead in the bones gives workers inflammation of the joints and is responsible for causing encephalitis or inflammation of the brain. This affliction is made worse by the high levels of alcohol consumption among desperate workers in Copsa Mica.

Doctors at the local clinic speak of higher than average levels of cancer, skin disease, respiratory problems, hypertension, premature births and infant mortality. In 1981, a report on the effects of industrial pollution on children found that 99 per cent of children suffered from high concentrations of lead in Copsa Mica, 66 per cent in Medias, a big town 11km down the road, and 10 per cent in places as far away as 30km. The average life expectancy in Copsa Mica is said to be 10 years below the national average. Even the horses have to be put down after two years.

The attitude of local people is one of resignation. 'These people have suffered so much they don't even know that they've suffered', said a local teacher, Maria. Under Ceausescu, the state decided where people lived and worked. Nobody had any choice if they were put to work in Copsa Mica. After a few years, they became accustomed to the horror of their lives: 'The black powder and the poison is so normal for people here', said one worker who stopped to speak to me in the town. 'After a while, you cannot see anything beyond the blackness.' Six months on from the fall of Ceausescu, the tragedy is that people still cannot see beyond the blackness.



and instability. The National Liberal Party was the most credible of the three pre-Stalinist parties, but only because of the relative youth of its leader. The National Peasant Party belongs back at the beginning of the century and so do its ageing leaders. Given the drubbing experienced by its sister organisations in elections elsewhere in Eastern Europe, it might have been better if the Social Democratic Party had never attempted a comeback.

Judging by the man from the monarchist Liberal Party (Of Liberty) who cornered me in the parliament and begged to be put in touch with monarchist parties in England, the other 80-odd parties have even less going for them. I took his address and made a note to send him the photograph of Ceausescu meeting the Queen which appeared in February's *Living Marxism*.

Given the uninspiring character of the opposition, few people saw the elections providing a way out of the impasse. In this unstable political environment, a torrent of chauvinism has been unleashed against ethnic Hungarians. Every politician is appealing to nationalist sentiment by demanding the return of the Romanian *irridenta* of Bessarabia and Bukovina. Anti-Semitism is respectable once

again. Countless people told me it was a disgrace that the prime minister of Romania was a Jew. Abuse of Gypsies, Poles, Arabs and any other ethnic minority or foreigner you care to mention is shameless. And then there is the clamour for the restoration of the monarchy and the return of King Michael.

Romania's unstable political past and present bode ill for the future. In the power vacuum that exists, there is a danger of a return to the ugly political patterns of the capitalist past.

Between the wars the backwardness of Romanian capitalism created a sordid system of corrupt party politics and meddling by the monarchy. Under the impact of economic recession and social turmoil, fascist movements made rapid headway in Romania, winning a quarter of the vote in 1937. King Carol II responded by abrogating the constitution and imposing a royal dictatorship. But faced with political violence and the threat of foreign invasion, Romania threw in its lot with the Nazis.

For most of the Second World War, Romania fought on the Axis side. But, as the Soviet armies arrived in August 1944, King Michael joined forces with the new invaders. The old political parties were so discredited that people were pleased to see them pushed aside.

In December 1947, King Michael abdicated at pistol point. Romania passed into the hands of the Stalinists. Three decades of economic and political ruin under capitalism had prepared the ground for Stalinism. Today, four more decades of economic and political ruin have prepared the way for the return of all the ugliness that disfigured the past.

After such a past, what future is there for the people of Romania? One thing is for sure: however the elections turn out, the National Salvation Front and the equally conservative parties opposing it will not last long. The question is: what comes next? King Michael? A ragbag coalition of reactionary fragments presiding over a collapsing economy, rampant chauvinism, ethnic strife and social disintegration?

The lesson of the early twentieth century is that capitalism has nothing to offer a backward nation such as Romania. And if it had nothing to offer then, why should it have more to offer now as the world economy moves closer towards another recession? The Romanian people are still waiting for the revolution that could deliver them from the long nightmare of the twentieth century.

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Save us from Mother Teresa

Quite recently I have had to spend some time visiting a friend stranded in hospital in south London. There I sit, eating his fruit, and gossiping about his fellow inmates. What have they got? How long have they got? Where can I get a cup of tea? Down the dirty, lumpy corridor that connects a collection of woebegone prefabs and sheds. Turn right through flapping plastic doors into a gothic revival vestibule. Here there are two square formica tables, six slatted-metal chairs and a counter with a tea urn. The two old men in attendance are friends of the hospital, it says so on their plastic badges. They are volunteers, providing cups of tea to patients and visitors alike. The shop selling chocolate and cigarettes, and the tea stall at the front of the hospital, are also staffed by the friends of the hospital. I notice that the easi-clean prints of sunsets and other pleasing scenes screwed securely to the walls have been donated by the friends of the hospital. So too has the portakabin that serves the patients as a hairdressing salon.

Without the charitable impulse this hospital would clearly be even less adequate and even more dismal. This started me thinking about wearing a red nose, donating money to a telethon or perhaps running a sponsored marathon. It may not be 'politically sound', but it does have the virtue of being eminently practical. *Real* people get *real* help they wouldn't otherwise get. You can't knock that, now can you? Look at the Variety Club of Great Britain. Look at Jimmy Saville. Look at Ian Botham's long walks. You don't have to like them to admit they do do good things. Yes, well...I suppose so.

If you don't like the showbiz glitz or the sporty personalities there's always Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Mother Teresa has just retired. Soon she'll be dead, and then the prayers and appeals for canonisation will flood the papal secretariat. A committee chaired by a cardinal will be convened and, within an unusually short time (maybe 20 years), Mother Teresa of Calcutta will be declared a saint. She will become the patron saint of all those who wish to help those less fortunate than oneself. Her mission to the 'poorest of the poor' will inspire all charitable endeavour.

And what an inspiring story it is! After being a nun and a teacher for 18 years, Sister Mary Teresa of the Christ Jesus was suddenly contacted by God. On 10 September 1946, while she was on the Darjeeling train, God urged her to go into the slums of Calcutta to help the poorest of the poor. Two years later, after getting the permission of Pius XII, she entered the streets of the Motijhil slum in sandals and a sari with five rupees that the

Archbishop of Calcutta had given her. Soon known as 'Mother Teresa' and widely publicised by the journalist, Malcolm Muggeridge, Sister Mary Teresa became a household name; a by-word for self sacrifice and charitable works.

What really caught the public imagination more than anything else was the well-scrubbed shed known as Nirmal Hriday. Nirmal Hriday is the place where Mother Teresa's nuns bring destitute people whom they find dying in the alleys and middens of Calcutta. Because it is by washing away the filth and dressing the beggars' sores that the nuns can minister to the wounds and suffering of Christ, the dying paupers are privileged to be able to play a vital role in the Roman Catholic drama. The emaciated, ulcerated, stinking and frequently incontinent bundles of rags neatly arranged on stretcher beds provide the nuns with ample opportunities for humility and sacrifice. Never once have they been tempted to participate in the struggle to bring this nauseating suffering to an end. Instead, the nuns of the Missionaries of Charity thrive among the city's 40 000 lepers, spiritually feeding off the hundreds of thousands of utterly destitute men, women and children.

Of course the charitable ideal has a more political aspect. 'It was a horrifying sight', said Mother Teresa on her arrival in India in 1928, 'if our people could only see all this, they would stop grumbling about their own misfortunes and offer up thanks to God for blessing them with such abundance'. What might be called the Pollyanna Factor is indeed very important. Helping those who are less fortunate than oneself enables everyone to look on the bright side. Even the living corpses at Calcutta's house for dying can reassure themselves with the thought that at least their cadavers will not be thrown in the Hoogly river to be chewed over by snuffing dogs and pecked at by scrawny birds. Somebody is always worse off than oneself! It is a useful thought for dampening the spirits of those who might be tempted to whinge, protest, or even hit back.

No doubt this is why during the republican hunger-strikes of 1981 Mother Teresa attempted to persuade those fighting British imperialism in Ireland to give up their struggle. People should accept their lot in life; charity will alleviate their suffering. This is the gospel according to the Catholic hierarchy. Consequently, enormous numbers of people at risk from HIV infection throughout the world must not protect themselves from Aids during intercourse because the Pope says condoms are sinful. A sexual act must have the

potential of making a women pregnant or it should not take place. Because of this millions of women must have abortions. And, because the Catholic Church opposes abortion, millions of women must risk death and injury undergoing DIY or amateur abortions.

It would be wrong to imagine that Mother Teresa herself is motivated by anything other than a desire for sacrifice. What is repellent about her and her nuns is their sincerity. They do live meagre lives. They do work hard in appalling conditions. By carrying their sacrificial burden of prayer they promote obedience to God, obedience to popes and cardinals, obedience to police chiefs, generals and employers. As Malcolm Muggeridge said of Mother Teresa, 'Ecclesiastical authority is something that she accepts in the same unquestioning way that peasants accept the weather, or sailors storms at sea'. It is in this imperturbable resignation in the face of famine, disease and warfare that Mother Teresa reveals her truly medieval spirit. Charity rightfully belongs to an age when there were no effective remedies against failing harvests and outbreaks of plague. Charity made sense when poverty was unavoidable.

But today the charitable impulse always has the political function of persuading people that we really are doing all that can realistically be done to combat misery. Charity sustains the *Blue Peter* philosophy of life where the nuns of the Missionaries of Charity use old matchboxes to issue pills to the destitute, and store clean boiled water in old bottles that have been collected by the more prosperous citizens of Calcutta. Invariably charity involves an acceptance, if not a defence, of the causes of shortages, misery and poverty.

The charitable seem to think that we'll all feel very much better if we simply accept prevailing conditions. If we collect enough silver paper, build the coin tower on the bar high enough, run as far and as fast as possible, or hang glide over the crater of a lively volcano, we will enhance our sense of community involvement as well as helping the needy. Mother Teresa is there to remind us all that sacrifice is a good idea too, but for most of the time charity can assume the guise of a peculiarly heartening species of family entertainment. The charitable impulse makes us beg for what can and should be ours. It is a thoroughly repulsive feeling. It is a feeling that enables us to accept the unacceptable and, to tolerate the intolerable. Make no mistake about it, charity will pluck your heart strings, blunt your critical faculties, and acclimatise you to the idea that you should thank God, or at least your lucky stars, that you are not one of those who is less fortunate than oneself.



'Somebody is always worse off than oneself' is a useful thought for dampening the spirits of those tempted to whinge, protest or even hit back

imperialism

Are Japan and Germany about to challenge America—and each other—for world leadership? Or can they all cooperate in developing a new global capitalist culture? As the post-war order ends, *Living Marxism* examines what's new and what's next.

Here, Frank Furedi assesses the prevailing balance of world power between the major players. In the pages that follow, we take a critical look at the 'globalist' theory that capitalism is now the same the whole world over, and ask what future for Nato after the Cold War



Toward World



Is a new old order

Two years, or even a year, ago it was difficult to see that the post-war order had come to an end. Certainly there were important changes taking place but the post-war balance of power seemed intact. Nato was very much a going concern, the USA despite its massive debt still projected the image of a dominant global power, Europe and Germany were divided. During the spring of 1989, the Nato powers could still have a major row about the need to modernise tactical nuclear weapons. It was as if nothing much had changed, and that one way or another the conflict between Nato and the Warsaw Pact would continue to shape world politics.

The row over the modernisation of tactical nuclear weapons now seems likely to be the last debate of its kind. It was a debate which supposed the durability of the institutions of the post-war world order, and the primacy of East-West conflict. In reality the days of Pax Americana and the artificial division of the world into two ideological camps had already come to an end. The collapse of Stalinism in East Europe has acted as a catalyst, speeding up the disintegration of the old world order. The demise of Stalinism at once called into question the division of Europe and Germany and hence the relevance of Nato. It also exposed the inability of the USA to continue to dominate international affairs.

By the summer of 1989 even the most conservative commentators could no longer ignore the shift in global influence away from the two so-called superpowers. By October, the *Economist* was writing of the 'increasingly fair bet that Germany is set to win in peace the European supremacy that has twice eluded it in war' (14 October 1989). Today this point appears self-evident to commentators around the world. As Lawrence Freedman has noted, 'few now bother to make the point that the vanquished of the Second World War have become the victors of the post-war peace, for this has become one of the great clichés of contemporary international affairs' (*Independent*, 19 April 1990).

The decline of American power and the ascendancy of Germany and Japan is the central theme of most of the recent literature on international relations. These trends are well documented and need not be discussed here. The main question that is worth probing is whether these developments have any long-term consequences for the existing balance of power.

imperialism

Most international affairs experts now accept that there will be major changes to the way in which diplomatic relations are conducted. The bottom-line consensus is that there is now an irreversible shift from a *bipolar* to a multipolar world. However there is little discussion of the consequences of this shift for the existing relations between the Western powers. The obvious point that the present shift in the balance of power is likely to benefit some and penalise others is barely considered in the public discussion. Instead most writers are content to restrict their conclusions to the platitudinous line that there will have to be a multilateral sharing of power.

Occasionally somebody drops a hint that the reorganisation of the world order may lead to the escalation of conflict among the main industrial powers and the demise of the Western Alliance. An astute analysis of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the *Washington Quarterly* emphasises the differentiated effect of this process on the Western powers:

'If Moscow's empire is disintegrating is this a net advantage for the West? It is if one assumes that the West is a group of states uniform in outlook and objectives....Such uniformity is absent, of course, for as a practical matter some states stand to gain more than others from the probable decline of the Soviet imperium. As Soviet hegemony dissipates, so does the rationale for thinking of the West as a unified political actor.' (AC Goldberg, 'Soviet imperial decline and the emerging balance of power', *Washington Quarterly*, Winter 1989/90, p161)

This understanding, that the West cannot sustain the façade of unity, must constitute the point of departure for any balanced assessment of contemporary international affairs. In other words, the more visible disintegration of the Stalinist bloc should not be allowed to obscure the parallel process influencing the Western Alliance. As Goldberg suggests, in 'a disintegrative process that superficially at least mirrors what is happening in the East, the original Western Alliance structure is unravelling' ('Soviet imperial decline and the emerging balance of power', p162).

The unravelling of the Western Alliance should not be taken to mean merely its fragmentation into its constituent parts. Above all the demise of Nato signifies a major setback for the main beneficiary of the alliance, the United States. The question of America's decline is now

a major subject of discussion. However, this decline is seldom considered from the broader perspective of a massive shift in the international balance of power.

American decline is generally treated as the result of specific domestic policies and trends, or in a narrow international context of comparing it to the more dynamic powers of Japan and Germany. This is acceptable so far as it goes. However, the subject needs to be analysed not merely as an American event but as part of the general erosion of the international framework within which US hegemony was based. America's position as hegemonic global power means that every significant change in the existing world order has a disproportionately greater impact on the standing of the USA than on any other nation.

It is still not considered good manners to point out the far-reaching consequences of the transformation of the post-war order. Jeffrey Garten's article in a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs* goes very much against the grain in so far as it draws attention to some unpleasant home truths for Washington. Although he believes that it is not too late for America to contain its rivals, Garten warns against complacency on this score:

'In the end, however, it would be a major mistake to dismiss the pressure that Tokyo and Bonn could exert on the United States—in concert. The notion of a planned "gang-up" may be forfeited for political reasons, historical and current, but the pursuit of similar interests is a good possibility. This scenario would include resistance in Japan and Germany to all manner of American pressure to reduce their financial surpluses, to dismantle their "structural" obstacles to increased consumer demands for imports, or to follow America's lead in global economic institutions and in various regimes of the world.' (Winter 1989/90, p98)

The thrust of Garten's argument ought not to be particularly controversial. Yet there is a studied silence on the emerging conflict of interests between the United States, Japan and Germany. If anything, it is quite common to *minimise* the scope of America's decline and to dismiss the possibility of any serious challenge to Washington's international role.

In some cases a mixture of naivety and optimism is sufficient to lead to the conclusion that, so far as America is concerned, it is business as usual. In his recently published

book, former US defence secretary Robert McNamara seeks to provide some 'new thinking' to illuminate future American foreign policy. McNamara accepts that 'in the twenty-first century the relative power of the United States will be less', but he argues that 'no nation will have greater power'. Accordingly, America will retain its pre-eminence and, in addition, without the need to sustain a vast defence sector, it can even become more affluent (*Out of the Cold*, pp192-3).

While most observers do not go as far as McNamara in talking up the prospects for the USA in the next century, there is a widely shared acceptance of his thesis that America's decline need mean no more than a modification of the existing balance of power. The argument advanced to promote this thesis is that, whatever the problems faced by the USA, no single power is strong enough to emerge as a challenger.

Joseph Nye suggests that the position of the United States at the end of the twentieth century is 'totally different from that of Britain at the century's beginning. The problem for American power today is not new challengers for hegemony' ('The misleading metaphor of decline', *The Atlantic*, March 1990). Jack Beatty reiterates the point that the USA 'faces no external threat from a rising "challenger state"' ('A post-cold war budget', *The Atlantic*, February 1990). If McNamara, Nye and Beatty are right then there need be no significant shift in the world balance of power. There would be no serious challenge to American hegemony and, by implication, conflict in the international sphere would be restricted to matters of secondary importance. In all essentials the post-war world order would continue into the indefinite future.

A quick detour

Let's examine this problem of transition to a new balance of power through a quick detour into history.

Comparisons with past events are always fraught with danger, so the experience of the transition from British to American hegemony must be used with great care when discussing international affairs today. With this proviso, it is nonetheless worth noting that Britain's decline was not conditional on the existence of one 'challenger state'. At the beginning of the century there was no obvious challenger to British power. Britain was most directly concerned about the growth of Germany's industrial muscle. This reaction was understandable in light of Britain's traditional preoccupation with

managing the European balance of power. But Britain was also worried about the United States and was keeping a careful eye on Japan.

One of the arguments put forward to suggest that the present balance of power can remain intact is the high level of economic interdependence between the main Western nations. It is argued that interdependence at the economic level will tend to minimise political/diplomatic tensions, and ultimately prevent military conflict. The high level of interdependence between America and Japan is the foremost example used to illustrate this point.

not *the* issue. The real issue is that of conflict and the divergent movement and interests of the major capitalist powers. Indeed it is precisely the high level of the internationalisation of economic life which creates the potential for tension and conflict. The drama of high diplomacy is the exception—more mundane concerns about currency fluctuations, capital flows, levels of interest rates, trade and finance are what international relations is mainly about.

International relations and competition on the world market require rules to which the main actors adhere. The world market

that all the main actors play by the rules. From history it is clear that when no single power can play this role, conflicts become more intense and transform into imperialist rivalries. So the issue is not whether there is a challenger state looming on the horizon, but the need for a dominant power to regulate international relations, and the question of whether the United States can continue to play this hegemonic role.

The very fact that the United States is experiencing a cumulative process of decline, and faces the embarrassment of being the largest debtor nation on Earth, calls into question its ability to enforce the conditions necessary for the accumulation of capital worldwide. Thus, although America remains the most powerful military power, it was Japan that stepped in and provided the liquidity necessary to lubricate the world markets in the aftermath of the stock market crashes of 1987 and 1989.

Power plays

The coincidence of a declining hegemonic power and the absence of a challenger state is a symptom of an unstable balance of power. It indicates not so much that the old order has survived the test of time as that there is no obvious mechanism for ensuring the establishment of an international framework appropriate for new circumstances. In a sense, it shows that the regulatory mechanisms of international affairs are lagging behind the realities of power relations.

There is no simple way to calculate the power of the main players in the international arena. Comparing statistics such as national GDPs can help to illustrate trends but does not resolve the problem. Power, by its very nature, is part of a relationship and finds an expression only through the interaction of one nation with another. So far as the changing world order is concerned, the ability to exercise power depends on a range of determinants. It is based on external factors such as the ability to construct a sphere of influence, and domestic ones such as internal stability and class peace. Until the existing relations become more crystallised it is only possible to point to the main tendencies at play: the discussion of the unfolding balance of power must have a provisional status.

For the time being, the United States remains the only true global power. And until it is directly confronted it will be *the* hegemonic power. However, its hegemony is now subject to serious constraints. For example, it can play only a secondary role in world banking and

The very fact that the USA faces the embarrassment of being the largest debtor on Earth calls into question its ability to enforce the conditions necessary for capitalism worldwide

It can also be argued, however, that there is no qualitative difference between the interdependence of America and Japan today and that of Britain and Germany at the turn of the century. According to one account, by the early twentieth century Britain 'imported over 80 per cent of its synthetic dyestuffs from Germany. It was similarly dependent on Germany for chemicals, optical glass and more sophisticated electrical goods' (DH Aldcroft (ed), *The Development of British Industry and Foreign Competition 1875-1919*, 1968, p13). Interdependence then and now was not an alternative to conflict, but a form of it. There appears to be no factor influencing the international balance of power at work today which did not operate at the beginning of the century.

The lesson to be drawn from history is that whether or not there is an obvious challenger to the USA is

intensifies the chaos and unpredictability of economic life and competition breeds uncertainty and instability. If unchecked this process can lead to the intensification of rivalries and even to the breakdown of international economic life—in effect, economic warfare. Rules and regulations help minimise the uncertainty that can have such devastating consequences. However, such rules do not arise spontaneously, nor are they the product of an agreement among roughly equal partners. In practice, uncertainty is overcome through the domination of economic life by one imperialist power. This point, which is a central element of the Marxist theory of imperialism, is also assumed by other approaches to the study of international affairs. For example, Charles Kinelberg in his book, *The World in Depression*, argues the need for a hegemonic power.

A hegemonic power acts as the guarantor of capitalism worldwide. It is hegemonic in the sense that it can project its power globally and ensure

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finance. Japan is more important as the major creditor nation. On balance, the appropriate conclusion is that the United States can no longer exercise hegemony in substance. In particular, its role as the global guarantor of capitalist relations is now called into question. It is for this reason that Washington suffers the classic dilemma of a declining hegemonic power. Should it stay global or should it retrench and reconstruct its domestic base? This question, which exercised the minds of the British ruling class during the first half of this century, is in fact an irrational one. There is no precedent for a major capitalist power withdrawing from its world role and becoming more national than previously. Taking this step backwards necessarily means speeding up the process of decline.

The rational question which faces policy makers in Washington is how to find an ally or allies which can help in the exercise of American hegemony. The question implies another major dilemma. To carry on in the old way means accepting the inevitability of a slow erosion of power. But if America were to develop a special relationship with an ally, say Germany, to preserve its hegemony, Washington risks closing its options. A bilateral relationship could slow down the process of decline, but by its very nature it would undercut any pretension to playing a globalist role.

Local markets

The decline of the United States and its transformation into a conservative status quo power is the most significant trend of recent years. But what about the rest of the equation? It is self-evident that the disintegration of the Stalinist world, which seems to provide all the public drama in international affairs, has contributed to the reshaping of the world order. However, it can be argued that the main impact of this event is not restricted to the confines of the Warsaw Pact; it has led to the displacement of the existing international equilibrium. It appears that the main effect of the breakdown of Stalinism is to accelerate the regionalisation of world market relations.

The fashionable theories of globalisation and of economic interdependence (discussed in detail elsewhere in this issue of *Living Marxism*) are singularly irrelevant to the present world order. Certainly, these theories must involve a view of the globe where the third world does not exist. The regionalisation of world market relations assumes its most striking expression in the withdrawal of the Western powers

from the third world. During the eighties capital was redirected away from the third world; as a consequence this part of the globe is less integrated into the international division of labour than it was in the twenties.

The regionalisation of world market relations is also striking in the growing divergence in the trajectory of the main actors. There is a divergent trend between Japan, the capital exporter, and West Germany, the exporter of goods. Japan is primarily oriented towards the American market while Germany is preoccupied with Europe. The differential reaction by these two powers to the fall of the yen and of share prices on the Tokyo stock market in April 1990 is symptomatic of an underlying trend of divergence.

In the race between Germany and Japan, it is also clear that national power will be enhanced by the growth of spheres of influence. The trend is clearly towards a *German Europe* and a *Japanese Asia*. Whether the potential for this development is realised cannot be determined in advance. But regardless of its success or failure, the growth of economic blocs appears to be a crucial development in recasting the international balance of power.

Stalin's legacy

The necessarily provisional character of any calculation of the balance of power is highlighted by the growing evidence that dying Stalinism leaves behind it a potential power vacuum. This vacuum adds to the unpredictability of the situation. For example, China has played a role in limiting Japanese power; similarly the Soviet Union has contributed to the containment of Germany. The future role of these two powers remains provisional. Ironically, at the moment they share a common concern with the United States in retaining the status quo. Normally, such a shared interest would lead to the convergence of those three powers. The legacy of the Cold War and past conflicts will probably make the consummation of this relationship difficult, but not impossible. It will be interesting to see how far these powers which previously stood on opposite sides of the Cold War will be able to go in their collaboration.

The dominant power of the future will be the one which can most efficiently assemble a bloc under its wing as a prelude to establishing its hegemony. In this sense, the most successful player in the regionalisation process is the one worth watching. At the moment Germany appears to have the edge here. Although Japan possesses a

more powerful economy than Germany, it faces major obstacles to the consolidation of a sphere of influence. Japan faces hostility in many parts of Asia and its natural collaborator, China, is not likely to accept the status of a junior partner. In contrast, Germany already dominates most of Europe. In the East (with the exception of Poland) the strength of anti-Stalinism has drowned the old anti-German sentiment. Germany faces no serious obstacles to dominating Eastern Europe and it is in a good position to consolidate its influence over West Europe.

New empires ahead

For now, it is advisable to remember that the present process of regionalisation operates in the context of an extraordinarily high level of international cooperation. This cooperation between Western powers and Japan, which is the main achievement of Pax Americana, is still the decisive factor in the balance of power equation. So long as it continues, change will be only minimal—a matter of quantity, not quality. No doubt at the level of subjectivity all the main actors would like to continue this arrangement.

It seems to us, however, that it is this arrangement rather than American hegemony which acts as the main stabilising element in world affairs. Elementary logic suggests that without the hegemonic support which inspired it, international cooperation must break down. The main developments under discussion—the decline of the Stalinist world, the regionalisation of the world economy—directly call into question the existing forms of international cooperation. The one that publicly breaks ranks will be the first to claim the title of challenger state. As to the outcome of the challenge, who knows? What seems clear, however, is that the final decade of this century will be marked by the reinforcement of the trend towards the regionalisation of economic life and the creation of geopolitical blocs. Left to its own devices the system will breed new empires and establish a framework for new forms of imperialist conflict.

From the perspective outlined above, the four decades of the Cold War represent a temporary episode during which the trends towards imperialist conflict evident in the thirties were suspended with the freezing of history. History does not repeat itself—but trends with deep historic roots have an uncomfortable habit of reminding us of unresolved problems.

imperialism

Globalisation?

Helen Simons

takes a critical look
at the most fashionable
interpretation
of changes
in the world economy

It's not the same the whole world over

There is now an assumption that a 'new reality' was created by changes in the world economy in the eighties. From right to left, a consensus holds that we have entered a new era of worldwide capitalist development, often described as 'globalisation'.

For the right, deregulation was the defining feature of the eighties, with the Big Bang in the financial markets making a major impact on the global economy. Right-wing commentators see deregulation as proof that capitalism has overcome the boundaries of nation states, and look forward to a globally integrated economy developing unhindered by the old constraints and crises: 'People may be in chains but in the 1980s capital has become free. It has burst out of the restrictions imposed by national governments and now goes virtually where it will, whatever the consequences on individual economies.' (P Coggan, *The Money Machine: How the City Works*, 1989, p9)

On the left, too, the common view is that capitalism has become a truly global system. For years many left-wing theorists have argued that capitalism was assuming a new transnational character, with the nation state being overshadowed by conglomerate multinationals. As production appeared to shift from the Western nations to the third world in the late seventies, radical commentators suggested that the divisions between the first and third worlds were disappearing. Today, they believe that the freer movement



of capital has accelerated this process so that we now live in a global economy. They point to the fact that in high streets from Birmingham to Bangkok and Seattle to Seoul, the same shops sell the same brands: Benetton and McDonald's, Sony and Filofax.

What is at issue in the discussion of globalisation is the Marxist theory of imperialism. Mainstream economists have always paraded new developments in the world economy as evidence of the dynamic character of the capitalist system. But the adoption of this approach by the left is a new and worrying development.

Marxists have traditionally understood the twentieth century as the imperialist epoch. In *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin characterised this as the era of capitalist stagnation and decay, in which the crisis of profitability becomes so intense that capitalists are forced to modify the laws of

competition by setting up cartels with their competitors. More significantly, the problems facing the major capitalist economies can no longer be overcome on the basis of the home market. Thus they have to seek international solutions to their domestic crises, carving out spheres of influence which can provide outlets for trade and investment.

As a result, capitalist competition takes the form of national rivalry between the imperialist nations in the international arena. Inherent within imperialism are the tendencies towards the oppression of the third world, and towards economic, political and even military conflict between the imperialist powers over the division and redivision of the world.

The left-wing theory of globalisation is a direct challenge to the Marxist view of modern capitalist development. In arguing that capitalism has transcended its national character and can develop

evenly across the world, radical commentators imply that it has assumed a new dynamic character. Gone are the old monopolistic and national barriers that held back capitalist development: empires, spheres of influence and national rivalries are a thing of the past. Potentially at least, capitalism can now expand freely around the globe.

The globalists pinpoint several trends to substantiate their arguments. First, to illustrate their claims for the increasing interdependency of the world capitalist system, they argue that trade and foreign direct investment have increased more rapidly than world output.

The co-op

Second, they contend that cooperation is a defining feature of modern capitalism, citing the growth of joint ventures and inter-company projects. They also argue that cooperation is the key feature of international relations today, especially in the sphere of international finance, where agreements and accords among the leading nations have proliferated since the stock market crashes of 1987 and 1989.

Finally, the exponents of globalism suggest that the uneven character of capitalist development is being overcome. They point to the emergence of newly industrialised countries like South Korea as major players in the world economy as proof that the gap between the Western and other capitalist economies is closing.

The globalisation theorists are right to focus on new developments in capitalism. But many of the global developments which they highlight only look exceptional when they are compared to trends in the post-war period. If we examine the earlier period of imperialism, it is possible to put international developments in the eighties into a more balanced perspective.

Trade increased rapidly in the 1980s. But given that there was a huge increase in the world output of goods over the same period, it is pretty meaningless to compare absolute levels of world trade. It is possible to measure real growth in trade levels only when looking at trade in relation to world output.

Recent increases in trade have to be put in the context of the absolute slump in trade in the inter-war years. As a percentage of GDP, trade only returned to its 1913 levels in 1970. Only since 1987 has trade begun to expand again relative to world output. Thus, while today's trade flows may look impressive compared to the thirties, the expansion is



imperialism

PHOTO: Andy Hall/Select

unimpressive compared to pre-1913 levels. Nor is trade expanding particularly fast; it grew far more rapidly when Britain dominated the world economy in the 1860s.

The same goes for the increase in credit and capital flows between nations in the eighties. The globalists have made much of the massive increase in foreign direct investment. However, dramatic changes in capital interpenetration have taken place only in the USA. Foreign investment in the UK, West Germany and Japan has barely changed as a percentage of total domestic production. In Britain and Germany, for example, 15 per cent of all manufacturing employees work for foreign-owned firms. This percentage has been fairly stable throughout the decade.

In the USA, the globalists can point out that the percentage of manufacturing workers employed by foreign-owned firms more than doubled in the eighties. This looks very impressive; but look closer and you see that 'more than doubled' means it rose from about three per cent to seven per cent. In other words, although foreign investment in the USA has risen sharply, it has done so from a low starting point. Foreign ownership remains far more extensive in Europe, where it shows no signs of a qualitative increase. The fact that capital has been able to penetrate the American economy is more a function of US weakness than a sign of dynamism in the world economy.

Another trend much talked about in the eighties is the explosion of Japanese overseas acquisitions. Yet just five per cent of Japanese production is located outside its national boundaries, compared to 20 per cent of US or UK productive assets. In the pre-1913 period foreign direct investment played a major role for British imperialism. Over 10 per cent of Britain's national income came from assets held abroad. Japan's dependence on foreign assets amounts to less than one per cent of its national income.

Still third

Both mainstream and radical commentators have attached great significance to the meteoric rise of the Asian newly industrialised economies. In 1988 these economies grew by 10 per cent—more than twice the rate of the developed nations. In the past 14 years their share of world exports grew from 3.1 to 9.1 per cent. However, overall third world growth rates have been far less dramatic. The total contribution of third world nations to world output has remained virtually the same for 40 years.

There has not been any significant

narrowing of the gap between the third world and the imperialist nations; but there has been a process of growing differentiation within the third world. In 1950 the Latin American and Asian newly industrialised economies together accounted for 7.8 per cent of world exports, with the Asian countries very much the junior partner. Since then there has been a significant shift of economic growth and influence away from Latin America and towards Asia, reflecting the relative shift in the balance of power between the USA and Japan.

So what has really changed over the past decade?

Developments in the third world contradict the notion of worldwide economic integration. Far from being integrated into a global capitalist system, the third world is being pushed to the margins of the world economy. Between 1981 and 1984, developing countries accounted for nearly 23 per cent of borrowing on international capital markets. By 1988, the marginalisation of the third world was exposed by the fact that these same nations accounted for just five per cent of borrowing. Since then, interest payments on third world debt have led to an absolute drain of capital resources from the third world.

Big borrowers

The expansion of capital movements between the industrialised nations of the OECD mirrors their decline in the third world. The OECD share rose to more than 90 per cent of the total in 1988. The immense sums and speed involved in these transactions certainly suggests that, since the deregulated eighties, capital can move around the world more easily than ever before. But it is wrong to equate what is an essentially technical development with the decline of nationally based capitalism. The truth is that individual nations are seeking to take advantage of recent international developments to counteract tendencies toward national decline.

Breaking down the movement of capital among the OECD countries raises serious doubts about globalisation. Just three—the USA, Japan and Britain—accounted for 24 per cent of total international borrowing between 1981 and 1984, rising to 44 per cent in 1988. In the first quarter of 1989, their share was running at over 50 per cent. And each of the three has had its own, distinctly national, reasons for relying on international markets.

Much of the increased overseas borrowing by Japanese corporations is designed to get around regulations in Japan which restrict their ability to



raise money in the domestic banking sector. This suggests that Japanese industry's dependence on the international capital markets would decline if there were moves to liberalise domestic banking regulations.

On the other hand, the US and British economies are structurally dependent on international sources of capital. For the USA, the need to finance trade deficits of \$100 billion—plus necessitates heavy borrowing from international capital markets. At \$76 billion in 1988, British borrowing was remarkable in that it exceeded even that of the USA. Corporate sector borrowing to sustain the takeover boom at home and abroad accounted for the steep rise.

These factors are significant in showing that optimism over the globalisation of capital flows is misplaced. Capital flows have not only become more international since the 1987 crash; they have also become more *national*, concentrated on a few imperialist powers seeking solutions to their own economic problems. So, instead of balancing



Mozambique: while a cheap Coca-Cola culture spreads around the globe, real inequality between the imperialist nations and the third world increases

out, the contradictions in the world financial system are if anything becoming more extreme, with an increasing fluidity of capital movement worldwide accompanied by a greater concentration of debt within fewer nations. The fact that so much international lending is going to the USA and UK, the two least dynamic of the big seven powers, suggests that a new period of international financial instability is in the offing.

Carried away with their vision of a unified world order, the globalists ignore another key development of the past decade: the regionalisation of the world economy. In the eighties the world became more regionally focused around the three major imperialist powers: the USA, West Germany and Japan.

Globalists claim that mergers and acquisitions across national boundaries herald a new transnational capitalism. However, these developments do not amount to the restructuring of industry along global lines. Where restructuring has occurred, it has come about largely as a result of regional rather than international factors. So, while many transatlantic takeovers have been about making a quick buck through highly leveraged buy-outs, some of the trans-European mergers have been spurred by the need to restructure industry along regional lines. For example, the Nestlé takeover of Rowntree reflected the new European character of the sweet industry rather than any trend towards globalised production.

German domination of Europe increased throughout the decade. Intra-European trade has expanded much faster than world trade. Transatlantic trade now accounts for just 7.5 per cent of world trade, while trade within Western Europe accounts for 31.5 per cent of the total. Perhaps the most significant development in Europe has been the emergence of the deutschmark bloc. Most European nations now peg their currencies to the deutschmark. European currency integration reflects the dominant position of West Germany rather than the new cooperative nature of world capitalism.

Moves towards a yen bloc are not so advanced. The regionalisation of Japanese power is likely to be more difficult given the peculiar post-war development of Japan, which has had extensive economic ties only with the USA. At the same time, it is possible to detect a few early signs of regionalisation. In the second half of the eighties, flows of foreign direct investment began to counteract Japan's exclusive reliance on the USA. Japanese capital investment in

both the Asian newly industrialised economies and the Asean economies has rocketed. Since 1985, US interests in the Pacific rim have declined by about 30 per cent, a significant trend in a region which used to be the exclusive preserve of the USA.

Even the US economy has been forced to become more regional. Although it is losing ground in the Pacific rim, the USA has developed a closer relationship with the economies of Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean basin.

Unequal partners

More often than not, what the globalists call the new interdependency of capital is simply capitalist competition in another form. Japanese investment in the US television and video sector, for example, has been motivated by competition rather than a desire to intertwine the US and Japanese economies. Japanese television manufacturers have fought a fierce battle with their US rivals over the past 10 years. Hitachi and Sony now tower over the American market. Zenith is the sole remaining US producer. For the Japanese, setting up local production points in the USA is simply the logical extension of this competitive strategy.

Even where there appears to be a degree of cooperation between capitalists over joint ventures and research projects it rarely implies an equal partnership. Typical of this sort of arrangement was the Rover/Honda 'partnership'—simply a mechanism for Honda to increase its foothold in the UK and European Community markets.

The proponents of globalisation have made much of the cooperation between the imperialist powers, such as extension of credit by the Japanese and German governments which held off a US recession after the crash. But this did not herald a new era of limitless cooperation between the leading imperialists. Rather, the eighties should be understood as an exceptional period in which the national interests of the major powers converged. West Germany and Japan were willing to go on bailing out America because of their dependence on a buoyant US economy. More fundamentally, neither was in a position to challenge the USA for world leadership.

The limits to continued imperialist cooperation are already becoming apparent. For most of the eighties, the imperialist powers united to control the value of the dollar. Yet recent attempts by Japan to get international backing for the troubled yen have fallen on deaf ears.

Japan has been so dependent on

the US market that it accepted the role of lender of last resort in order to keep the American economy going. As a result, Japan has become the world's leading creditor nation. Current trends indicate that this development is premature and cannot last. The recent collapse of the Tokyo stock market—the Nikkei index—demonstrates that Japan's financial surpluses have become over-extended. Japan has assumed the role of the world's leading lender before it can even be considered a proper regional power, let alone a global one. The strain on the Japanese financial sector indicates that it will be unable to sustain this role indefinitely.

Not so rosy

The sheer volume of global transactions today often leads commentators to lose sight of real economic developments, and paint too rosy a picture of global trends. One recent report calculated that \$420 billion changes hands on the world financial markets every day. Yet many of these massive sums simply represent credit changing hands in speculative deals. The same study calculated that less than 10 per cent of the \$420 billion had any relationship with real investment or trade.

Figures for foreign direct investment, which appear to vindicate claims for a resurgence of productive capital investment, also give a distorted picture. For example, much has been made of Japanese direct investment in the USA. But only about a quarter of the total is tied up in manufacturing; most goes into the banking sector. Even the figures for manufacturing investment include highly leveraged takeover deals. This is hardly productive investment: leveraged buy-outs usually entail asset-stripping and a quick trip to the bank.

Nobody could deny that there have been many significant changes in the world economy over the past decade. The theorists of globalisation, however, tend to overstate the novelty of the changes, and misrepresent their meaning. They present the increased internationalisation of the world economy as proof of the dynamism of modern capitalism. In reality, it is a sign of the stagnation of the capitalist system as it approaches the twilight of the twentieth century.

The globalists may be heartened by the growth of joint ventures, the emergence of the newly industrialised economies and the increase in international capital flows. But the motor for these developments is the relentless struggle for survival as profitability declines in the capitalist

imperialism

heartlands. Joint ventures and mergers hide parasitic takeover bids; investment in the newly industrialised economies conceals rampant exploitation of cheap labour; international capital flows obscure indebtedness and an orgy of speculative investment.

The truth about the international economy in the eighties is best illustrated by the fate of some of its success stories such as Sophie Mirman's Sock Shop. In the early eighties easy credit allowed a gimmicky retailing operation to go international. Sock Shops sprang up everywhere. By the end of the decade the bubble had burst and the loans were called in. Sock Shop is in the hands of the receivers.

This is not the first time that left-wing commentators have deluded themselves about international economic developments. On the eve of the first imperialist war in 1914, the left claimed that the newly internationalising world economy heralded a new cooperative form of capitalism. Even as the guns were blazing the German socialist Karl Kautsky insisted that international cooperation was the order of the day. Today the left is trying to put the same positive gloss on international developments which do not merit

such optimism.

To summarise genuine developments briefly: the first notable trend of the eighties was the accelerating shift away from productive and towards speculative investment. Much of this speculative credit found its way into the international financial markets. Here, deregulation and the liberalisation of the markets created more scope for hot money to travel the globe in search of a quick buck.

The second significant trend of the past decade has been the growth of inequalities within the world economy. Ironically, the extension of global capital has exacerbated uneven economic development. The gap between imperialism and the third world has widened. Meanwhile, the creation of a cheap, global capitalist culture, symbolised by the spread of Western consumer goods in parts of the third world, deluded many commentators into believing that capitalism was evening things out. In addition, the tensions between the imperialist nations have increased. The shifting balance of power is most apparent in the sphere of economics. The USA has become the world's largest debtor nation and Japan has become the lender of last resort.

The third striking feature of the

eighties, however, was the degree of cooperation between the imperialist powers. For most of the decade the leading capitalist nations shared an interest in bailing out the USA. But as the eighties drew to a close the strain was beginning to show. The West Germans, who followed Washington's economic lead and requirements throughout the post-war years, have become less attentive to US interests and more concerned with consolidating their own position in Europe.

Perhaps the most important development of all has been the trend towards the regionalisation of the world economy. This looks likely to hold the key to the future shape of the world, as the major imperialist economies seek to outdo their competitors by carving out rival power blocs. It is another development to elude those who subscribe to the notion of globalisation.

Where there is decay, they see dynamism. Where there is parasitism, they see productive investment. Where there is inequality and immiseration, they see the onward march of Coca-Cola and McDonald's.

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then and now

June 1950: Korea

When the Cold War got hot

As a ceasefire is declared in the Cold War, Adam Eastman looks back at how it escalated 40 years ago this month

On 25 June 1950, the USA got the excuse it needed to launch the Cold War in earnest. Armed units from 'communist' North Korea moved across the thirty-eighth parallel, the border between the Soviet and US-controlled halves of Korea agreed at the close of the Second World War. Over the next three years, what began as a military gamble to bring the South Korean regime to the negotiating table turned into a bloody nightmare for the Korean people.

The USA went to war to restore the border, fighting under the banner of the United Nations. UN forces lost 94 000 men, including 34 000 US troops. China, which entered the war in late 1950 when US forces reached its borders, lent armed assistance to Kim Il Sung's North Korean forces. An estimated 1.5m Korean and Chinese troops perished. More than a million South Koreans and significantly more North Korean civilians were slaughtered. Hostilities formally ended in July 1953; the division of the country was ratified with only slight modifications to the border.

More bombs were dropped on North Korea during the Korean War than on the whole of Europe in the Second World War. In the first year the Americans offloaded 97 000 tons of bombs and 7.8m gallons of napalm. 'Almost the entire Korean peninsula is just a terrible mess', said Major General Emmett O'Donnell of bomber command: 'Everything is destroyed. There is nothing standing worthy of the name.' Within five months of the war starting, the USA grounded its bomber force because there were no more targets to hit.

The USA scorched the earth, incinerated hundreds of thousands of Koreans by napalm and drove the rest of the population and industry underground. Declassified documents reveal that America was ready to contemplate anything to crush North Korea, including killing almost all Koreans and nuking the country. The Korean War stands as a testament to the barbarism of the imperialists.

What was it all for? The Americans (and their sycophantic British allies) claimed that Korea showed their commitment to saving democracy from communism. In fact the war revealed the manipulative character of the anti-communist crusade. Washington conjured up the so-called communist threat in Korea as a pretext to justify the consolidation of US world leadership.

The US 'liberation' of the southern Korean peninsula from the Japanese in 1945 hardly brought freedom to the people. Before landing, the Americans dropped leaflets telling Koreans to obey 'orders passed to you through the current [Japanese] government and do not participate in demonstrations against the Japanese or in welcome of the American armed forces'.

America presented its involvement as vital to prevent the spread of communism into South Korea. Washington depicted the radical nationalist challenge to imperialist domination in the region as part of a Soviet conspiracy. Not only did Washington enlist Japanese help in quelling Korean unrest, it even recruited a former Hitler Youth Movement leader to direct a youth corps to break strikes and form the nucleus of a Korean army.

Head of operations was General Douglas MacArthur: 'I would help the devil if he would come down to this Earth and offer to help fight the communists.' And so he did, ably assisted by the rabid anti-communist Syngman Rhee, flown in from America to front the new Southern regime in October 1945. Rhee and MacArthur became the central players pushing for a drive north to take the rest of Korea. MacArthur wanted to go further and 'reclaim' China from Mao's Communist Party, which had taken over the year before.

But president Harry S Truman and the US administration had broader problems to consider. Despite its unchallenged hegemony at the end of

the Second World War, US imperialism lacked any framework through which its potential could be realised. Europe remained uncommitted to life under the American umbrella and incapable of buying the goods that came with it. Stalin's 'peace offensive' was making life even more difficult for American leaders demanding Allied unity against the mythical Soviet threat.

The German general Clausewitz once said that war is the pursuit of politics by other means. This was truer of the Korean War than most. The strictly military battle against the Koreans was of secondary importance to the Americans; what mattered most was the broader objective of consolidating America's political and economic power. Depicting Korea as the frontline against communist subversion sweeping through Asia, the USA used the war to strengthen its military hand and its leadership of the Western Alliance.

After the North Korean invasion, the vastly superior Southern forces retreated in order to justify greater US commitment and convince Europe of the need to support America. The amazed North Koreans walked into deserted cities. While Rhee ranted about the involvement of Soviet troops, MacArthur claimed massive losses.

Even the USA's British lapdogs weren't entirely convinced by this manoeuvre. The *Times* suggested that accounts of military losses should be treated with 'the greatest reserve'. However, none of this stopped the British from playing along with the propaganda war in Washington. As well as despatching troops to fight with the UN forces, both Labour and Tory governments were fulsome in their support for America's war.

Having marched his troops back to the tip of the peninsula to create the impression that defeat was imminent, MacArthur marched them forward again once he had secured the support of congress and the Allies. By this time, even vice president Alben Barkley was moved to suggest that the whole thing 'is an incredible hoax'.

Having done his job, MacArthur began to outlive his usefulness. He insisted the UN forces should retake the whole of Korea and nuke China. The US state department, however, was concerned that China might be pushed closer to the Soviet Union. And once Chinese troops had entered Korea to repel the threat to their border, winning the war proved a lot harder than MacArthur had suggested—a taster of America's later humiliation in Vietnam.

While MacArthur was obsessed with defeating 'communist Asia', Truman's priority was sorting out Europe. He sacked the general and reformulated US strategy in Asia in that light. America's inability to conquer Korea did not have the same traumatising effect as Vietnam because the war succeeded in its major objective: rallying the Allies and American opinion behind the banner of the Cold War.

Back in 1950, the American gaze was still fixed on consolidating its global success rather than soul-searching about the limits of imperial power. The Korean War bound the European Allies more firmly together behind America's political and military leadership of 'the free world'. At a time when the Marshall Aid programme was ending, Korea also provided the military packaging necessary to justify continued US economic aid to Western European capitalism. And in Asia, the Korean War allowed Washington to argue that Japan, widely despised for its Second World War crimes, was now one of the good guys in the fight against communism. Thus Japan was rehabilitated into the US-dominated 'democratic' camp through the signing of the 1952 anti-communist treaty with America.

'No one can say what would have come of these projects if the North Koreans had not marched south on 25 June 1950', said a top US official. George Kennan, author of America's Cold War strategy, put it more bluntly: 'Korea came along and saved us.'

5, 10, 15, 20...

2 June 1985:

Uefa bans English football clubs from European competition 'indefinitely'

19 June 1975:

Inquest finds Lord Lucan guilty of murder

29 June 1965:

US troops go into first official battle in Vietnam

30 June 1960:

Norman Bates puts frighteners on first *Psycho* audience

6 June 1930:

Birds Eye frozen peas revolutionise food retailing

15 June 1920:

Mob of 5000 lynches three blacks in Minnesota

east and west

After the Cold War is over

Last post for

Do old Cold Warriors die or just

fade away? asks Kirsten Cale

Nato can no longer be taken for granted. As the Soviet Union caves in on itself, the Berlin Wall becomes millions of souvenirs and American troops scale down their war games in Bavaria, foreign policy makers and observers are debating the next move for the US-dominated military alliance. 'Is Nato still needed?' asks *Time* magazine, while *Avionics Weekly*, mouthpiece for the US aviation industry, wants to know 'Does Nato have a future?'. Even John R Galvin, supreme commander of Nato's allied troops, has admitted that Nato's days as an anti-Soviet alliance are numbered. As Nato ministers prepare for a crucial summit meeting, the very existence of the alliance has moved to the top of the agenda.

Nato's most strident defence has been mounted by the country with most to lose from its demise: the USA. America is desperate to maintain Nato because the alliance has provided the framework through which it has dominated the post-war world order.

At the start of the Cold War, Lord Ismay described the newly formed Nato as an alliance to 'keep the Russians out, the Americans in [Europe] and the Germans down'. The primary public justification for Nato has always been to keep the Russians out. Today, however, as the mythical character of the 'Soviet threat' and the weakness of the Warsaw Pact are thoroughly exposed, it becomes clearer that Nato's central role has been to manage America's relations with the other Western powers.

Nato's function for America has been both military and political. Washington's military leadership gave it important influence over the conduct of the affairs of the allies. The trillions of dollars shelled out by the Pentagon on European defence were reaped many times over in political dividends. And the USA's ability to control and mediate political and economic relations between the major Western powers

was backed up by that most potent symbol of American might: the missiles and bases stationed in Germany.

In the heyday of the alliance, America never lost an opportunity to spell out who ruled the Nato roost. If the European allies queried US policy too openly they got short shrift from the White House, as in this spat over defence between the Dutch foreign minister Joseph Luns and US admiral Rickover at a Washington cocktail party in 1969:

'Luns: "Why do you refuse to give the Netherlands an atomic submarine?"

'Rickover: "You are wholly dependent for your existence and survival on the United States. Right? Therefore we and not you will decide what kind of warships you may possess....I know all your arguments and I am sick and tired of them." ' (Quoted in C Wiebes and B Zeeman, *International Affairs*, January 1990)

American braggadocio in international affairs often infuriated the allies, but none was strong enough to challenge America's role as world leader. In 1973, for example, some European states denounced US support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War. But secretary of state Henry Kissinger rode roughshod over their concerns: 'The United States has global interests and responsibilities. Our European allies have regional interests. These are not necessarily in conflict, but in the new era, neither are they automatically identical.' (*Years of Upheaval*, 1982, p153) And in global affairs, American interests came first.

Another US foreign policy maker, Ronald Steel, rubbished the notion of equality among the Nato allies: 'The Europeans complain but Americans make decisions', he said, adding that Nato was marketed on an illusion: 'The illusion was that the alliance would lead to a true partnership of equals with virtually identical interests.' (J Palmer, *Europe*

Without America, 1988, p70) The Europeans resented the Americans lording it over the alliance; but they also recognised that, behind the illusory equality of Nato membership, their subordination to Washington was the price to be paid for international stability.

Now, however, events in Europe have called into question the future of the alliance, and by implication America's dominant position on the world stage. In the past, the USA was able to use the imaginary threat of Soviet expansion to cohere the allies under a single military umbrella. Its leadership of Nato in the Cold War gave it the moral authority to manage global affairs.

There is thus a direct correlation between America's leadership of Nato and its leadership of the world. The end of the Cold War is not the cause of America's decline. But the questioning of Nato's role has further undermined Washington's ability to control its allies, in circumstances where it is already being pressed by the resurgence of Germany and Japan. Without the Cold War, why have Nato? Yet without Nato, how could America continue to demand the dominant role in international relations?

The loss of Nato leadership would not only erode America's ability to influence international events, it would also mean that the entire

premise of post-war US foreign policy would have to be scrapped. This point has not been lost on former secretary of state Robert McNamara: 'For most of [the past] 40 years, the Cold War was almost the sole foundation of American foreign policy....Now we must have a post-Cold War vision of the world.' (*Observer*, 14 January 1990)

While some American analysts cast around for a new role for Nato, many others simply yearn for the past. Deputy secretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger recently lamented the passing of the Cold War, 'a time', he said, 'of remarkable stability in international relations'. Some Pentagon hawks, like former defence secretary James Schlesinger, are even blunter: 'It ain't war that's hell, it's peace that's hell. Peace is a pain in the ass.' When all the dependable institutions of the past—the Berlin Wall, the Iron Curtain, the Cold War—have disintegrated, it's small wonder that old generals long for an age when reds were red, walls were walls, and 300 000 American troops occupied themselves bayoneting Soviet dummies in German forests.

Britain, the other main status quo power in the West, has its own reasons for supporting the continuation of Nato. Britain is primarily concerned to use Nato as an instrument for containing the threat of German domination in Europe. Margaret Thatcher has recently championed Nato as 'a

relations. This is why Thatcher has adopted such an aggressively pro-Nato and sulphurously anti-German stance.

Nato has been unable to hold the fort against the meltdown of Stalinism in the Soviet bloc and the rapid moves towards German reunification. Nonetheless, the American and British authorities cling to the outdated military alliance as the only institution capable of regulating the pace of change. But how do you justify a Cold War alliance when everybody agrees that that war is over? Washington and London have come up with increasingly feeble excuses for Nato's continued existence.

When US secretary of state James Baker visited Berlin to propose a new role for Nato, he argued that the alliance still had an important role to play monitoring new arms agreements and promoting democracy in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. But his vision of US troops swapping their weapons for clipboards to count tanks, and teaching old Stalinists the ABCs of the American constitution, lacked the conviction of the old anti-communist crusades, as even the pro-Nato British press noted: 'Mr Baker talked about a "new role for Nato", but he sounded as though he was trying to convince himself.' (*Times*, 16 December 1989)

Ominously, Baker argued that Nato should assume an active military role *outside* Europe. Thatcher has similarly argued that the collapse of the Warsaw Pact

British-parts-for-Iraqi-superguns charade was doubtless designed to fuel this argument.

These flimsy attempts to justify Nato by conjuring up new threats to the Western world cannot disguise its diminishing relevance to the new realities. Nato is no longer a working military alliance. President Bush's May announcement of the scrapping of plans for the modernisation of Lance short-range missiles in Europe reveals the difficulties confronting the Americans in trying to hold together the military and political status quo.

America can no longer rally the allies behind the anti-communist banner. Even the anti-Soviet rhetoric has disappeared for the time being. Washington has issued only mild injunctions against the Kremlin's stranglehold on Lithuania, as American spokesmen concede that their Nato allies are unlikely to support even token anti-Soviet action. This is a measure of how little the old Cold War assumptions upon which Nato is based mean today.

Nato could have one more possible role to play—as a framework for containing Germany. The Western powers have insisted that a reunited Germany join the Nato alliance in order to prevent it from acting unilaterally in the European arena. Chancellor Helmut Kohl has acquiesced to this demand, in part because he is not ready to break decisively with the allies, and possibly because he believes the alliance will become increasingly meaningless.

A reunited Germany looks set to join Nato sooner or later. But so what? It is unlikely that Nato will have the authority to hold back Germany's rise to power in Europe, nor the intense national rivalries which this process will unleash. Nato could limp along for some time like the powerless League of Nations did in the thirties, presiding over growing conflicts among its constituent members. As such a shell, Nato could cling on to the trappings of power for years. But as a military alliance symbolising America's unquestioned world leadership, it is already finished.

winning formula' and argued that German reunification 'could only take place against a background of stability and security...through our existing alliances'. The freezing of history through the Cold War, Nato and the division of Germany has allowed Britain to retain an artificially high place in the world power league. Thus the British establishment has much to lose from any major changes in international

made Nato's nuclear umbrella more important, as more sinister new forces in the Middle East are waiting to pounce on the Kremlin's decommissioned nuclear hardware. The alliance must be maintained to control 'countries in the Middle East with missile technology'. The British media's manic coverage of the

'Queer-bashing' in west London

The Ealing cottage murders

Andrew Calcutt reports on the murder of two gay men in a London borough where local public figures indulge in verbal 'queer-bashing'



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

In the early hours of 29 April, 49-year old actor Michael Boothe was stamped to death by a gang of six or seven 'queer-bashers'. A passer-by found him lying in a pool of blood on the pavement outside the public lavatories in Elthorne Park, Hanwell, in the west London borough of Ealing. He died that evening, after what a police spokesman described as 'an extraordinarily severe beating of a merciless and savage nature'. His injuries 'ranged from the tip of his toe to the top of his head'. One of Boothe's feet was half-severed from his leg. Pathologists lost count of how many times he had been kicked and punched.

Boothe, a single man who lived alone in St Margaret's Road nearby, had almost certainly gone to the Elthorne Park toilet—a well-known 'cottage'—to pick someone up. The circumstances of his death are similar to the recent murder of 61-year old William Dalziel. On 15 January outside Harleyford Manor old people's home in Acton, about three miles from Hanwell, Dalziel was killed by seven or eight blows with what may have been a heavy piece of wood. Phil Derbyshire, from the Gay London Policing Group, reports that 20 gay men were murdered during the last two years, of whom 10 or 11 were victims of 'queer-bashers'. Gay men are particularly vulnerable in toilets and other cruising venues such as parks.

'The Hanwell toilets are known as a very dangerous place', says Jim, a middle-aged gay man from Ealing: 'There is only one entrance so it only needs a couple of clever clogs—one inside and one at the top of the steps—and you've had it.' Many gay men have to run that risk as Terry Sanderson, a *Gay Times* columnist and Ealing resident, com-

living

mented: 'Cottaging has always gone on. For many gays, clandestine anonymous encounters are the only way to express their sexuality. But they are easily targeted. Hooligans and police can go down there and sit and wait.'

Commenting on the killing of Michael Boothe, former *New Society* editor Paul Barker wrote: 'I have never understood why, after private homosexuality was legalised, public "cottaging" carried on, with all its risks: arrest, assault—and now Aids.' (*Sunday Times*, 6 May 1990) Apart from the fact that there are still 70 laws on the statute books which discriminate against homosexuals, the 1967 'legalisation of homosexuality' (in private, between men over 21) did not by any means lead to its carefree, open practice or end the abuse, violence and scandal. The majority of gays remain closeted, and clandestine sex remains a necessity—especially in a tree-lined suburb such as Ealing.

'It's not like Hammersmith' said Jim 'where everyone goes to the Penny Farthing'. Ealing is said to be home to the highest concentration of gay men outside Islington. But there is no public 'scene'. The nearest gay pubs and clubs are in Richmond, Hammersmith, Hounslow or Earls Court. The Ealing Gay Group, which mainly caters for over-40s, is sedate and slightly secretive. Its members have heard of Gay Pride but wouldn't think of attending. 'This is a fairly expensive area' explained Peter Knight, chairman of the Ealing Gay Association. 'Property values are high and many gays here are couples in a settled lifestyle who don't go out and about much locally. We might meet for afternoon tea on a Sunday.'

Most gay men can't fit in with the lifestyle of Ealing's suburban homosexual couples. They have little choice but to explore the underground cottage-culture of transient sexual encounters. They know where the cottages are. But so do the 'queer-bashers'.

Not that gay men in Ealing need to go cruising to find trouble. 'I know of several cases of people being harassed and having to be moved from their homes by the council' says Terry Sanderson. 'A young lad who is HIV positive had to barricade himself in because of bricks thrown at the windows. Last year somebody broke into a couple's house, held a gun to them and said he would kill them. He didn't, but it was inevitable that someone would be.'

'Violence is a horizon', said Phil Derbyshire, 'you live within it'. 'You have to be circumspect' says Sanderson. 'You don't wear a Glad to be Gay t-shirt on the tube at night.'

Detectives in Ealing have appealed to gay men for information which could help find Michael Boothe's murderers. But gays are not exactly keen to talk to the police about cottaging. Last year the Ealing Force staked out local toilets in an operation involving horse patrols and a helicopter, and told the press that transvestites were trying to lure innocent men into the lavatories. 'It sounded like a straight policeman's idea of gay sexuality' said Peter Knight. 'They think we want to wear frocks.'

Phil Derbyshire believes 'there are some police officers no longer treating public decency as the worst offence imaginable. But it's not generalised. Arrests on public decency offences went up from 1500 to 2000 last year'. The current Gay London Policing Group report lists police stake-outs in Kennington, Balham, Harrow, Hendon, Hyde Park, Oxford Circus, Green Park, Liverpool Street, Victoria and Baker Street. 'You cannot expect trust in the police if the same police force is busting people in cottages and on towpaths and relentlessly criminalising the gay community.'

Many gay men are reluctant to report attacks, even to each other. 'A lot of people won't talk about abuse they may have suffered' says Peter Knight. 'I know a couple of people who have been beaten up but they will not admit it took place in a lavatory. It is a myth that gays are open about such matters.'

Derbyshire estimates that the murder rate of gay men is fairly constant. But when homosexuality hits the headlines, as in the Aids scares, violence probably increases. 'Lesbians and gay men are set up as aliens, not real human beings, then you get people who kick the queer because the queer has "nothing to do with us".' In Ealing, where Boothe and Dalziel were murdered, homosexuality has recently hit the headlines several times.

In their successful bid to unseat the Labour council in the May elections, Ealing Tories went to town on homosexuality. 'Lesbians offered combat training on the rates...romps for gays on the rates' screamed their 'Return to sanity: vote Conservative' leaflets. 'In the Tory newsletter we head the list as the biggest waste of ratepayers' money', says Peter Knight, 'and they are doing it for cheap votes'. When the Tories took the council in May, their first act was to close down the race, women's and lesbian and gay units.

Harry Greenaway, Tory MP for Ealing North, is always an enthusiastic supporter of anti-homosexual legislation, such as Section 28 or attempts to ban donor insemination for lesbian couples. Greenaway called for Archbishop Runcie to resign after the recent Osborne report recommended that the Church of England take a slightly more lenient line on homosexuality. The vicars of Ealing and Hanwell don't share Runcie's views and have both preached anti-gay sermons. Sitting on the Tory council is a fundamentalist Christian, Graham Weeks, who once invited himself to Terry Sanderson's house and started shouting that 'the evil' of homosexuality was 'against Christ'. Sanderson had him removed.

Not cricket

Why Captain Viv blew his top

There was more to England's tour of the West Indies than cricket, says Kenan Malik

Britain's black community, said Norman Tebbit recently, 'wouldn't pass the cricket test'. He had just discovered that many black people prefer supporting good cricket to cheering England on. For others however the problem is less a lack of black support and more that black people are taking over the game. 'Cricket is not an English game any more', moaned Simon Barnes in the *Times*, as England's winter tour of the West Indies drew to an acrimonious close. 'It has been subject to the influences of, to name but a few, Islam, Indian politics, Tamil separatism, Marxist writing, Rastafarianism.'

'There is no place in cricket', thundered the *Sunday Times'* Robin Marlar, 'for Richards' unscrupulous win-at-all-costs attitude'. Others accused the West Indian captain of 'cheating', 'lying' and 'bringing shame' to the game which the English always claim to play with a straight bat. 'The compilers of the Oxford Dictionary', wrote Martin Johnson in the *Independent*, 'might be wondering just how long they can continue to list "not cricket" as "(colloq) infringing the codes of fair play between honourable opponents in any sphere".'

Seasoned performers like Greenaway are careful to distance themselves from violence. But their homophobic sermons are hardly likely to deter Ealing's 'queer-bashers'. 'Certain elements take it literally' said Labour councillor John Gallagher, who was deputy chair of the now-abolished lesbian and gay consultative group. He believes that anti-gay prejudice is mainly confined to 'the fascists corralled up in Ealing North'. But chauvinism extends across society, and not even Ealing Labour Party is immune.

The erstwhile Labour council's infamously generous grants to lesbians and gays only existed in the pages of the gutter press. 'Why he isn't a Tory, none of us know' says Peter Knight of the chair of Labour's consultative group. Under the influence of local resident Neil Kinnock, Ealing Labour has seemed more worried about losing votes by being associated with homosexuality than about seriously defending lesbian and gay rights. Knight says that Labour was 'wasting our time'.

With the 'queer-bashers' receiving public encouragement, more attacks look likely. Our response should be to demand equal rights for lesbians and gay men; as Terry Sanderson puts it, 'I don't need the whole world to love me, but I do need to walk down the street without being killed'.

• Gay London Policing Group: (071) 278 6215, phone lines answered from 10am to 6pm, 24-hour answerphone. Councillor John Gallagher will also take calls from lesbians and gay men who do not wish to go to the police, c/o Ealing Town Hall on (081) 579 2424

What did the West Indians do to set the stiff upper lips a-trembling? The furore began in the third test when the West Indies used time-wasting tactics to prevent an English victory. 'Cheat!' screamed the British press. The British commentators were ready for the next test, and when Rob Bailey was wrongly given out caught behind, they furiously complained that Richards had intimidated umpire Lloyd Barker. BBC correspondent Christopher Martin-Jenkins claimed that Barker had 'cracked under pressure' and his actions had been tantamount to 'cheating'. Barker issued a writ for defamation. Haul Jenkers, 'educated at Marlborough and Cambridge', in front of the beak? Now, that just wasn't cricket.

On the first day of the fifth and final test match Richards gave a V-sign to barracking spectators, and then threatened to 'whack' *Daily Express* hack James Lawton if he wrote anything derogatory. Lawton did just that, in an article headlined 'Captain Viv blows his top'. The following day Richards sent a substitute on to the field while he himself marched into the press box and spent 10 minutes haranguing the hapless Lawton. This was the final straw. 'Oh for a cartoonist like Gilray to cut this turkey cock to size!', exclaimed an exas-

living

perated Marlars. The *Correspondent's* Scyld Berry thought that the controversy had become 'cricket's equivalent of the Salman Rushdie affair'.

But why such a fuss? Cheating, time-wasting, intimidation, abuse of and by crowds, players and journalists—there is nothing new in any of this. 'It is widely acknowledged', wrote the great English batsman CB Fry nearly a century ago, 'that if both sides agree to cheat, then cheating is fair'. In the fourth test, it was England's turn to spend all day tying shoelaces and moving fielders in an attempt to save the match. The fact that the West Indies still won suggests that England are as bad at playing up as they are at playing the game.

'Take your licks'

What made the test series so acrimonious was not the cheating, nor the intimidation, nor the abuse, but the racial undertones always implicit in tests between England and the West Indies. This time the underlying tensions exploded after England won the first test against all expectations. In the West Indies, as in India and Pakistan, cricket is more than just a game. It is both a reminder of their colonial past and an affirmation of national pride. For a people who lived under the colonial yoke, humiliating England is a national pastime. Such feelings are particularly intense in the West Indies with its history of slavery. When a banner in Barbados told the English batsmen to 'Take your licks like men', the reference to flogging was not accidental. Nobody has embodied this fierce West Indian pride more than Viv Richards. As the *Sunday Times* noted 'Richards is not only the world's greatest batsman, he is a hero figure to millions and a potent symbol of black power and dignity'.

For England too cricket is more than just a game. For more than 150 years cricket has been the embodiment of the values of England and of Empire. When England teams toured the colonies, they went to impress the stamp of King and country. As CLR James said of the 1953 England tour of the West Indies, 'the team gave the impression that it was not merely playing cricket but was out to establish the prestige of Britain, and by that, the local whites'.

'Goocha, Charlie'

In those days the colonials knew their place, both on and off the field. Today it is a different matter. It is more than 20 years since England won a test series against the 'Windies'. The top three test teams in the world are all black. The English went to the West Indies resigned to a repeat of the 'blackwash' of four years ago, when they were rolled over 5-0. Instead, they won the first test, and very nearly won the third.

'Goocha' ran the *Sun's* banner headline after the test win, echoing its notorious headline after the sinking of the *Belgrano*. 'We made them grovel' it boasted. England vice-captain Allan Lamb told leading West Indian bowler Malcolm Marshall that he had lost his 'bottle'; England's rookie fast bowler Devon Malcolm boasted that he knew how to deal with Viv Richards.

Far from grovelling to England, the West Indies set out to humiliate them. The more the West Indies asserted their superiority, the more racist became the rantings of the British commentators. Led by former England cricketers Geoff Boycott and Tony 'Goodnight Charlie' Greig, the commentators tried to do in the press box what their team failed to do on the pitch.

The West Indians had the final say. Richards took 19 runs off one over from Malcolm in the fourth test. The bowlers reduced English batsmen to nervous wrecks. In the final test normal service was restored as England collapsed to an innings defeat. It will take more than a Gilray, Marlars or Boycott, or a Gooch, Lamb or Malcolm, to cut this turkey cock to size.

The art of deception

Fool's gold

Kirsten Cale finds the forgeries exhibited at the British Museum just as entertaining as the real thing

The hawkers around Oxford Circus know a thing or two about fakes. The smudgy bottles of Chanel No 5 brimming with evil yellow liquid, the Rolex watches ('completely waterproof, look, I'll stick it in a glass of water for you'), the gold chains at a tenth of the price are dummies masquerading as the real thing. But this is the West End, not the British Museum, so nobody expects the genuine article. The salesmen make barely credible claims for their wares, passers-by derive malicious pleasure from watching tourists get conned, while the streetwise tourists buy knock-down eau de toilette for little-loved relatives who'll expect a present when they get home (stick it in a duty free bag and they'll never know the difference).

Whether he operates at the tacky or the top end of the counterfeit market, most people have a sneaking respect for the forger. The anonymous figures who knock out Picassos or perfume, Hitler's diaries or £20 notes have got *gall*. Their disrespect for the law and mockery of convention give them the glamour of the underworld, without the nastiness.

In the rather more rarefied world of art dealers, collectors and high-class auction rooms, where a huge premium is placed on authenticity, forgery is seen as disruptive and subversive. So all the better when a forger puts one over on the specialists. 'Fake? The Art of Deception' catalogues the work of the mostly anonymous, but highly imaginative, counterfeiters who pulled off profitable scams against the grandees. Indeed, the forgers who have been unmasked deserve respect for their sheer nerve: Charles Dawson,

the creator of Piltdown Man, built a whole career around anthropological forgeries, and two prisoners developed a nice line in bogus Bernard Leach ceramics before the pieces were traced back to Featherstone prison pottery room.

While the faker's art is imitation rather than individual expression, forgeries often tell us as much about the age in which they were created as the age they seek to copy. After all, the forger is supplying consumer demand. The Victorian fascination with the macabre and bizarre was furnished by a steady stream of faked oddities. The Canadian 'furry trout', gnomish 'shrunken heads' constructed out of goatskin and clay, and a ghoulish torture chair purportedly used by the Spanish Inquisitors fuelled the lurid fantasies of the Victorian middle classes. The Cottingly Fairy photographs—validated by the credulous Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—likewise satisfied the whimsical tastes of the Edwardians.

The forger must also reflect the era's standards of authenticity to avoid detection. At one time, veracity was gauged by the perfection and completeness of the work. Later, it was determined by the type of materials used or expected wear and tear. Today, forgers have to fool X-rays, radio carbon-dating, thermoluminescence and dendrochronology. Yet, despite the increasing sophistication of detection techniques, forgeries are often accepted as the real thing because they seem to provide the answer to a puzzle. The prehistoric skull so carefully deposited by Charles Dawson in the Piltdown gravel pit (alongside mastodon and hippo teeth for added authenticity) was assumed to be genuine because it conveniently provided the

Darwinian 'missing link' between ape and man.

Many fakes are created for commercial gain. But forgeries are also a formidable weapon in the art of black propaganda. Perhaps the most famous example on show here is the Zinoviev letter, purporting to show Soviet support for the first Labour government, which played a part in Ramsay MacDonald's defeat in the October 1924 election. More common and modern examples of political fakery, such as confessions forged by policemen, are predictably absent from the collection.

The irony of this show is that the exhibits, despite their ingenuity and occasional beauty, have been exposed as impostors. Other more effective frauds lurk in galleries and museums for future discovery. Meanwhile, check that £40 Lacoste shirt you bought in Covent Garden. If it doesn't have mother-of-pearl buttons with two (not four) sewing holes, you've been had.



PHOTO: British Museum

The fairy tale that fooled Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

'Fake? The Art of Deception' is showing at the British Museum until 2 September 1990.

Film: *Hush-A-Bye Baby*

Look who's not talking

To get away from Hollywood's babymania, Joe Boatman spoke to the director of a new film about the problem of an unwanted pregnancy in Ireland

On the night the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill passed through the commons I heard an embryo talk. Of course this was nothing to me, I've seen an elephant fly. The embryo's voice was that of Bruce Willis in *Look Who's Talking*. This may not be as funny as *Dumbo*, and shouldn't be taken any more seriously, but I find any attempt these days to establish embryo personalities rather disturbing. Thanks to warm nurturing from across the political spectrum the idea that bringing up baby is the positive choice for the complete woman has become frighteningly fashionable. Many a glamorous thirty-something has doted on the darlings in a cinema near you. Sperm speaking parts are now in.

The new film from Derry Film and Video Workshop, *Hush-A-Bye Baby*, is about an unplanned pregnancy, but not about the delicious dilemmas of Hollywood like 'Shall I marry the millionaire or the handsome caring one?'. *Hush-A-Bye Baby* reminds us that an unwanted pregnancy in Ireland doesn't present anybody with a choice. Abortion is entirely illegal there, North and South. When an unmarried girl gets pregnant in Ireland, nobody's talking. Director Margo Harkin told me how she and co-scriptwriter Stephanie English came to approach the issue.



Girls together: left to right Emer McCourt, Sinead O'Connor (with wig), Julie Marie Reynolds

PHOTO: Willie Doherty

'In 1983 we had the abortion referendum in Ireland so the country was in a state of moral panic, suddenly everybody was finding dead and butchered babies. When we set off, in 1984, all these really shocking revelations were coming out in the Irish media, the main one being about Anne Lovett. She was a 15-year old girl and she died when giving birth. On a

cold, cold winter's day she went to a field that was beside a grotto of the Virgin Mary. No one will ever know if she deliberately did that, but it was still a very, very shocking image of the Catholic consciousness.

'The film isn't based on any particular case but that's what I was thinking about, particularly in the final scene, the panic and fear when the inevitable

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happens after keeping it quiet for so long. It's symptomatic of Irish society that people just do not surface these things, just don't talk about them. Eventually she paid with her life that wee girl.'

At the outset the film's heroine Goretta (Emer McCourt) and her gang of school friends (played by Cathy Casey, Julie Marie Reynolds and Sinead O'Connor—who also wrote the music) are full of amused enthusiasm for future pleasures. At their convent school Father Devine lectures them on the holy sacrament of marriage while they conspire to embarrass him by staring between his legs. At the same time good-looking 'Clitoris Allsorts' (the boy who only goes with girls who will have sex and has already left one pregnant) is definitely to be avoided. When Goretta falls for Ciaran (Michael Liebmann) and one thing leads to another, the tensions between social pressures and reality are suddenly not funny any more.

'The whole theme of sexuality was made for an Irish audience, to be accessible to as many people as possible here and to do it with a sense of humour, so that people could begin to discuss it without getting incoherent with anger which is my experience whenever we discuss abortion. People get so angry, we get so angry, I just want to hit people.'

The film is set in Derry, 1984, during the last throes of the supergrass trials, and Goretta's isolation is exacerbated when Ciaran gets dragged off to Castlereagh. 'I was trying to convey to people who wouldn't live here that this is part of our everyday experience', says Harkin: 'I wanted to remove him from the scene but by using a common experience in Derry. It is part of the contextual background that it is quite common for people to be lifted and you wouldn't even know why sometimes.'

Love and war

Throughout the film the Brits loom up, sometimes literally, sometimes in passing conversation accounting for deaths and disappearances. Harkin and English didn't want the film to endorse Ciaran as a 'stereotypical macho republican'. In one scene he is stopped and questioned, with Goretta at his side. He answers in Irish but is humiliated when the soldier replies in more fluent Irish. 'I worry about how other people will see this' says Harkin. 'It was partly an attempt to show the level of psychological warfare that goes on, that is much more sophisticated now. But mainly it's there to poke fun at him a bit, at his way of being a big man in front of her. We were having a bit of fun amongst ourselves, but if this was interpreted as being sympathetic to the Army I'd be quite worried.'

Hush-A-Bye Baby directs most blame for Irish women's oppression at the influence of Catholic morality, as the love story is punctuated with dark warnings from church, school, family and friends. 'I didn't make any direct links between her state and British occupation, I mean whatever she's going through was going on before the "troubles". One of the main reasons for doing the film is that, if we get what we want, if we get a united Ireland, if we get troops out, what kind of country are we left with?'

'The country is still dominated by a very strong moral religious force, North and South. So this is an attempt to look at how we treat women, and how we treat women who have sex outside marriage, and how we treat women who have sex outside marriage and become pregnant. Because in this system you have to suffer for it, you're the one who's left to deal with it.'

The main performances are all strong, especially that of Cathy Casey (a Derry woman who returned to work in a local factory after filming), and Sinead O'Connor's score adds to an atmosphere that is both romantic and dangerous. *Hush-A-Bye Baby* will give you some idea of what daily life in Derry is like. And the voice that's talking here has something to say.

• *Hush-A-Bye Baby* opens in London in June at the Piccadilly Film Festival.

PHOTO: Simon Northok



Elena Khudiakova in Lenin-Stalin-Gorbachev choker

Revolutionary Russian art

Red stars

John Fitzpatrick on the continuing interest in the art of Russia's revolutionary age

The extraordinary outburst of artistic creativity which followed the Russian Revolution still fascinates, and much more of it is now available to British audiences. The latest arrival in print is *Women Artists of Russia's New Age: 1900-35*, by Miuda Yablonskaya, which concentrates on a dozen painters, designers and sculptors, such as Natalya Goncharova, Olga Rozanova, Alexandra Exter and Vera Mukhina. Yablonskaya charts their development in the full context of the political and artistic movements of the day. Exter, she says, 'travelled the usual path for women artists of the avant-garde—from cubism and futurism to suprematism and constructivism'. There are 15 stunning colour plates of her work alone, the originals of which hang in Soviet museums. In all there are 284 illustrations, 83 in colour, in a splendid book.

This month too at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, an exhibition opens entitled 'Bolshevik Posters 1917-25'. In post-revolutionary Russia posters were one of the Bolsheviks' main propaganda tools. The exhibition features 74 of them, many of which, such as *The Red Fleet*, *Literacy is the Path to Communism*, and *Have You Enrolled As A Volunteer?* are already justly famous. The intricate early posters with their more realistic approach soon gave way, under the pace of events and the hectic innovations of the times, to much simpler, bolder and more abstract images. The catalogue, explaining the background to each poster, makes sure that the visitor gets an informed glimpse of a society fighting for its survival, in style.

Keeping the traditions of both Soviet women artists and constructivism alive today is Elena Khudiakova, a young Russian artist, who has

been in Britain for the past few months and exhibits her work in Rome in June. She designs clothes and jewellery, and explains that her first big break came when she was commissioned to reconstruct the dresses of, among others, Varvara Stepanova and Lyubov Popova (whose photographs have the place of honour on the title page of Yablonskaya's book) for the 1985 'Art into Production' exhibition in Oxford and London.

Working through the designs of the constructivists confirmed her admiration for the style. 'It's very straight, very strong, very simple, and very expressive. I think it's great to express more ideas in very simple ways. Maybe because I graduated from an architectural institute [Moscow 1982] I like all things which include construction, which are functional. It's close to my way of thinking, not just decorative elements which are brought together, but a very strong system.'

She insists however that her own designs are 'absolutely new, a new interpretation of constructivist styles'. If some are workaday clothes others are extravagant in a very Western way. Her velvet chokers with Soviet military motifs and miniature portraits of past and present Soviet leaders ('there's nothing political about them') have a kitsch flippancy not generally associated with Russian art. Still, as she herself says of constructivism, 'art reflects the political situation, the ideas of the time'.

- Miuda N Yablonskaya, *Women Artists of Russia's New Age: 1900-35*, Thames & Hudson, hbk £28
- 'Bolshevik Posters 1917-25', Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, 15 June-21 July.

Frank Cottrell-Boyce

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Hero Nerds

This time last year, I wrote an episode of *Brookside* in which Sinbad told Caroline he couldn't come to her party because he'd been hit in the eye by a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle. The producer cut the line insisting that I had made the creature up. Oh, if only I had. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is the biggest-grossing film in the States this year and while I'm waiting for the UK release, my children have become addicted to a spruced-up TV version with a blue-pencilled title—*Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles*. They also insist on Hero Turtle paper plates, cups, hats and underwear.

In case you don't know, the Turtles mutated into heroes in the sewers of New Jersey, as a result of something chemical, and with the help of some superhero lessons from a drain-dwelling Ninja master who has been turned into a rat. The rat recruits the Turtles to help him in his epic, rather pointless, struggle against the evil Shredda, a droid of many knives, a kind of bacofoil Freddy. Despite the high amphibian count, *Tales from the Riverbank* it ain't.

It's easy to see why the Turtles are so successful. For one thing, they have a very high recognisability factor—how many other turtles have you seen with hankies tied round their heads? They also have an aura of trendiness which derives from the fact that they started out as a high-class new wave comic. Even in the kiddies' version you can still stumble across the fossilised remains of the appealing cleverness of the original. The Turtles, for instance, are named after Italian renaissance painters such as Raphael, Donatello, Leonardo and—the party dude—Michelangelo.

The incongruity between the dumpy heroes and their classy names gives the show a touch of knowingness, as of course does the whole idea of turtles doing anything as graceful as kung fu. The Turtles' needs in life are simple, not to say dumb. What they like to do all day is drive around in their van, and order pizza. For some reason to do with the chemical in the sewer, their mental development was arrested in their teens. They are, in fact, the latest manifestation of nerd culture. Literally an Animal House, they are less Beast Master, more the Beastie Boys.

The trick of creating a stupid hero so as to question the whole idea of heroism has a long brilliant history: the picture of Achilles that Euripides gives us in *Iphigenia at Aulis* for instance, is probably the most savage attack on stupidity ever written. The problem here however is that the Turtles, as well as being stupid, are cute. They may not have the sinister glamour of Captain Scarlet, but they are likeable, especially Donatello, the gadget master, the kind of nerd who likes to fiddle with hi-fi. I haven't yet seen the film but I know that Jim Henson made the Turtles and they are cuter than ever.

The Turtles' mock heroics do win the day, their affable dumbness supposedly offering some sort of solution. But solution to what? Well, a solution to Shredda. In fact it's hard to see why everyone is so worked up about Shredda. He's not the Mysterons, or Ming from *Mong*. He is not the head of any great Cold War conspiracy or anything else. He's definitely a baddie, but he's a strangely inactive and unambitious baddie (in fact he's working for someone else who is so ill-defined no one can remember his name). Only the Turtles get him really riled. When you were watching *Joe 90*, *Captain Scarlet*, *UFO* or *The Man From Uncle*, you felt that the whole planet was threatened and that if it wasn't for Joe or whoever, you'd be screwed. It's difficult to feel worried by Shredda or that grateful to the Turtles.

Those other shows all dealt directly with the threat of invasion. The *Turtles* deals, albeit indirectly, with a much deeper, more nagging anxiety; the feeling that we have lost control over the world in which we live. The story of the Turtles' genesis for instance, recalls the modern myth about the alligators in the sewers of New York. This type of story crops up again and again in the show itself. There was the time when Shredda substituted the olives in the pizza supply for the eggs of tiny mutant crocodiles which hatched when placed in the microwave. There's a whole string of 'true stories' of urban anxiety in there—from *The Revenge of the Killer Microwave* to *Son of Sam*. The Turtles' stories take place against a landscape that expresses

these anxieties—fast-food parlours, filthy rivers, sewers and so on—then soothes them by blaming Shredda and having the Turtles sort things out.

Well, I believe in solutions. I believe in humanity. But the solutions being offered here are a long way from the combinations of altruism, technology, rational thought and the invulnerable integrity of childhood offered by *Joe 90*. The solution being offered here most loudly is, have a pizza. The subtext is that this stuff is so overwhelmingly complicated you'd be better off grossing out. The Turtles are not alone in this. There are an awful lot of very stupid people on kids' TV at the moment. Check out *Denver the Dinosaur* on Saturday mornings—here a group of goofy teenagers goof into an even goofier dinosaur and they all goof around together. One of the key elements of nerd culture is the way it has transformed the idea of the teenager from someone with ambitions and glamour that challenges the authority of their parents, into dumb animals who would party all night if they could just hold their beer.

Now I'm not one for nostalgia but I do find myself looking back fondly on the days when it was cool to be clever—when Top Cat and Bilko used their brains to run rings round muscle-bound figures of authority. What makes the Turtles so potent is not brains or grace but the way they combine American football goofiness with a good snort of mystic Eastern violence. This is a powerful combination. I know because I saw it work on grown-ups' TV. It was called the war in Vietnam and it wasn't cute at all.

On the other hand, it's impossible not to applaud the Turtles for their one sublime act of cultural sabotage. For my generation, the definition of an intellectual was somebody who could listen to the William Tell Overture without thinking of the Lone Ranger. For my sons' generation, it's going to be someone who can hear the name Michelangelo without shouting, 'Yo, Party Dude!'



'The Turtles are the latest manifestation of nerd culture; less Beast Master, more the Beastie Boys'

marxist review of books

James Heartfield reviews

Mark Poster (ed), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, Polity Press/Basil Blackwell, pbk £8.50; Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge University Press, pbk £7.95, hbk £25; Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*, Polity Press/Basil Blackwell, pbk £8.95, hbk £29.50

POSTMODERN, ANTE-ENLIGHTENMENT

Postmodernism is the fashion that refuses to fade. The fact that the term embraces no consistent approach to the historical, philosophical and cultural matters to which it alludes has doubtless been more of a help than a hindrance in keeping it going. Amid all the obfuscation and jargon, however, we can identify one persistent theme, noted by Jean-François Lyotard in his 1979 work, *The Postmodern Condition*: 'Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives.'

By metanarratives he means any attempt to understand and describe in their totality the laws of development of human society. For Lyotard, and indeed for postmodernism generally, this is an impossible project, born of overweening Enlightenment claims for the power of reason. It is self-deluding, since any presentation of such laws will necessarily be circular, smuggling the proof into the initial hypotheses. 'Let us wage a war on totality', he concludes, 'let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable'.

It should be noted that postmodernism contains its own meta-narrative—the modern in postmodern. This modern refers not to any particular historical period or development in society, but is a grand fiction to which postmodernism appeals in order to justify itself by contrast. It is a conflation of Enlightenment thought of the eighteenth century, Marxism, social democracy and structuralism. In fact, more or less any 'grand narrative' or aspiration to knowledge of reality turns out to be 'modern'.

The first casualty here is any distinction between different social movements. The quest for reason of the encyclopaedists in 1700s France in the face of the mystifications of church and crown becomes synonymous with the work of structuralist professors today. The Bolsheviks' attempt to plan society is equated with the Attlee government's attempt to plan Milton Keynes. The sublime and the ridiculous are joined without regard to context or goals: it is enough that they should presume to have goals. The postmodernists cannot see the trees for the wood.

It is convenient however for any postmodernist critique not to investigate the content of any rationalising project. It is simply enough to identify it as such. Further, all grand narratives, being interchangeable, must bear responsibility for any outcome of the folly of human agency. Every encyclopaedist has taken the first step to the gas chambers. Any challenge to capitalism will end in the gulag.

The career of Jean Baudrillard, recorded in his *Selected Writings*, shows how the collapse of semiotics, the science of the sign, laid the basis for postmodernism. These essays published in his native French between 1968 and 1985 open with a critique of the idea of the consumer sovereignty promised by advertising. Here Baudrillard is in the mainstream of semiotics. As with Roland Barthes, his target, consumerism, is thought of as a system which will yield to a rational investigation that will dispel its mystery.

As he attempts to develop this in 'Towards a political economy of the sign', the project collapses: 'The crucial thing is to see that the

separation of the sign and the world is a fiction.... This "world" that the sign "evokes" (the better to distance itself from it) is nothing but the effect of the sign, the shadow that it carries about, its "pantographic" extension.' Here Baudrillard carries semiotics to its limits. The science of signification, of meaning, demands the end of any and all objective basis to such meaning. Reality is now an arbitrary affair, contingent upon sign systems, in other words, ideas.

Having dealt with semiotics, Baudrillard assumes that he has finished with all rationality. His most pointed attack on Marxism, 'The mirror of production', continually slides into an attack on semiotics. He says that Marxism mirrors capitalism in its obsession with production: 'Radical in its logical analysis of capital, Marxist theory nonetheless maintains an anthropological consensus with the options of Western rationalism in its definitive form acquired in eighteenth-century bourgeois thought. Science, technique, progress, history—in these ideas we have an entire civilisation that comprehends itself as producing its own development and takes its dialectical force toward completing humanity in terms of totality and happiness.'

Baudrillard discounts Marx's separation between the use-value of a commodity and its exchange-value. He also attacks the related presentation of 'concrete labour', that specific kind of labour which makes things into useful objects, and 'abstract labour', labour considered apart from its specific qualities, which endows commodities with exchange-value. To Baudrillard this is a rhetorical device: 'concrete labour' is the 'alibi', or metanarrative, of 'abstract labour'. The charge is that concrete labour is simply an invention against which to pose the idea of abstract labour. This false counter-position, Baudrillard writes, smuggles a fetish for labour, or production, into Marx's work.

Baudrillard's criticism of Marx can only make any sense if *Capital* is read as if it were semiotics rather than a critique of political economy. If it was the case that abstract labour was a linguistic trick or that the relation of exchange to the useful aspects of a commodity was a relation only in Marx's book, then Baudrillard might just have a point. But Marx was not a semiotician. His category 'abstract labour' is not just a word but a central feature of capitalist production: homogeneous, abstract human labour is the source of value, common to all commodities, which is why things which are produced in very different ways (chalk and cheese, silicon and chips) can all be represented by money and thus exchanged on the market. Similarly, exchange-value is not invented as an attribute of commodities by Marx, nor production fetishised by him. These are achieved by capitalist social relations and the play of market forces.

If Baudrillard's book shows the gestation of postmodernist thought, Richard Rorty's *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* demonstrates how it has become an establishment hang-up. Where Baudrillard's militancy is typical of French philosophy, Rorty's pragmatism is typical of American mainstream liberalism. He takes

postmodernism's radical scepticism towards objective reasoning and draws out its profoundly conservative political consequences. His starting point is contingency. Against any idea of a certain essence to be realised, he proposes that language, the self and community are all contingent—they are literally accidental.

The stress on contingency is not wholly bad. Ideas that see the world as fixed and eternal have generally been conservative ones. Rorty, however, does not fix upon contingency out of a desire for change, but rather as an expression of the uncertainty of the dominant order. A philosophy that incorporates change as something to be negotiated but lacking the force of objective law, suits current middle class anxieties. His conservatism is evident in his piecemeal attitude to the Enlightenment. The concept of objective truth he says is not essential to Enlightenment, but is simply a habit picked up from earlier, religious thought: the 'need to have human projects underwritten by a non-human authority'. Here the Enlightenment, the assault on religious ignorance in favour of rational investigation, is turned on its head.

If natural science was a model for the pioneers of the Enlightenment, it is at best an embarrassment to the mature 'liberal' Rorty. He is hostile to the example of an investigation of a law-governed, objective world. His hostility to the sciences is reinforced by their less dramatic contemporary development. 'This was a useful tactic in its day, but it is less useful nowadays. For, in the first place the sciences are no longer the most interesting or promising or exciting area of culture.' It speaks volumes for postmodernism that it should take comfort from the inability of capitalism to develop technology and sciences systematically.

Rorty is explicit too on the lowered horizons of the postmodern polity: 'Society [should be] conceived as a band of eccentrics collaborating for purposes of mutual protection rather than as a band of fellow spirits united by a common goal.' From the point of view of the property-owning classes this is true. But whereas the era of Enlightenment was one in which the bourgeoisie could gather all classes around the project of rebuilding society anew, today any such cross-class community is contingent.

Rorty's book shows how postmodernism has provided the terminology for a loss of purpose by the bourgeoisie. Alex

Callinicos' *Against Postmodernism* shows why rationalist thought has had trouble defending itself. To his credit, Callinicos sets out to defend the Enlightenment and rationality, and makes some valid points to that end while reviewing the literature usefully. However, he is over-respectful of the academic status of many of the writers. And although he notes that a 'purely formal conception of reason cannot defeat the foes of Enlightenment', he misses the weakness which has made Enlightenment thought vulnerable.

Any defence of rationality must explain the predisposition towards irrationalism in capitalist society. Society does seem mysterious, which is why people get away with mystical explanations of it. Marx's theory of *commodity fetishism* explains the limits of rational thought under capitalism. It characterises capitalism as a system in which people relate to each other not directly, as fellow producers, but indirectly through the exchange of their products. Consequently social relations take the form of relations between things.

Bourgeois thought since the Enlightenment has grappled with the problem that human interaction appears spontaneous and resistant to rational investigation. This is precisely because many social decisions are not made but come about unconsciously through the dictates of the market. Thus Enlightenment philosophers were constantly thwarted in their attempts to carry the rational method of the new sciences into the investigation of human society. Postmodernism makes a virtue out of this failure, and consequently rejects the Enlightenment emphasis on the possibility of social progress. This helps explain why the theory has caught on in the pessimistic climate of late capitalist society today.

Callinicos has little feel for the way postmodernism feeds off the apparent irrationality of society because he misunderstands the import of Marx's theory of commodity fetishism. At best he thinks it extraneous: 'No great damage would be done to *Capital* by the excision of commodity fetishism.' (*Marxism and Philosophy*, 1987) Thus, although Callinicos can plausibly account for the gestation of postmodernism in the political disappointments of the post-1968 generation of French intellectuals, he has trouble explaining how such disappointment on the left could have become a central motif of bourgeois thought.

Adam Eastman reviews

Arno J Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken? The Final Solution In History*, Verso, pbk £12.95, hbk £39.95

THE HOLOCAUST AND HISTORY

'There was a time when the Jews in Germany also laughed at my prophecies. I do not know whether they are still laughing today or whether they have been cured.... But take my word for it: they will stop laughing everywhere.' (Adolf Hitler, 1942)

Hitler's grim prophecy was to be fulfilled. The enormity of the Holocaust, in which an estimated six million Jews perished, has been detailed many times. But a rational explanation for such an apparently irrational horror remains elusive. According to the conventional histories, the Holocaust was the result of the extreme ideology of Nazism, and in particular its rabid anti-Semitism.

Princeton University professor Arno Mayer has taken a radically different approach to the subject. *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?* deals with many previously unanswered questions and challenges the assumptions of most writers on the Holocaust. The purpose of Mayer's book is not to add new information to the discussion; it contains no new source material or even footnotes. Mayer told me that his intention was 'to debate with those who maintain that from the start anti-Semitism was the core and pivot of National Socialist ideology'. In rejecting the argument that the Nazis planned to exterminate the Jews from the start, Mayer challenges a central contention of most accounts of the Holocaust.

If the Nazis were simply implementing a masterplan to eliminate all Jews, why did they try to force them to leave Germany? Why were the Jews of Eastern Europe annihilated more systematically than those in the West? If the eradication of the Jews was the primary objective of the Nazis, why did they launch an equally barbarous onslaught against the Soviet Union, which according to the latest figures left up to 28m dead? These are some of the questions which Mayer attempts to answer.

Until recently the debate has been a very one-sided one. Mayer told me why he thought this was the case: 'In the US during the Cold War the left was in a beleaguered and defensive position. We almost

had to make a superhuman effort to try to liberate ourselves from the ideological pressure. We were at all times fighting the primacy of ideology.' Clearly the Cold War had a debilitating effect on intellectual as well as political activity. When the world was seen to revolve around the conflict of ideas between Soviet 'communism' and American capitalism, it was difficult to argue that there was more to the Holocaust than the ideology of Nazism.

Mayer does not dismiss the importance of ideas. Indeed, he considers himself to 'take ideology more seriously than others from the left'. But he insists that you 'cannot understand anything without looking at the interplay between ideology and circumstance'. Thus while the 'core ideology of Nazism consisted of four elements, anti-Semitism was only one of the four'. What needs to be explained is the 'point at which anti-Semitism has primacy'. In other words, it is only under certain circumstances that ideas really have any impact. The absence of anti-Semitism from Italian fascism, Mayer points out, was largely due to it having little meaning given the small number of Jews in Italian society.

Mayer locates the development of the 'Judeocide' as he calls it, in 'Germany looking for vital space in the East through the crusade against Judeo-Bolshevism'. The barbaric colonisation of the East, the war of '*sein oder nichtsein*' which Hitler boasted would make the world 'hold its breath', created the essential precondition for Nazi anti-Semitism becoming a policy of genocide. In as much as there was a specifically Jewish 'solution' up to that point, it was to ship them to Madagascar with the complicity of the British.

The 28m Soviet dead are testimony to the centrality the Nazis gave to Eastern expansion and its corollary, the destruction of the Soviet regime. Of course, even in the early and successful stages of Hitler's war against the Soviet Union, Jews were a target. But Mayer's argument is that the extermination of the Jews was not yet a systematic and overriding objective. Consequently, much of the killing was carried out by local reactionaries. In the initial stages of

the Eastern campaign, after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Nazi violence was directed against the Jews only in so far as they were identified as linchpins of the Soviet regime.

According to Mayer, the Jews became the central target of German aggression only after the failure of the campaign against the Soviet Union. Hitler expected a victory as swift as that against the Poles, particularly given that the bulk of German resources was concentrated on the Eastern front. But after the collapse of Operation Typhoon in late 1941, Hitler was facing failure. Defeated in their objective of bringing the Soviet Union to its knees in six weeks, the Nazis turned their fury against the Jews—especially in Poland, which was not only the pivot of the Eastern campaign but the centre of operations of an increasingly embittered SS. This point was made by Emmanuel Ringelblum in his terrifying 1958 book *Notes From the Warsaw Ghetto*: 'Because the Germans are being defeated and their cities destroyed they are taking their revenge on the Jews.'

Even at the stage of reaction becoming uncontrollable, Mayer contends that an economic imperative remained. For example, Auschwitz came to be run as a slave labour factory by the German company IG Farben. Able-bodied Jews were worked to death rather than gassed. Mayer claims the Lodz ghetto was the last to be destroyed because of its economic importance to the war effort.

Nevertheless, Mayer cites a conflict between the 'productivists'

and 'exterminationists' in the SS—those who stressed the utility of Jewish labour and those who argued for liquidation. In reality, the distinction meant little. Given the conditions, the policy of unselective Jewish 'resettlement' meant certain death. Economic devastation and the starvation of the Jewish community made its utility to the German war machine questionable.

Mayer's argument is that the Holocaust was neither planned nor inevitable: and far from being peculiar to Nazism, the potential for such a catastrophe remains so long as similar social conditions prevail. Certainly, as he says, 'there is a recedescence of nationalist, ethnic and religious bigotry as a by-product of destabilisation in Eastern Europe. But the question is whether anti-Semitism in political terms will manifest itself. If it is activated in a situation of more general crisis then all bets are off'. Mayer is not about to predict the future, but he is certain that 'one thing we still have to accept from Marx—if nothing else—is that things will change again'. In a pessimistic play on the famous phrase from *The Communist Manifesto* he says 'a spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of pogroms'.

Why Did the Heavens Not Darken? is an important work that deserves a wide readership. Much will be contentious. Nevertheless, if only for making us question the conventional interpretation of the Holocaust, Mayer has done history a service.

Alan Harding reviews

Clive Ponting, 1940: *Myth and Reality*, Hamish Hamilton, hbk £15.99

WHOSE FINEST HOUR?

Clive Ponting came to prominence as the civil servant who blew the gaff on the sinking of the Argentine cruiser *Belgrano* during the 1982 Falklands War. He leaked evidence which revealed that Her Majesty's government knew the ship was steaming away from the British exclusion zone when Thatcher's team ordered it sunk. Ponting was not against the war; but he was opposed to excessive secrecy and dirty fighting. He was sacked and prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act.

Ponting is still stirring the shit, as both an investigative writer and an organic farmer in Wales. In *1940: Myth and Reality*, published to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of Dunkirk, he uses government archives to debunk some of the myths about the Second World War.

What Winston Churchill dubbed the British Empire's 'finest hour' was in fact the end of Britain's role as global power. The enormity of the crisis is captured in Ponting's tableau of the cabinet meeting of 22 August 1940. The issue under discussion was not the Battle of Britain and the survival of the RAF. It was quiet in the cloudy skies as the weather kept the Luftwaffe away. Before the cabinet was a paper entitled 'Gold and exchange resources', by chancellor Kingsley Wood. The contents were devastating: 'It forecast Britain's imminent financial collapse and inability to continue the war.'

Wood's paper showed that Britain was having to liquidate its assets so fast that they would be gone by the end of 1940. Ponting is probably right to make this the key moment of modern British history. The cabinet had to decide whether to accept defeat by Germany or to go cap-in-hand to the Americans. It chose the latter, since at least an alliance with the USA would preserve the façade of British power. But it was an expensive façade.

Britain swapped strategic bases in the Caribbean for clapped-out US destroyers. Washington gave no commitment to defend British interests in the Far East, insisted that Britain liquidate all assets in the Americas (to be bought up at rock-bottom prices by US firms), and sent a warship to pick up British gold shipments en route from South Africa without telling Whitehall. In December 1940, Churchill drafted a telegram to president Roosevelt complaining that the USA was like 'a sheriff arresting the last assets of a helpless debtor'. The embassy in Washington dissuaded him from sending it and annoying the Americans. Such was the reality of the 'special relationship'.

In analysing these events, Ponting himself indulges an old myth: that Britain was dragged down by the unnecessary burden of defending the Empire. This misses the point. It was only the parasitical exploitation of the colonies which had allowed Britain to maintain an inflated world status for so long. Still, Ponting's investigation of colonial affairs contains some precious nuggets, like the minute mentioning an offer by the British government to 'reunite Falkland Islands with Argentina' so as to ensure continued

supplies of Argentine wheat and beef. The details of this episode remain secret; but Ponting cites a foreign office official opining in 1936 that it would be hard to explain how Britain obtained these islands 'without showing ourselves up as international bandits'.

Ponting is most entertaining when counterposing the facts to the great wartime myths. His Churchill is a vainglorious failure who, on entering the war cabinet in autumn 1939, made as big a cock-up of the operation in Norway as he had of the Gallipoli landings in 1915. He was often under the influence, and when called upon to defend his Norway strategy in the commons kept stuttering about Sweden. Ponting claims that when Churchill's speeches were broadcast on radio, they were delivered by an actor who played Larry the Lamb for a living.

Ponting's version of the military situation in 1940 is equally heretical. The German army was not an invincible machine on the Western front. In October 1939, a month after war was declared, it had enough ammunition to supply a third of its troops for a fortnight, and was outnumbered 3-2 by the Allies in manpower and tanks. The ease with which the Germans advanced was largely due to the speed at which the British commanders retreated.

When the Battle of France began in spring 1940, the British Expeditionary Force did not fight its way heroically to Dunkirk while being betrayed by the cowardly Belgians and French. Only 500 British troops were killed in the first 11 days of the campaign. The Belgians had to give up more and more territory to keep the Allied line intact by following the retreating British.

The Dunkirk evacuation remains the biggest achievement—not of the intrepid spirit of our island people, but of the state propaganda machine. The British army was evacuating while its Allies held off the Germans; on 29 May French troops were thrown off the ships. Nor was the evacuation the work of flotillas of small ships; it was not publicly announced until three quarters of the army had been transported. The people's armada carried a modest eight per cent of those shipped out of Dunkirk.

As spring turned to summer 1940 the cabinet was still debating whether to seek a compromise with Nazi Germany. Foreign secretary Lord Halifax led the faction wanting peace now. The new prime minister, Churchill, spoke for those who wanted to wait a couple of months to see if better terms could be coaxed out of Herr Hitler. This was the substance of the divide between the 'appeasers' and the 'anti-fascists' in the establishment.

Turning to the home front, Ponting does not describe chirpy Cockneys cor blimeying their way through the Blitz. The civilian population was demoralised and so distrustful of official news that a third of them listened to Lord Haw Haw, broadcasting from inside the Third Reich. No doubt there are those in high places today who wish they could have given Clive Ponting the same treatment as that earlier turncoat.

James Malone reviews

Stephen Ambrose, *Nixon, Volume Two: The Triumph of a Politician 1962-72*, Simon & Schuster, hbk £19.95; Robert D Schulzinger, *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy*, Columbia University Press, hbk £19.95

DR STRANGELOVE: THE SEQUEL

Former US president Richard Nixon and his old foreign policy man Henry Kissinger died a political death in the seventies—or so everybody thought at the time. But like vampires who haven't had wooden stakes hammered through their hearts, they continue to haunt the living.

Nixon has been rehabilitated as an elder statesman and plays the sage in the editorial pages of the Sundays. Badges have even been spotted proclaiming 'Tanned, Rested and Ready—Nixon in '96'. Kissinger, who crawled from the wreckage of Watergate more successfully than Nixon, is only slightly less active than he was in the seventies. When he's not on television, Kissinger is writing for foreign policy journals or meeting top policy makers. He has direct access to the White House, through protégés Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger, advisers to George Bush.

It has been a remarkable comeback for Tricky Dick and Doctor Strangelove. Today American high school students are asked 'Should Nixon be remembered for Watergate or for his opening to China?'. Such questions reveal why the president and his sidekick have not been wholly discredited: few in the USA would suggest that Nixon and Kissinger should be remembered for their most heinous crime—killing millions of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians.

Nixon and Kissinger have written lengthy memoirs, but their tomes do more to whitewash the past than set the record straight. Nixon has blocked access to most of his papers and 4000 hours of taped conversations. Based on recently released archival material, these two biographies of Nixon and Kissinger help to correct the self-serving accounts by the men themselves—and those by 'the president's men' who wrote books to cover their legal fees.

Stephen Ambrose's Nixon is cynical, lying, backstabbing, paranoid and egomaniacal. He recalls some of Nixon's most embarrassing moments, such as when the president stood before the Great Wall on his landmark trip to China and said in all seriousness: 'This is a great wall.' Nixon was painfully awkward in company and possessed a tactless sense of humour. When giving a guest to the White House a memento, Nixon would tell the same joke: 'Give this to your wife or secretary, whichever you prefer.' It rarely got a laugh.

Nixon and Kissinger were the odd couple: the California-born Wasp and the German-born Jewish refugee; the machine politician and the Harvard professor; the old guard Republican and the intellectual guru of the liberal Eastern establishment. Nixon would say 'some call me an egghead', while Kissinger saw himself as a 'Wild West cowboy'. Each thought the other needed psychiatric treatment.

Nixon's anti-Semitism was a sore point. After a typical tirade against 'Jewish traitors', Nixon turned to Kissinger and said, 'Isn't that right Henry?'. Kissinger replied, 'Well, Mr President, there are Jews and Jews'. Later Kissinger would say 'You can't begin to imagine how much anti-Semitism there is at the top of this government—and I mean at the top'. John Wayne told Nixon that the opening to communists in China was 'a real shocker' and that he should stop listening to 'that Jew, Kissinger'.

Robert Schulzinger demythologises Kissinger the diplomat extraordinaire. Schulzinger points out that despite his talk of *realpolitik*, Metternich and nineteenth-century balance-of-power struggles, Kissinger was a traditional post-war foreign policy thinker. Faced with the collapse of the establishment consensus on foreign policy over Vietnam, Kissinger responded pragmatically. Detente with the Soviet Union was intended to gain Soviet assistance in third world trouble-spots like Vietnam.

Kissinger became a celebrity: the 'most admired man in America' according to Gallup. But, paradoxically, Kissinger's acclaim as a globetrotting diplomat was a symptom of the declining power of the USA. The problem of managing US spheres of influence required extra diplomatic effort as American strength waned. Schulzinger says that Kissinger's diplomacy 'represented an end of an era more than it heralded a new beginning'.

Kissinger remains a fairly accurate weathervane of establishment thought in America. With the end of the Cold War and the rise of Germany and Japan as contenders, the USA may need some of the balance-of-power diplomacy Kissinger talked so much about. Dick and Hank in '96? Pass the stakes.

Rob Knight reviews

Boris Yeltsin, *Against the Grain: An Autobiography*, translated by Michael Glenny, Jonathan Cape, hbk £12.95

IN THE GORBACHEV GROOVE

Against the Grain is a dead giveaway about Boris Yeltsin. Its author often works 20 hours a day and expects his deputies to do likewise. He thinks that managers should reward good workers. He believes that mass meetings are dangerous. His autobiography is a book of homilies for bosses about how to be a good boss. Anybody who harbours illusions that Yeltsin might have more to offer Soviet workers than Mikhail Gorbachev should remember Lenin's description of socialism as 'an end to bossing'.

Yeltsin is seen as the only credible alternative to Gorbachev. Yet for somebody who claims to offer another way out of the impasse in the Soviet Union, his criticisms of perestroika are remarkably banal. His main point, about the need for the market, is accepted by every section of the ruling bureaucracy.

He complains that Gorbachev and his hangers-on are too stuck in the past, too corrupt and too subservient. All this is true, but Yeltsin has no alternative beyond moral platitudes. Where there is subservience let there be outspokenness; where there is corruption let there be honesty; where there is laziness let there be hard work. And, fortunately for the Soviet Union, cometh the hour, cometh the man.

Yeltsin, the rough diamond, the man who has been cast down by the leadership only to rise again, confesses to having the necessary talents to turn things around. Yeltsin, by his own account, is short of no virtue but modesty. Typically, he writes of his time as party

boss in Sverdlovsk as 'a period of furious activity and, as always in my life, I spared myself less than anyone'.

Buried beneath the moralising and self-justification, there are some useful insights. Yeltsin presents a uniquely jaundiced insider's view of the goings-on in the Kremlin. He tells how the politburo files in and out of meetings in alphabetical order; how Brezhnev in his last years signed anything put in front of him so he could get off to his hunting; how Gorbachev's politburo is as sycophantic and unquestioning as any of its predecessors.

He also illustrates in passing some of the problems facing the Soviet system. We learn that convict labour is paid twice the normal rate in order to alleviate the labour shortage. We see the chaos that ensues when key sections are omitted from builders' plans, rendering new buildings useless. Yeltsin documents the casual corruption that exists at all levels of a society in which cynicism is ingrained.

Those looking for a solution to the problems facing the Soviet Union will find none in this book. Yeltsin understands and accepts the symbolic role he plays in Soviet politics. He is a 'left foil', just as Yegor Ligachev is a 'right foil', who allows Gorbachev to come across as a man of the centre. It is fitting that at the end of the book, after the catalogue of complaints that has gone before, Yeltsin should argue that there is no alternative to the man who organised his downfall: Mikhail Gorbachev.

letters

We welcome readers' views and criticisms. Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

Left, right and riots

I was sorry to read in *Living Marxism* (May) that my old comrade Tariq Ali was so fazed by the events in Trafalgar Square that he decided to go on to the other side of the barricades. This does not mean, however, that the majority of the British left has done likewise. Mick Hume's editorial expressed views which I am sure are held by many of us: that we would rather line up with those 'prepared to confront a baton-swinging policeman' than with the pathetic Militant leaders. In fact many of us were there!

The phenomenon of 'uncontrollable elements' rioting at the end of marches is well known in the rest of Europe. We saw it during the student demonstrations in Paris in 1987. The reality is that no force on Earth could possibly have prevented people from expressing their anger in this manner, as the same left always seems to recognise when such events take place elsewhere. You have no monopoly on support for those who showed considerable courage in fighting back with the only means at hand. *Labour Briefing*, to name only one example, carried reports to this effect, and most of the 'hard left' inside the Labour Party have nothing but contempt for those who have tried to denigrate the anti-poll tax movement by concentrating their fire on the oppressed, rather than upon the Tory creators of the whole situation.

Andrew Coates

Socialist Society Steering Committee

The German question and answers

Undoubtedly Joan Phillips is right to claim that the majority of East Germans support Germany's reunification, expecting a higher standard of living ('Deutschland: dying to escape the past', May). But she's wrong to label the only major party that resists the *Anschluß*—the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)—as 'the new face of Stalinism'.

The PDS has lost two thirds of its membership because the old privileges have gone and it takes courage to stand up for socialism in East Germany nowadays. The historic mission of the SED/PDS was to hand over the East German state apparatus to the new Western-style bourgeois democracy. Now the old institutions—the army, police, Stasi, etc—will serve the new order. Many former party officials and state bureaucrats, now members of the

CDU, will emerge as the entrepreneurs and managers of the market economy.

If Joan Phillips had read the programme of the new party she would know that the PDS (and the *Vereinigte Linke*—United Left) represent the most progressive elements of East German society today. Whoever supports modern socialism—a socialism open to feminism, humanism, Green elements—cannot ignore the fact that the PDS is the only party with a mass base in East Germany.

The main issue for the West German left right now is to prevent a 'Fourth Reich' in the centre of Europe. German imperialism is on the rise and the German left faces a grim future. We need the PDS as an ally in East Germany whether we like it or not. A critical analysis of the party's development is helpful and welcome, but PDS-bashing for the fun of it doesn't help us the least bit.

Thomas Rolirad

Goettingen

West Germany

Ute Fischau's letter (April) suggests that the emergence of German nationalism is somehow a new problem—a view very widespread among the left in Germany. The argument goes: German nationalism equals reunification, therefore we must be against reunification. This covers up the left's own failure to confront consistently German nationalism over the past 20 years by pretending that it never really existed as a problem until the issue of reunification.

In fact, attempts to reassert German nationalism occurred throughout the eighties. The Reagan-Kohl visit to Bitburg in 1985, the mobilisation of racist and nationalist sentiment during the 1986 federal elections, and the *Historiker-Streik* in 1987-88 are all examples.

The left's failure to tackle nationalism in these and other instances has meant that, until now, the establishment has held the initiative. Only by being 100 per cent in support of reunification can the German left begin to break away from its profoundly conservative outlook. By arguing for German reunification the left makes clear that it has no interest in supporting any aspect of the status quo.

Without this stance, the German left has no realistic perspective for fighting German nationalism. To be against the reunification of Germany means being for the division of Germany. But this division has had the utmost reactionary consequences and has in fact been the bedrock of the whole post-war order. Thus, far from recognising new realities, the left are, once again, stuck in the past.

The division of Germany remains a reactionary pillar of the past. The left should stop trying to steer into the future by only looking at the rearview mirror.

Julian Albert

Hamburg

Permanent apartheid?

I agree that the De Klerk regime can remove petty apartheid and unnecessary restrictions ('South Africa: no time for euphoria', April). But surely the *economic basis* of apartheid capitalism is essential for the accumulation process. Giving blacks equal democratic rights in residence, social services and education will cost a great deal—more than South Africa can afford in a recessionary period.

The homelands and the pauperisation of the blacks are crucial for keeping the value of black labour-power as low as possible. Granting democratic rights to the black masses necessarily means an increased burden on the total profits of the South African economy and upward pressure on the value of black labour. Consequently, the basic relationship of apartheid—extreme black oppression—will not be reformed away as it is the prerequisite of South African capital accumulation. It is therefore irreformable.

Finally, a 'neo-colonial' solution for South Africa! This term is nonsense when used in relation to South Africa, an imperialist nation in its own right. It smells of the Stalinist notion of 'colonisation of a special type' in South Africa. In a *Living Marxism* edition devoted to the death of Stalinism precision would have been appreciated.

John Miller

Coventry

'Ad enough?'

I was shocked and amused by the advertisement which showed a pair of East Berlin border guards posing merrily behind two pieces of *Living Marxism* merchandise, the all-new single size baggy t-shirts.

It makes little sense to me why you should want to flaunt association with such a symbol of communist demise. Such a ruse was first used rather unashamedly by that popular capitalist icon, Pepsi. Since then many have leapt aboard this now weary merchandising bandwagon. Lest you forget, quite a few people were murdered there fleeing the repression that this wall tried to contain. Nowadays it is little more than a playground littered with money-making schemers, green-fingered opportunists and cheapskates like yourselves, in this case anyhow.

Neil Michael

London

Ted Talbot and Joan Lewis' claim (letters, April) that *Living Marxism's* subscription advertisement endorses a racist-fuelled nuclear attack on Moscow is very silly indeed. Apparently 14 years of exposure to the left press has taught these two well-intentioned readers little about satire.

Antoni Orgill

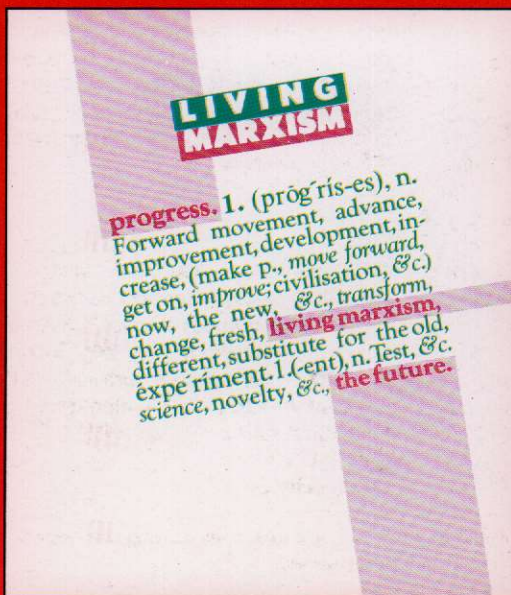
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* Yes, we 'ave. This correspondence is now closed



Berlin Wall, January 1990

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