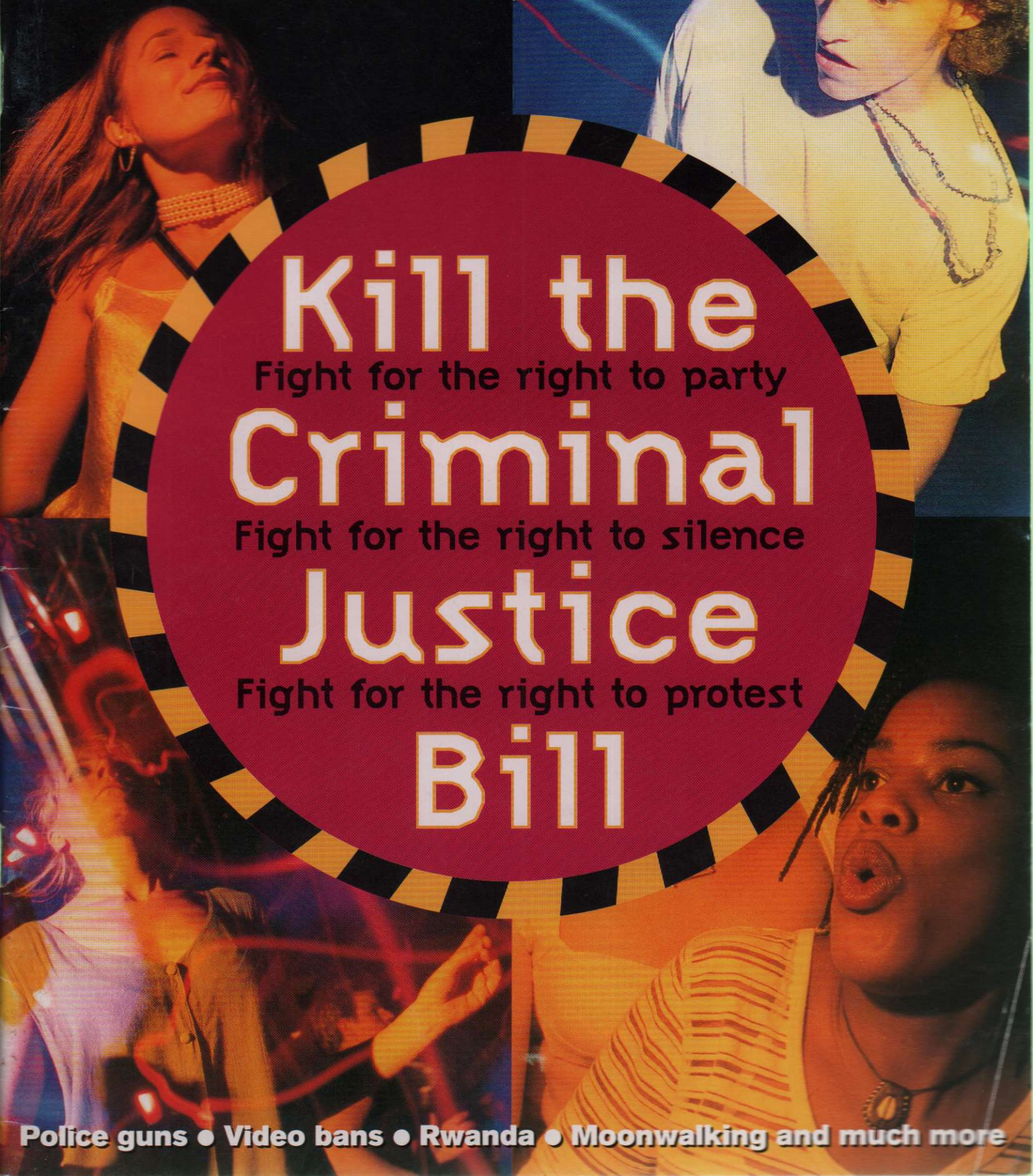


LIVING

MARXISM



US\$5 DM7 FF25 IR£2
UK £2 July 1994 No69

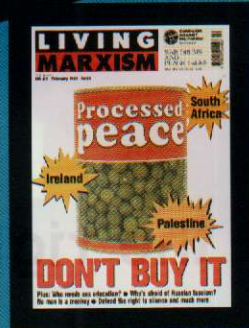
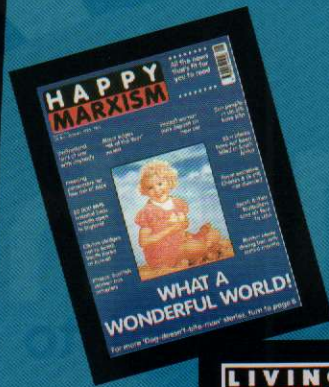
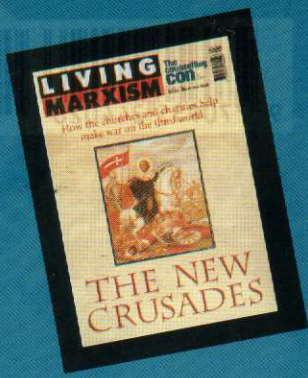


Kill the
Fight for the right to party
Criminal
Fight for the right to silence
Justice
Fight for the right to protest
Bill

Police guns • Video bans • Rwanda • Moonwalking and much more

Subscribe

A subscription to *Living Marxism* is now better value than ever; at £19.50 for a year you save almost 20 per cent on the cover price. Write to *Living Marxism* Subscriptions (69), BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX or phone (071) 278 7699.



Back issues

All issues £2.50 including p&p

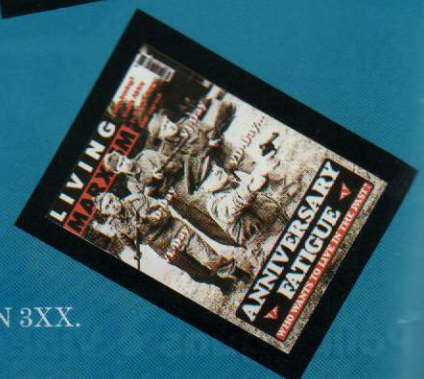
- 62 They're all PC now; Women and sex in the nineties; Handicapped or oppressed; Environmental imperialism; Privatisation: another government handout
- 63 The right to be offensive; Happy news—read sod all about it; North Korea: nuclear Gooks?; Bulger trial: a morality play for our times
- 64 Processed peace: don't buy it; Sex education—who needs it? Major's Irish gamble; No man is a monkey
- 65 The new crusades: how the churches and charities help make war on the third world; The counselling con; Why PC can damage your health
- 66 Nature's not good enough: the case for infertility treatment and genetic engineering; Bosnia: where peace means war; Computer porn scandal
- 67 Britain drools over D-Day: pornography for patriots; Who's afraid of porn? The family: what's all the fuss about?; The trouble with anti-racism
- 68 D-Day, VE-Day, VJ-Day: anniversary fatigue; South Africa's election fraud America pulls the strings in Bosnia; Unemployment fall-out; Kurt Cobain

Binders

Living Marxism embossed binders.
£7 plus 80p p&p

Index

Living Marxism index. Issues 1-58;
November 1988-August 1993. £2.50 plus 40p p&p



Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX.

CONTENTS

- 4 **Editorial**
- 6 Letters
- 8 Kill the Criminal Justice Bill
John Fitzpatrick
- 11 A law to make you raving mad
Josephine Hussey
- 13 Ann Bradley
- 14 Arms and the policeman
Andrew Calcutt
- 17 A moral panic for adults
Alec Campbell
- 20 China: human rights make no cents
James Heartfield
- 22 **Futures:** Over the moon?
John Gillott and Manjit Kumar
- 25 Towards 2000
- 29 The crying game
Frank Füredi
- 30 Who killed Rwanda?
Sabena Reul, Andy Clarkson
- 34 Where's Blair's Labour Party?
Mike Freeman
- 36 Management's flexible friend
Phil Murphy
- 38 **Taboos:** Family planning
or population control?
Amanda Macintosh
- 41 Toby Banks
- 42 **Living:** Defending Damien Hirst;
Ethical adverts; Blur
- 47 **The Marxist Review of Books**

COVER PHOTOS: OPUS CONTENTS PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER



POLICE PRESENCE AT THE 1 MAY DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL

Fun in the sun?

This month's Living Marxism sets the scene for the truncheon-tastic summer of 1994: crazy days and naughty nights filled with the Criminal Justice Bill, armed police and all-round law-and-order mania.

Raves are being made illegal, festivals and protests are being criminalised, videos are on the wrong end of a legal crackdown. So what is there left to do this summer?

Well, you can sit in the garden (but keep off the grass). Or you can stand up to the government, get in touch with the Campaign Against Militarism, and get active in opposing the Criminal Justice Bill and all the rest of the treats that the strongarm state has in store for us.

Last year the authorities brought charges against 10 Campaign Against Militarism members, arrested after invading the US embassy in London in protest at the bombing of Somalia. CAM has successfully defended all of the Embassy 10, demonstrating that if we are bold and we stick together we can defend our right to protest.

For more information, turn to page 8.
Or phone Geraldine Hetherington on (071) 278 9908.

Editor: **Mick Hume**

International Editor: **Daniel Nassim** ● News: **Andrew Calcutt** Living: **Kenan Malik**

Books: **James Heartfield** ● Design: **Richard Stead** ● Production: **Michael Kramer,**

Peter Ray, Alec Campbell ● Managing Editor: **Phil Murphy**

Advertising and Business Manager: **Ian Scott**

US mailing address: Junius Publications Ltd, PO Box 769, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156

Subscription rates: Britain and Northern Ireland £19.50 ● Europe (airmail) £27 ● Outside Europe (airmail) £37 ● Overseas (surface mail) £23 ● (Institutions add £7.50)

● Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX; Fax (071) 278 9844 ● Distributed in the UK by Comag Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE; Phone: West Drayton (0895) 444 055; Fax (0895) 445 255; Telex 881 3787 ● Distributed in the USA by Ingram Periodicals Inc, 1226 Heil Quaker Boulevard, Post Office Box 7000, La Vergne, TN 37086-7000; Phone (615) 793 5522 and Bernhard DeBoer Inc, 113 East Centre Street, Nutley, New Jersey 07110; Phone (201) 667 9300 ● Typeset by Junius Publications (TU) © copyright Revolutionary Communist Party ● Printed by Russell Press (TU), Nottingham ● ISSN 0955-2448 June 1994.

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but can only be returned if an SAE is enclosed

**LIVING
MARXISM**

Monthly review of the
Revolutionary Communist Party
Editorial: (071) 278 9908
Subscriptions: (071) 278 7699
E-mail: lm@camintl.org



Mick Hume

Who needs controls?

I am against the Criminal Justice Bill because it is an attempt by the government to tell us what we can and cannot do and where we can and cannot go. For the same reason, I am against all of the other schemes now seeking to regulate and control life in Britain. I want no bans on raves and protests—and no bans on racist literature or cigarette advertising either. I want to defend the right to silence—and oppose all attempts to censor pornographic material or anti-Irish jokes.

A lot of people reading the coverage of the Criminal Justice Bill in this issue of *Living Marxism* will be outraged by the government's attack on basic freedoms and its attempt to dictate how others live. Although the official opposition parties have gone along with the general drift of the law-and-order clampdown, thousands are bitterly opposed to the bill. But it is a safe bet today that many of those same people also support demands to impose some alternative controls on human behaviour.

The fashionable causes of these politically correct times all seem to have a strong authoritarian element. There are demands, led by feminists like the American Catherine MacKinnon, for extensive censorship of material they deem pornographic or anti-women. There are demands, led by anti-fascist groups, for bans and media boycotts on the British National Party and other scum whom they call Nazis. And there is a general vogue in radical circles for demanding more regula-

tions against 'offensive' remarks and jokes in colleges and workplaces, along with more measures to outlaw everything from smoking to boxing.

From their different perspectives, the government and its critics all want to regulate and control what we can do, see or hear. When differences arise, it is usually over the question of which social evils should be targeted. But there is a more basic question that needs to be asked. Shouldn't people who set out to defend freedoms and oppose repression be worried to find themselves sharing the authoritarian and censorious approach of those who authored the Criminal Justice Bill?

Their expressed aims might often sound very different; for example, anti-racists want a law to stop violence against black people while the government wants one to stop violence against people in red hunting jackets. Yet some dangerous assumptions about what people are like seem to underpin the approach of both.

Whatever cause it is supposed to support, the call for more controls, bans and regulations reveals a low opinion of the humanity of which we are all a part. It is an attitude which says that the majority of people cannot be trusted, that they need to have their instincts curbed and their behaviour regimented by those few who somehow know better.

The whole culture of 'don't-let-them-see-that/say-that' might be presented in high moral terms but it rests upon a decidedly

low opinion of our neighbours—and ultimately of ourselves. It starts from the assumption that the beast within us is always prowling, ready to burst out of the cage of civilisation at the first whiff of a joint or glimpse of a BNP pamphlet, so that it must be chained with laws, codes of conduct and new social taboos.

Take the Tory justification for introducing the Criminal Justice Bill. In defence of its huge boost to legal and police powers, the government has painted a picture of decent British society under threat from photo-fit young thugs and criminals, excited by video violence and dance drugs.

That is a distorted image of reality which opponents of the government's bill have dismissed. Yet what is the alternative view offered by feminists and anti-Nazi groups in support of their demands for more bans and controls? They have painted their own picture of decent British society under threat from photo-fit young thugs and criminals, except that these ones are excited by video porn and racist propaganda.

The message from both anti-racist groups and Home Office ministers is that society is at risk, with the general population divided between two basic categories: the passive victims and the potentially violent.

Their notions of who the victims are might differ—the Tories champion their 'quiet majority' of decent men and women, while others are concerned with defending minorities. But their views on where the threat comes from often seem strikingly similar, focusing on stereotypes of violent young working class louts.

In this grim world, polarised between the victims and the violent, it appears that everybody has at least one thing in common; we are all deemed completely incapable of controlling our lives. The victims are depicted as passive punch-bags who simply have things done to them, while the aggressors are seen as people overtaken by animal urges. The conclusion reached by the government and its critics

alike is that all of these out-of-control individuals need to be either protected (the victims) or policed (the violent). In short, we all need to be more closely controlled—for our own good, of course.

Pick just about any issue today and you will find a spontaneous demand from all sides for order, for clipping ears and telling people that they cannot say this or do that. And you will find too that this always means calling in a policeman of one sort or another to interfere in our affairs. In this atmosphere, even interventions ostensibly designed to help people turn into policing operations before long. For example, health visitors and social workers are supposed to be caring professional arms of the welfare state. Yet, as anybody involved in these areas of work today knows, they spend much of their time mounting surveillance operations to police people's private lives, particularly within working class families.

The fact that not only the government, but also feminists, anti-racists and others now see a need for more regulation and control has dangerous consequences. It means that what used to be opposed as authoritarian interference by official agencies or unofficial do-gooders is now widely tolerated; and far worse, it is even seen as a liberating, empowering experience. In this respect, the discussion which followed the recent award of £6000 compensation to a man who said he was driven out of his job by anti-Irish jokes is a cautionary tale for our times.

The ground-breaking award was based upon the industrial tribunal's finding that management at the foundry concerned had not done enough to stop workers cracking offensive jokes. The decision was celebrated by the Commission for Racial

Equality as a major landmark in the fight against discrimination and prejudice in the workplace. Aubrey Rose, chairman of the CRE's legal commission, was in no doubt as to whose responsibility it was to take that fight further: 'There is not sufficient control and clamping down from those in superior positions. In future, employers will have to watch very carefully.'

Any attempt to impose more 'control and clamping down' by management would once have been denounced as an assault on the conditions of the workforce, and resisted accordingly. Yet today, when employers everywhere are already seeking to clamp down in the workplace and to 'watch very carefully' everything we do, old-fashioned capitalist coercion is encouraged and applauded as a blow against racism. 'Those in superior positions', with their no doubt superior sense of equality, are being called upon to control the base behaviour of the foul-mouthed mob of employees—that is, the rest of us.

Who is really likely to benefit from the kind of workplace regime demanded by the CRE? Would it be black, Irish and women workers, who might be able to do a grotty, badly paid job in a foundry or a supermarket without hearing the odd joke? Or 'those in superior positions', who would be empowered to terrorise and divide the entire workforce under the liberal banners of anti-racism? It is not hard to see why the Tories have agreed to include an anti-harassment clause in their Criminal Justice Bill, giving the police and courts even more power to harass people.

Why do we need experts and authorities to tell us that we cannot do this or say that? Why should we accept that employers, government ministers or anybody else has the right to 'control and clamp down' on our

behaviour? We ought to have confidence in our capacity to get together and sort out our problems for ourselves—not hand over control to those who are responsible for many of our difficulties in the first place.

Even where the problem identified is real, the solution of calling for more bans and restrictions is a bogus one. Racism is a major problem in Britain. But people are not racist because they heard some BNP spokesman on the TV. Similarly, women are still treated unequally in all walks of life. But that is not because their husbands and bosses saw some pornographic pictures. These fringe factors did not cause, or even contribute to, the dominant prejudices in our society. To call for them to be censored can only spread confusion about the nature of social problems, and the likely solution.

However they are justified, all controls and regulations are essentially anti-human. They rest upon the patronising, not-in-front-of-the-children assumption that most people are low-life, so stupid and gullible that they can be turned into beasts by a word from a racist or the glimpse of a nipple. If we were to accept that bigoted judgement on humanity, then we would also have to accept that our prospects of changing the world for the better are nil. We might as well retreat into a smoke-free, non-racist plastic bubble, where jokes and penetrative sex are banned, and wait for vandals to destroy civilisation.

Should we exercise our minds dreaming up alternative bans and laws for the authorities to impose? Or should we instead start to believe in ourselves, in the ability of people to control their own lives, and oppose every instance of authoritarian interference in our affairs? We are free to choose—at least until somebody passes a law against that, too.

If you would like more information about *Living Marxism* readers' groups in your area, write to Helen Simons, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or phone (071) 278 9908

Prozac and cons

Stuart Derbyshire's analysis of the likely implications of the drug Prozac ('Under the influence', June), is theoretically flawed. This leads him to false conclusions.

Derbyshire is correct to criticise the biological reductionist conceptualisation of human consciousness which seeks to explain all mental life by reference to innate genetic factors. However, his own formulation (never made explicit) is no great advance.

Derbyshire draws a sharp distinction between the biological and social influences on mental life. He misses the point that even the social influences on depression must have a physiological impact on the brain, unless we adopt some quasi-religious belief in the soul or human spirit, a view which Marx torpedoed in 1846! The error of biological reductionism does not lie in its claim that consciousness has a physiological existence, but in the assertion that this physiology is innate and, therefore, unaffected by social experiences. I am not making the crass proposition that all mental life can be explained biologically: this would be like claiming that a book can be understood simply by studying the paper and ink from which it is made. But even our most abstract thoughts must have a physiological existence as well as a semantic one.

We can dismiss Derbyshire's gloomy conclusions about Prozac. For example, his claim that the pharmaceutical management of our moods and emotions must inevitably act as a brake on revolutionary activity, is based on a crude mechanistic model in which social problems lead to mental distress, which leads to dissatisfaction with existing social arrangements, which in turn leads to revolutionary activity. Thus any attempt to alleviate mental distress by pharmacological means must inevitably break this chain and lead to quietism or passivity.

There are several errors here: first, that there is an association between mental distress and political activity. Rather than being the shock troops of the revolution, the severely depressed (by Derbyshire's own admission) are often incapable of taking control of even the most mundane aspects of their own lives, let alone bringing about social change. In fact our moods and emotions often disable us and reduce our capacity for rational thought and action.

Secondly, that the discovery of mood-altering substances will automatically override the consciousness of people who might use them. If a social phenomenon depresses me, I might well decide to engage in individual or collective action to change it. However, if this is not viable in the short term I might take something to ease the immediate pain (Holsten Pils is particularly effective). But this does not reduce my commitment to genuine social change, any more than taking an aspirin reduces my

desire to remove the cause of my headaches. Moreover, if I felt that a substance was likely to cause long-term impairment of my critical faculties (Valium, for instance), I would not take it. I am a rational human being capable of managing my own mental life; radical politics is one method, Holsten Pils is another, neither one precludes the use of the other, and I do not need a neuropsychologist to tell me which to use.

Prozac might be an effective means of improving memory. It might be an effective way of combatting depression. Both of these possibilities should be tested by randomised controlled trials, not written off in advance by the dogmatic espousal of nineteenth-century metaphysics.

David Wainwright *Brockley, London*

D-Day misfires

Your editorial on D-Day is somewhat wide of the mark ('Pornography for patriots', May). It may well be that certain politicians would love to stir up nationalist 'Two world wars and one World Cup' feelings, but this they have found embarrassingly difficult. The more popular sentiment has been the sombre 'never again' approach, with some commentators going so far as to suggest that all the war dead (Germans included) be remembered.

This sophisticated view of D-Day appears to transcend narrow anti-Germanism, and consequently appeals to young people who are not particularly patriotic but very much anti-war. Attacking this as 'Pornography for patriots' only serves to confuse the matter.

The explanation given is that the dead must be respected because they were victims of mankind's inhumanity. In other words, D-Day is primarily no longer about patriotism, but has become yet another issue (along with crime, Aids, etc) in which we are encouraged to identify with that emblem of powerlessness, the Victim.

Any commemoration of D-Day will only serve to reinforce this victim culture that is inviting the state to 'protect' us, and further interfere in our lives. Exploiting this culture is proving much more useful to the state in its attempt to re-legitimise itself than raising the national flag and asking us to all to salute it. Dismissing it as patriotic rubbish (as if it is old-style nationalism) will not work if we are to go beyond the low horizons of today.

Ciaran Weston *Nottingham*

We are writing to express our anger that the Second World War is being characterised as a moral crusade against the evil totalitarian Nazi state. We wholeheartedly agree that Nazi Germany was an evil totalitarian state, but war was not engaged because of the internal evils

of that state (many of which did not in fact come to light until after the war). On the contrary, the resort of warfare was used because of territorial concerns about the balance of power in Europe.

Whilst we would condemn the invasions of Poland and Czechoslovakia, we would point out that the apparently important principle of their independence was not considered so important in the carve-up of Europe after the war. Moreover Allied opposition to Nazi Germany was not a selfless altruistic sacrifice on their behalf, but a self-interested defence, not of freedom, but of trade and Empire.

We recognise that a German invasion of the British Isles would have been to our great detriment, but we refuse to sanctify the war as a defence of freedom and the British way of life. If we had truly cared about the evils of Nazi Germany, we would have done something practical to oppose its ideology before 1939. The uncomfortable truth is that we legitimised Nazi rule by continuing trade and royal visits. As a nation, we shared some of Nazi Germany's principles and prejudices, particularly its opposition to communism, its execration of homosexuality, and its racism and anti-Semitism.

The anniversary of D-Day is not a cause for celebration, but for commemoration and for repentance of our apathy and inaction during the 1930s. Victory is no cause for celebration either. Let us not forget that it was bought at the incalculable cost of human lives, not only military but civilian. A true commemoration of the end of the Second World War would be the opposition of racism, fascism, militarism, state violence and human rights abuses, wherever they occur in the world, including Britain.

R Black, Helen F Jones,
Ruby J Smith and others,

Newcastle Student Christian Movement,
University of Newcastle Upon Tyne

Boxing stupid

Ann Bradley's list of deaths in sports other than boxing ('Gloves off', June) has limited meaning if such deaths are not correlated to the number of participants. But even if the proportion of fatalities is higher elsewhere, the main problem with boxing is not death but unavoidable brain damage.

Bradley claims the middle classes dislike boxing because it expresses working class violence. Not at all. Bradley's admiration for supposed working class values—'there is a clear winner and loser, and the hardest, most determined guy wins'—admirably sums up the reason why many middle class spectators enjoy the sport. It encapsulates the Tory ethic perfectly. And what better way to inculcate the dog-eat-dog message of capitalism than to encourage the working class to knock the brains out of each other?

Rene Gimpel *London*

Social workers

I myself am not a social worker, but I found some of Sara Hinchliffe's arguments ('Anti-social work', May) somewhat over-zealous. It is ridiculous to suggest that social workers' 'sole role is to lay down petty laws about how people should live', and that 'we would be better off if there were no social workers to interfere at all'. Hinchliffe totally disregards the thousands of elderly, infirm and disabled people whose quality of life is very much improved by the efforts of social workers, and this is an enormous insult to the many dedicated and caring members of the social services.

It is true that social workers cannot prevent child abuse from taking place in the first instance, but surely this does not mean that once a child has been abused, then the damage caused to the child should not be limited as much as is possible through the work of social services.

Finally, does the fact that 180 children have died annually for the past 20 years through neglect, mean that we should resign ourselves to the fact that these deaths are inevitable and we should no longer try to reduce this number? Obviously, social services are not perfect by any means, but matters would be much worse if no provision were made for the protection of the vulnerable in society.

Leon Jones *Market Drayton*

Absolutely fatuous

Just when we thought it was safe to feel all right about ourselves, Ann Bradley ('Fat's not a feminist issue', June) seeks to justify her latest diet. The reasons she gives for it are fatuous in the extreme: a) she's not as 'pretty' as Dawn French; b) she doesn't want to be fancied by Toby Banks; and c) the fat is beautiful movement is a conspiracy thought up by thin people to make them look better by comparison.

Hasn't she heard that 98 per cent of dieters put back on all and often more than they have lost? Not only that, but more heart disease is caused by yo-yo dieting than by obesity. Hasn't she also noticed that thin people can be ugly too?

I am surprised that *Living Marxism*, which I had always assumed to be a magazine about real issues written by and for real people,

should print such fattist attitudes. If I'd felt like going on a diet, I would have bought one of the cellulite-obsessed women's magazines Ann Bradley's attitudes echo.

Never mind, girls. Next month she'll be telling us about her latest binge.

Isabel Pearce *Canterbury*

I agreed with some of the points Ann Bradley made. However, I feel that eating disorders are often mentioned in articles relating to dieting, and I believe they actually have little in common. Whereas dieting may be a way to get rid of excess fat from overindulgence, women who develop eating disorders tend not to be fat in the first place.

My understanding of eating disorders is that they are compulsive and addictive behaviours leading to self-destruction and in many cases death. Because of this I see them as akin to alcoholism and drug-addiction rather than slimming. The underlying reasons for these behaviours are complex but essentially the same.

We live in a society which demands that women be thin, hence women's bodies become the focus of their self-abuse. We know that a high percentage of women develop eating disorders and a very small percentage of men. However, men have a higher rate of abusing drink and drugs.

I think we should be asking why do people resort to self-abuse, why do many of us want to self-destruct? By looking at society and its many institutions, particularly the family, we will find answers to this question; and by actually changing these institutions, rather than just changing our point of view, we will find solutions.

Heather McEvoy *Bath*

Cybernought

It is not Andrew Calcutt or Mark Bowman ('The disinformation age', May) who are unnecessarily negative about the Net (letters, June). Rather it is the stultifying climate in which we live that means the new possibilities for free exchange of information and ideas can only be viewed as a threat. It was with wearisome predictability that so much commentary on the Net has focused on computer porn or cyber-Nazis. Neither of these, nor the supposedly

'subversive' character of the Net, represents a tangible immediate threat to anyone.

Gary Dale *gd@ee.ed.ac.uk*

Hugh Cannon believes in a 'subversive...Net culture' (letters, June). He puts forward no examples of this. Perhaps facts are not required on the Net and questioning would breach 'Netiquette' (resulting in a 'flame').

With 15m people soaking up a part of this subversive culture, you would expect a good few tens of thousands across the world to demonstrate, subversively, against the Nato bombing of Serbs in Gorazde, or the slaughter of over 4000 Somalis by US and UN peacekeepers. But how many Net subversives supported the 700 Serbs and Greeks outside the UN in New York, or the 30 Campaign Against Militarism demonstrators inside the US embassy in London last September?

So if the Net is not dripping with subversives, what is it like? Imagine all the letters pages of the newspapers and periodicals (national and local) in the US and Britain, and you'd be close to the level of discussion on major (and tediously minor) topics. The bottom line is that the same old prejudices and shortcomings define the boundaries of discussion.

As Andrew Calcutt says (Read on, May), the Net 'is not a current of liberation in its own right'. There is not a progressive culture just waiting for us to come along and use it. If we don't make it ourselves, that culture will never exist. In that way the Net is no different from real life.

Bill Webb *Holloway, London*

Thanks from the Embassy 10

The last of the cases against the Embassy 10—charged after occupying the American embassy in protest at the massacre of 80 Somalis last September—was dismissed on 9 June 1994. Not one of the charges resulted in a conviction as the Director of Public Prosecutions retreated from the politically motivated accusation of criminal trespass, and the other charges did not hold water.

We won because of the many people who opposed the DPP's attempts to stage a show-trial against us, through their protests, resolutions, petitions and contributions. To them, all our thanks.

James *Embassy 10 defendant*

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, or fax them on (071) 278 9844

Power to police the people

The government wants to rush its Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill on to the statute books before the end of July.

John Fitzpatrick explains why the authorities are so keen on this dramatic boost to police and legal powers—and why the bill should be killed



Kill the Criminal Justice Bill

On a recent anti-racist demonstration to Campsfield House, the Home Office detention centre where asylum-seekers are held without charge or trial, a uniformed policeman ostentatiously photographed marchers with the aid of a flash bulb mounted on a large gleaming, reflective disk. Later, he moved among the assembled crowd of a few hundred, taking photographs as directed by a colleague.

This open photography by the police is now common practice. In the past they would have taken their mug shots surreptitiously from roofs of buildings or using men in plain clothes. No longer. For the state openly to take photographs of everybody on a demonstration is a calculated piece of insolence. The message is clear: 'You have no rights here. We can do what we like. Your card is marked.'

It was telling that neither crowd nor stewards remonstrated with the man, let alone separated him from his equipment. Far too many people seemed to accept that this was normal behaviour from the forces of state, or at least that there was

nothing we could do about it. The whole experience, of overt state repression meeting little resistance from the usual sources of opposition, brought to mind the Criminal Justice Bill.

Lord Renton boasted in the House of Lords that this bill had 'the longest Long Title in modern history'. The Long Title recites the objects of the legislation, and in the case of the Criminal Justice Bill a long list of targets had to be accommodated: young offenders, bailed persons, squatters, travellers, ravers, protesters, trespassers, arrested persons, defendants, hunt-saboteurs, pornographers, video pirates, obscene telephone-callers, prisoners, racists, terrorists, ticket touts, cannabis-smokers, serious fraudsters and not forgetting gay men under 18.

You might think that only a very paranoid reactionary having a very bad nightmare could call to mind this lot at one go, but with this cast of monsters, home secretary Michael Howard was able, with just a brief flash of his bill, to send the last Tory Party conference shuddering towards a collective orgasm.

Who is the government really trying to impress, and with what? Round up the usual

suspects. They want to be seen to be doing something about crime; they want to scapegoat as many unpopular sections of the population as possible; they want to ram home the message that the criminality of irresponsible individuals is a bigger threat to society than anything an incompetent government might do; they want to boost police powers. All true, but there is something more.

There is something desperate about the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. Only desperation could account for the determination that an ill-prepared government has shown in facing down considerable high-level opposition to the legislation. For example, Home Office policy on young offenders, evolved over many years and commanding widespread support, has been torn up. In seeking to abolish the right to silence, the government has ignored the recommendations of two royal commissions (1981 and 1993). Some of the most senior lawyers in the country have queued up to press criticisms and qualifications of the bill. Its partner, the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill, which seeks to give the home secretary powers to appoint members ►



The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill



RIGHT TO SILENCE ABOLISHED

NEW POLICE POWERS TO STOP RAVES, REMOVE PEOPLE AND VEHICLES FROM RAVE SITES AND SEIZE SOUND EQUIPMENT



NEW POWERS ENABLING POLICE TO STOP AND SEARCH ANY PERSON OR VEHICLE FOR NO REASON AT ALL (FOR 24-HOUR PERIODS IF THE POLICE SAY IT WILL HELP STOP 'SERIOUS VIOLENCE')



NEW POWERS TO STOP AND SEARCH ANY PERSON OR VEHICLE FOR 28-DAY PERIODS FOR 'ANTI-TERRORIST' PURPOSES

EXTENSION OF POLICE POWERS TO REMOVE PEOPLE AND VEHICLES TRESPASSING ON LAND (eg, TRAVELLERS)

NEW POLICE POWERS TO REMOVE TRESPASSERS WHOM POLICE SEE AS DISRUPTIVE AND INTIMIDATING (eg, HUNT-SABOTEURS)



NEW POLICE POWERS TO BAN ASSEMBLIES OF TRESPASSERS WHO POLICE CLAIM WILL CAUSE 'SERIOUS DISRUPTION TO THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY' (eg, FESTIVALS)



NEW CRIMINAL OFFENCES FOR SQUATTERS WHO FAIL TO LEAVE PROPERTY AS DIRECTED BY OWNERS OR COURTS

NO RIGHT TO BAIL FOR THOSE ACCUSED OF COMMITTING OFFENCES WHILE ON BAIL.

EXTENSION OF POLICE POWERS TO TAKE INTIMATE BODY SAMPLES, AND SEARCH THE MOUTHS OF ARRESTED PERSONS



NEW DETENTION ORDERS ('SECURE TRAINING ORDERS' OF SIX MONTHS TO TWO YEARS) FOR 12 TO 14-YEAR OLDS

MAXIMUM SENTENCES FOR 15, 16 AND 17-YEAR OLDS DOUBLED TO TWO YEARS



NEW POWERS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO DIRECT UNAUTHORISED CAMPERS TO LEAVE ANY LAND (eg, GYPSIES)

The new uniform that the police will need to match their powers under the Criminal Justice Bill, as modelled on the May demonstration against the bill

◀ and chairmen of police committees got an even rougher ride, and will not emerge in its original form.

As for the Criminal Justice Bill itself, the final product reeks of panic: from the absurd diversity of its targets to the confused jumble of afterthoughts and compromises with which it has been thrown together. Reading through the bill, it is possible to sense a government at bay, a ruling elite that feels threatened on all sides; threatened, not by New Age travellers or hunt-sabs, but by the fragmentation of society at large, the sense that things are out of their control.

Behind the Criminal Justice Bill hovers a perception of a need to set firmer ground rules for what people can and cannot do, and to impose them. There is a recognition here of the beleaguered government's need to establish conformity, stability and control. The detail doesn't much matter, even when, as in the brutal treatment of young offenders, it flies in the face of received wisdom, it will cost more money and it won't work in the sense of rehabilitating them. What matters is that the government gets some broader messages across.

At the core of the Tory curriculum is the idea that individuals should defer to the authority of the state. That is why the abolition of the right to silence, which will mean a suspect is considered guilty unless he can prove his innocence to the authorities' satisfaction, has been rightly identified as the heart of the proposals (see 'Their right to dictate', *Living Marxism*, February 1994). The same message of control comes from the whole bill, yoking together as it does criminal justice and public order issues, and from every nook, cranny and vindictive detail of the 140-plus clauses. You *will* allow your mouth to be searched when you are arrested, you *will* give intimate body samples for DNA-testing, you *will* leave land when ordered to do so by a police officer, you *will* turn out your pockets and open your car boot on demand to a police officer conducting a stop-and-search operation.

The bill proceeds on the basis that important rights are of no consequence and can be casually removed. Indeed, this is one of its central messages. The right to jury trial will be removed at a stroke for many defendants in criminal damage cases. Defendants must be accused of at least £5000 worth of damage before they will be allowed a jury trial. In 1980 it was £200, in 1984 £400, in 1988 £2000. With another stroke of the pen the police rather than the courts will now be able to set bail conditions (including movement restrictions and curfews).

Several activities are simply to be extensively criminalised—squatting, raving hunt-sabbing, festivals, travelling, (see page 11). The police are here given an extraordinary array of discretionary powers. If a police officer 'reasonably believes' your gathering may cause 'a serious disruption to the life of the community' then your demonstration becomes 'a trespassory assembly' and he could have you banned (designed for solstice festivals, but widely drawn). If an officer 'reasonably believes' that you intend to disrupt, obstruct or intimidate those carrying out a lawful activity on private land in the open air, then you are now committing the offence of 'aggravated trespass'

(designed for hunt-sabs) and the officer can arrest you (without warrant) or evict you.

One of the recurring features of the bill is the extent to which the presumption of innocence is undermined. This is most obviously so with the abolition of the right to silence, but there are many examples. It will be an offence for a person 'without lawful authority or excuse (the proof of which lies on him)...to collect or record any information which is of such a nature as is likely to be useful to terrorists'. So if you are found with a list of names and addresses of prominent people, the burden of proof is upon you to establish your innocence. You are no longer presumed innocent of an offence for the purposes of bail if you are charged with an offence while already on bail. Simply being *charged* with a second offence may ensure that you are imprisoned.

The bill is an outlandish assault on civil

liberties and clause 55 sums it up. It provides that a police superintendent, if he 'reasonably believes' that serious violence may take place in his locality, can confer random stop-and-search powers on his officers for a 24-hour period. During that time, 'A constable may, in the exercise of these powers, stop any person or vehicle and make any search he thinks fit whether or not he has any grounds for suspecting that the person or vehicle is carrying weapons or articles of that kind'. That clause, together with those imposing restrictions on travelling to raves and festivals, spells the official end of freedom of movement in this country.

How can they get away with it? Like the police photographer, they have not faced any real challenge from the opposition. In the parliamentary debates on the bill, Labour and the rest prefaced their every remark with apology and



Have you got a licence
to do that?

PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

concession. Tony Blair attacked the bill in the commons on the basis that it was 'not an acceptable and effective measure to tackle crime.... We do not oppose the strengthening of the criminal justice system—on the contrary, we support measures that actively strengthen that system'.

There is of course widespread public indifference or even satisfaction at the plight of the marginal groups on the receiving end of these clauses. The government learned well from the success of the Public Order Act 1986 the value of targeting unpopular groups in order to justify more state power and diminished freedom for the individual. The inclusion of child pornographers and obscene phone-callers no doubt serves further to legitimate the authority of the state in the eyes even of many who oppose most of the bill's measures.

The perils of cheering on the state's law-and-order campaign at one moment and fretting about it the next were particularly evident in the promotion by radical Labour MPs of a clause seeking to make racial harassment a specific offence. No wonder the Tories have taken the opportunity to introduce a new clause outlawing 'persistent harassment'. Here was the left reinforcing the idea that the police (the very people who they had just been suggesting should not be trusted with discretionary stop-and-search powers) were appropriate defenders of black people. More than that, the parliamentary left was reinforcing the idea that we should look to the state to help solve our problems—even when, as with racism, that state is the main prop of the problem in the first place.

Labour MP Harry Cohen summed up the helplessness that passes for political opposition today when he plaintively declared in this debate, 'We need a law; we need the state to come out firmly and say that racism will not be tolerated'. No we don't Harry. We need a new opposition; one which says firmly that state authoritarianism will not be tolerated, whether it is dressed up as an attack on ravers or racists. ●

Raves, festivals and protests could all be banned under the Criminal Justice Bill. Yet these measures to curb and criminalise the activities of a generation have attracted little criticism.

Josephine Hussey attacks the all-party alliance that wants to control young people's lives today

A law to make you raving mad



If they have their way, attending free parties and raves, attempting to attend a rave, looking like you are preparing for a rave and inciting other people to attend a rave will all become criminal offences. Sound systems will be confiscated and, if you are found guilty, they won't be returned.

Raving has for the first time been defined. Clause 58(1) of the Criminal Justice Bill defines a rave as 'a gathering on land in the open air of 100 or more persons' who do not have to be trespassing, just playing 'amplified music' with 'repetitive beats' which is 'likely to cause serious

distress to the inhabitants of the locality'. If a superintendent believes that two or more people are preparing for a rave, 10 or more people are waiting for one to happen, or 10 or more people are attending a rave already in progress, he can order them to leave the area. If they don't go, or they return within a week, they will have committed a crime.

You can only wonder at the suits sitting in cabinet committee, discussing what on Earth a 'rave' is and how one might define it: 'No, Sir Humphrey I don't think "making a bloody racket" will work, how about "playing amplified music"?' Did villagers tell the Tories that the raves caused them 'serious distress', or was that what the government researchers experienced when trying to dance to 'repetitive beats'? It is a bizarre thought that suddenly serious distress is being caused around the country by a gathering of people who want to dance. Yet on this basis, the police are being given all sorts of powers to order people around, confiscate property and generally harass young people.

It seems each MP has his own pet idea of the threat young ravers pose. For Alun Michael (Labour, Cardiff South and Penarth) the bill's crackdown is welcome because 'a new youth drug culture has developed, associated with raves and so-called dance drugs such as ecstasy, LSD and amphetamines...it is also clear that there is a link between crime and drugs. Addicts frequently steal to support their habit and the amounts of money they require to do so are truly frightening'. Robert MacLennan (Liberal Democrat, Caithness and Sutherland) was pleased that the bill 'tackles the problem

of hardcore juvenile offenders who number perhaps several hundred, of rave parties and of murderers who re-offend' (*Hansard*, 28 March 1994). In the eyes of MPs, it seems the country is being

overrun by teenage ravers and criminals addicted to all sorts of drugs who steal frightening (!) amounts of money and are somehow mixed up with serial murderers.

The media is full of stories about teenagers from hell—hooligans, rapists, burglars, young joy-riders, and gun-slissing juvenile drug-pushers. The authorities have justified making partying illegal by promoting the notion that the youth of today are on the rampage. Anyone who can be fitted into the frame will be a target for police attention. ►

'All they want to do is put people under control!'

Steve, festival-goer (28)

'From what I've read about it, everything from a house party to standing on a street corner will now be illegal...it's doing away with the fundamental right to have a good time!'

Mark, rave-goer (23)

Kill the bill

Throughout the summer, the Campaign Against Militarism (CAM) will be working with others to oppose the Criminal Justice Bill. If you want to do something about it, get in touch.

● **Badges: 3 types** 50p each

Fight for the right to protest
Fight for the right to party
Kill the Criminal Justice Bill

● **Postcards** 50p each

Warning: Danger Ahead
Kill the Criminal Justice Bill

● **T-shirt** £10

Kill the Criminal Justice Bill
(See picture on page 51)

● **CAM Briefing on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill** £2

For orders and more information on what the Campaign Against Militarism is up to, contact CAM, BM CAM, London WC1N 3XX or telephone Geraldine Hetherington on (071) 278 9908.

'Does this mean that a group of slightly dishevelled youths in Archway can be stopped on the "reasonable suspicion" that they are heading, albeit erratically, for a rave in Kings Cross?', asked the London *Evening Standard* (18 February 1994). 'And what about that odd-looking couple in that car with the stereo blaring out manic techno? Will the long arm of the law fall on their shoulder for being in possession of an unruly hairdo or a funny hat?' If they have their way!

If they have their way, it will also be a criminal offence to attend festivals or stage any kind of assembly or protest that disrupts 'lawful activity' (like road-building or fox-hunting).

According to home secretary Michael Howard, Part V of the bill 'contains important measures designed to tackle the destruction and distress caused mainly to rural communities by trespassers. Local communities should not have to put up with, or even fear the prospect of, mass invasions by those who selfishly gather, regardless of the rights of others' (*Hansard*, 11 January 1994).

Howard justifies taking away the general freedom of movement and right to protest as a defence of the property rights of a few farmers. He talks of mass invasions, destruction and distress in a way that might make anybody think whole villages are under siege by the inner-city 'underclass'. Sir Cranley Onslow (Conservative, Woking) spelled this out in his defence of the bill's assault on hunt-saboteurs. 'It is a disgrace that organised violence, deliberate provocation and physical assaults on

people and animals have become an accepted way of life for a militant section of urban society. The saboteur movement has its roots not in the countryside, but in the towns. Anyone who has seen busloads of Millwall supporters brought in to disrupt a hunt knows exactly what I am talking about.' (*Hansard*, 11 January 1994) Anyone who has seen Millwall supporters hunt-sabbing must have taken too many of those 'so-called dance drugs' that MPs are so concerned about.

On these justifications, freedom of assembly will be curtailed. A chief police officer will be able to issue an order banning the holding of any 'trespassory assemblies' of '20 or more persons' for up to four days within a radius of five miles, if he decides that it will cause 'serious disruption to the life of the community' or damage to a building or monument of historical, architectural or scientific importance (of which, no doubt, there are many in the middle of fields). It will be an offence to organise, take part in or incite another to take part in such an assembly.

On these justifications, freedom to protest will be curtailed. Anyone that disrupts, obstructs or intimidates 'lawful activity' in the open air will be committing 'aggravated trespass'. Anyone convicted of aggravated trespass can be jailed for up to three months. Protesting used to

be a lawful activity, our right; by turning it into a criminal offence the police are given the right to obstruct or intimidate protesters at will.

If they have their way, not happy with targeting protesters, animal rights campaigners, ravers and 'Millwall fans', travellers and squatters will be criminalised too.

'If you get caught with a sound system they can impound it. If you break a blade of grass on a piece of property that you're actually allowed to be on, they can cart you off it. They can do anything they like.'

Kirk, rave-goer (19)

'It's great for the judiciary. They can fall back on it to attack anyone they don't like, especially groups in society that they want to crack down on. It's just like a tool of the police.' *Amanda, squatter (18)*

The Criminal Justice Bill gives local authorities power to move travellers on, confiscate their vehicles and split them up. Squatting is made a criminal offence. It will be easier to get an order for possession of property, and violence can legally be used by the owner or his agent to gain entry. A squatter will have 24 hours to leave or he can be charged.

But why stop at squatters? This draconian piece of legislation has broader implications. Clauses that are framed to deal with 'New Age'

'I'd really like to ask them what is their problem with 11 people getting together in an empty space and having a dance.'

Lofty, student (24)

'As it stands, supposedly you're innocent until proven guilty, but if they take away the right to silence, it changes the whole accentuation of the system. Now you're guilty until proven innocent. I think it sucks.' *Jinx, traveller (19)*

travellers or hunt-saboteurs create offences which give the ownership of land the sanction of the criminal law in a completely new way. Police will have new powers to stop people entering land, remove them from it and jail them if they won't go. Journalist David Rose has pointed out a few of the other targets against whom these same measures could conceivably be used:

'Walkers and climbers straying on to private land used for grouse-shooting might become criminals. Mass trespasses to secure access to the hills, such as the celebrated Peak District gatherings of the 1930s, would be illegal: the police could stop any car they suspected of travelling to such an event. A local authority could invoke the law to criminalise mothers protesting on the town hall steps at the closure of a nursery;

a company could use it to prevent a picket.' (*Observer*, 17 April 1994).

By exploiting images of rampaging youth, the government is bringing in laws that create a framework for criminalising dissent on a wider front than ever before.

A letter headed 'Criminally ignored' appeared in the *New Musical Express* on 21 May from Paul Ackrill, who had been on the big march against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill on 1 May. Ackrill found it 'sinister in the extreme' that although '10-15 000 people' marched in central London, 'not a mention was made of the event on any channel, radio or TV'. The letters' editor described it as an 'I'm in love with life letter, cruelly twisted by a last-minute burst of conspiracy theory nonsense'.

Whether Paul Ackrill was being conspiratorial or not, it is striking that Section V of the Public Order Bill has attracted no real public criticism. While debate has focused on the right to silence and restrictions on videos, the attacks upon ravers, travellers and protesters have passed almost without comment outside the pages of the music press, whose readership is directly targeted by the bill. The only ones to have demonstrated opposition are those young people who marched on 1 May—and their protests have been 'criminally ignored'.

It is clear that, whatever their quibbles about specific measures, the opposition parties have accepted the basis on which Section V of the bill is being introduced—the need to control young people. The *New Statesman* has assured us that Labour 'will not support the full weight of the proposed legislative clampdown on squatting, trespass, travellers and "raves" (though it will go some way with the Conservatives on some of these issues)' (8 April 1994). Labour certainly

won't take a stand against these measures, for fear of being seen as 'soft' on young delinquents. The only evidence of Labour not supporting the full weight of the clampdown so far was Tony Blair's weakly voiced worry about arresting hunt-saboteurs. Meanwhile, both the Tory and Labour Parties are busy dreaming up more measures to control teenagers. If they have their way, the next step will be national voluntary service as suggested by Labour, or the more direct boot camps which are being considered by Michael Howard.

It is time to stop this dangerous nonsense. Through painting pictures of a society out of control and menaced by unruly young people, the authorities are gaining more powers to control our lives. With the opposition's acquiescence, the police are being given more force to deal with these 'threats to society'. The threat we ought to worry about is the increasing power of the state.

It is time to fight for the right to party, the right to protest, the right to control our own lives. Don't let them get their way. ●



Killer bug eats our sanity

It was all very well for Dr Diana Walford, director of the Public Health Laboratory Service, to meet the panic about necrotising fasciitis with the sensible announcement that 'there is no killer bug sweeping the country'. A handful of cases do not an epidemic make, especially when victims of the supposed Gloucestershire 'cluster' turn out to have been infected by different strains of the bacterium, and the national death toll is well within the normal range for this condition. But nobody was prepared to take Dr Walford's reassurance at face value. Not even the government's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Kenneth Calman, who in a rushed statement 'to allay public fears' assured us that 'everything that can be done is being done to investigate the so-called "killer bug" infection'.

As the days went by, the panic became more and more absurd. The London *Evening Standard*-seller at Oxford Circus tube station solemnly announced 'Killer bug eats three more' to commuters and shoppers queuing up to arm themselves with the latest sensational accounts of galloping gangrene. Only on scrutinising the copy did you discover that the three 'new' cases were only new in the sense that they had never been in the papers before. The deaths had taken place months previously. The annual death rate from necrotising fasciitis remains lower than that from chicken pox, and mirrors the number of people who die from being struck by lightning.

The tabloids competed for hysteria awards. The *Standard* described 'galloping gangrene that can eat flesh at the rate of an inch an hour'. The *Daily Star* ran the headline 'Killer bug ate my face' and warned 'it starts with a sore throat but you can die within 24 hours', a line which made it the GPs' least favourite paper as surgeries filled with patients with rasping throats. The *Sun* led on 'Flesh bug ate my brother in 18 hours', which the *Mirror* trumped with the irresistible 'Flesh-eating bug killed my mother in 20 minutes'.

It was impossible to avoid being infected by the story, if not by the panic, if only because it was so much more interesting than the Labour Party leadership contest. But the flesh-eating bug panic gripped the nation, not just because it injected some colour into the greyness of the evening news, but because people were inclined to believe it. Even the broadsheets which distanced themselves from the necrotising fasciitis panic did so in such a way as to indicate that this might be a non-plague, but it should serve as a warning.

The *Guardian* carried one of the most sensible pieces: a gallop by Tim Radford through all the horrible marginal diseases which wipe out tiny numbers of people each year. 'Nature has *always* produced disgusting ways of getting us—if we're not wiped out first by media panics.' Too true, and it's helpful for the *Guardian* to point this out. But if you're a frequent reader of its women's page you will find that it

is usually as susceptible as the tabloids to the hype-driven health panics. Tampon-related Toxic Shock Syndrome, a condition even less common than necrotising fasciitis, is without exception treated with the seriousness accorded to significant killers like cancer and heart disease.

So why are people so easily gripped by panics about rampant microbes today? How is it that the *Standard* can seriously speculate about whether necrotising fasciitis could be a mutant strain of escaped germs from the biological warfare centre at Porton Down, or a disease from outer space brought to Earth by meteorites?

Sunday Telegraph journalist Robert Matthews is right when he points out that both the public and doctors are scared by 'the knowledge that one day medical science may face a new organism that is deadly, widespread and untreatable'. In our pessimistic and insecure

times, there is a strong sentiment that nature is somehow biting back and that there may be limits to medical advance. These fears are fuelled by reports of antibiotic-resistant strains of conditions like tuberculosis. Once thought to be defeated, TB is now emerging as a new killer, reaching epidemic proportions in some areas of Eastern Europe and even striking down people in Britain.

In reality, the emergence of these 'super-bugs' is as much the consequence of poverty as of the ingenuity of nature.

The new strains have emerged because sufferers of old-fashioned, treatable TB have been unable to have their condition properly treated. But with today's widespread suspicion of science and medicine, people looking for answers are more inclined to blame the overuse of antibiotics than the under-treatment of the sick. The irrational notion that 'nature' must get us in the end is part of the doom and gloom of modern times, and it leaves people looking for and believing in worst case scenarios. Ironically, necrotising fasciitis isn't even a 'super-bug'. As long as it is caught in time, it is easily treated with old-fashioned penicillin, which is why so few people die of it.

Pessimism about the future of humanity isn't the only factor which predisposes people to be gripped by irrational panics in the nineties. A window-cleaner at work put me straight when I tried to put his worries in perspective. For some reason his imagination was gripped by the thought that if you got the symptoms of necrotising fasciitis when you were stuck in your car on the M25 you could be eaten before you even got to the next exit. As I tried to explain that his fears were groundless given the number of cases, he interrupted me in an all-knowing voice: 'I'm surprised at you, m'dear. And what makes you believe anything *they* tell us? For all you know people could be dropping like flies.' Now that is a reasonable suspicion, and a healthy attitude that is well worth encouraging. ●

A disease from outer space brought by meteorites?



The thin blue

We all value the image of the British bobby but we have to police the real world. Having had two officers murdered, two shot and several stabbed, I am not going to ask my officers to carry out their job without proper protection.'

On 16 May 1994, Metropolitan Police commissioner Paul Condon held a press conference to announce that the three-man crews of 12 armed response vehicles in London are now to wear .38 Smith & Wesson pistols on the hip at all times. Condon's announcement came amid a flurry of media coverage depicting defenceless police officers under attack in the mean streets of Britain. The *Times* editorial of 17 May captured the mood of the moment:

'the streets of Britain's inner cities, London's in particular, have seen a sharp increase in stabbings

and shootings of unarmed policemen...[perpetrated] by terrorists, drug dealers and a new breed of reckless lawbreaker...criminals who refuse to abide by any unwritten code of combat.'

But the current debate about arming the police cannot really have been prompted by unprecedented violence against officers. Their own records show that the much-publicised 'sharp increase' has not in fact occurred.

Two police officers have been killed in the past year. This is no more than in previous years. Since 1984, when WPC Yvonne Fletcher was shot dead, 20 police officers have been killed (excluding the Royal Ulster Constabulary). Of these deaths, one occurred earlier this year, two in 1993, none in 1992, five in 1991, one in 1990, two in 1989, three in 1988, one in 1987, none in 1986, two in 1985, three in 1984; and before that there were four

police killed in 1983, six in 1982, two in 1981 and one in 1980.

A total of three Metropolitan Police officers have been shot in the past year. In 1992, one Met officer was shot and there were 11 instances in which guns were held at constables but not fired. In 1989, Met officers were fired at five times and held at gunpoint on 15 occasions. In London 46 officers were attacked with knives in 1993, compared to 63 in 1992.

In the year ending 31 March 1994, officers reporting injuries from attacks numbered 3902. In the previous year, 3370 Met officers were assaulted (only 200 sustained injuries such as broken bones or worse), compared to 4172 in 1990, and nearly 5000 five years ago. Behind the hysterical headlines, a Home Office press release shows 'a level trend in the number of officers assaulted'. The current assault rate for the Met is around one in eight. This is half the turn-of-the-century assault rate.

How did the most heavily armed Force on Britain's streets come to be regarded as society's defenceless victims in need of more guns for protection?
Andrew Calcutt looks down the barrel

firing line



Bill the kill: police officers have been armed since the 1820's

On the face of it, there is a debate in progress to determine whether the British police will carry firearms. Commissioner Condon's announcement that some police would be permanently armed on the streets of London has been interpreted as a 'Rubicon' (*Evening Standard*, 17 May 1994), with no going back to the good old days of the unarmed British bobby. But when exactly were the good old days? And how can there be a debate about arming the police when they already have as much firepower as a medium-sized army?

The Metropolitan Police force has had access to firearms since its formation in 1829. In the 1890s officers were accustomed to carrying guns on night patrol. A full-time firearms training unit was set up in 1967 after gunmen killed the crew of an unmarked police car in Shepherd's Bush. Nottinghamshire police have maintained an armed presence

on the M1 since 1978. By 1980 an estimated 15 per cent of London police were authorised to carry guns. Greater Manchester Police acquired two sub-machine guns in 1981. Home Office records for 1983 show 3180 armed police operations in England and Wales. In the mid-eighties it was common practice for detectives to carry small arms in the south-east. Since January 1986, airports have been patrolled by officers armed with machine guns. In 1991, armed response vehicles (ARVs) began 24-hour patrolling in London. ARVs were established in Manchester the following year. The specialist firearms unit of the Met gave 'tactical advice and operational assistance' on 857 occasions in the year 1992-93. The existence of ARVs in Lancashire was revealed in May of this year when officers mislaid two loaded pistols which were subsequently returned to Blackburn police station.

Recent press reports suggest that more officers are gaining access to firearms. In fact, since the mid-eighties, the Metropolitan Police have more than halved the number of firearms officers, from 4800 to approximately 2000. During the same period, however, the Met's armoury has been upgraded to its highest-ever level. This means that more firepower is now concentrated in the hands of fewer marksmen.

Today's debate is not what it seems. The police are already armed and are not facing any major increase in violent attacks. The real issue at stake for the authorities is the public image of the Force. Behind the overblown publicity about attacks on officers there is a concerted attempt to repackage the police for public consumption. The plan has been to present the police as a collection of vulnerable individual victims in need of protection, and divert attention away from the evolution of a national paramilitary force. The motive for repackaging the police is that the public has a dangerously low opinion of them.

Combat gear

Police spokesmen are wont to say that today's violent criminals have robbed them of their *Dixon of Dock Green* image. But the Dixon image was irretrievably lost 10 years ago when mounted police in combat gear charged into picketing miners wearing t-shirts and trainers. Over the subsequent decade, the reputation of the British bobby has sunk lower with the exposure of each scandal: from the framing of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, the Tottenham Three and the East Ham Two, to the corrupt and violent antics of the West Midlands serious crime squad and the Stoke Newington drug team. It has all helped to confirm the popular perception that police officers are arrogant young tykes who don't give two hoots if you've just been burgled.

The public's low opinion of the police is a big worry for the authorities. The police are the state's frontline agency for maintaining control. Social stability depends on the ability of the Force to police society's behaviour with a modicum of public consent. What if public support is found wanting? In today's cynical atmosphere, this is a highly charged question for those in authority.

However, alongside popular distrust of the police, there is also a general mood of fear and apprehension in society today. Even the most level-headed individuals are predisposed to fear of crime and over-anxiety about the spread of lawlessness. It is a mood in which more and more people see themselves as victims; and it is in this context that the authorities are struggling



to improve the standing of the police by presenting them as victims like everyone else. Except that the police, in doing society's dirty work, are said to have ascended to a higher rung on the ladder of victimhood, and to need greater protection.

Presenting the strongarm police as victims is a task which requires

Officers who shoot people are now seen as victims in need of counselling

the services of a sophisticated public relations machine. The Force has invested heavily in PR. And just as the police have become more sophisticated in recasting their public image, so journalists and broadcasters have become more compliant in conveying this image to their audience. The backscratching relationship between police and media has reached the stage where heavily armed officers who have beaten or shot someone, are now portrayed as vulnerable victims in need of counselling for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Police PR

In cooperation with the Metropolitan Police press bureau, *Sunday Telegraph* home affairs correspondent Valerie Elliott recently visited South Norwood police station. Her story, 'Too little, too late: gun patrols fail to lift morale among officers who face thugs on the street' (22 May 1994), featured policeman-as-victim PC Alan Murtagh: 'you join the police to be an officer, not a target. Society has said we will do its dirty work for it...why should my wife be left a widow on a pension?' Other papers have covered similar ground.

In March 1994, heroin addict Stephen Doyle was convicted of attempted murder after he stabbed WPC Leslie Harrison while resisting arrest. The police/press machine went into overdrive. The *Daily Telegraph* carried interviews with three of Harrison's colleagues under the headline 'Police who put their lives on the line: Nigel Bunyan hears how officers who faced a drug-maddened addict are coping with the trauma'. One of the trio had retired from the Force. Another said that 'these days even a call to a violent domestic incident can be a potential fatality, yet officers go on foot patrol alone with a pathetic piece of wood'. On the front page was a large picture of WPC Harrison, who happens to be what the tabloids would call an

attractive blonde. The caption read 'a surgeon saved her life by plugging the hole in her heart with his finger', and the story underneath was headed 'Senior officers discuss guns'. The unmistakable message was that new measures are required to protect vulnerable police officers from unprovoked attack.

The PR offensive has hit home. There were howls of protest when armed police officers started patrolling Heathrow in January 1986. But there were few complaints in May 1994 when Condon announced that some uniformed officers would wear guns on their hips; or when Home Secretary Michael Howard announced that every officer will be allowed to carry a truncheon (the 'Arnold') as long as a pickaxe handle and twice as strong.

Paramilitary force

Shadow Home Secretary Tony Blair was too busy presenting Labour as the party that supports the police to raise any questions about militarisation. Meanwhile most of the press were assiduously copying down the speech to the Police Federation by its newly elected chairman Fred Broughton, who insisted that today's beat officers are like 'cannon fodder' from the First World War. It is a testament to the effectiveness of the police-as-victim campaign that Broughton's words were taken at face-value, even though they bear almost no relation to reality.

There is one sense, however, in which Broughton is right: the police are more like squaddies than ever before, armed and organised to fight battles on Britain's streets. In the late eighties, the (then) Metropolitan commissioner, Sir Peter Imbert, conceded that 'a subject for concern is the move towards paramilitarism in the police. I accept that such a move has occurred'. The move to paramilitarism has accelerated in the nineties, but it has been offset by a campaign of image-building which presents the police as society's victims-in-chief.

Fake support

The political decision to go public about arming the police must have been taken at the highest level. But it has been convenient for the Home Secretary and his police chiefs to claim that the debate arose spontaneously, in response to a groundswell of public sympathy for injured officers. This version of events turns reality on its head. The suggestion that public opinion determines whether the police carry guns is like saying that the wind is caused by trees moving their branches.

Throughout April and May, politicians and senior officers repeated that they were reluctant to arm the police. Any increase in the number

of armed officers would be 'event-led'. During the same period, numerous police spokesmen, usually representing junior ranks, were wheeled on to say that they did not want to carry guns, but that circumstances might force them to do so.

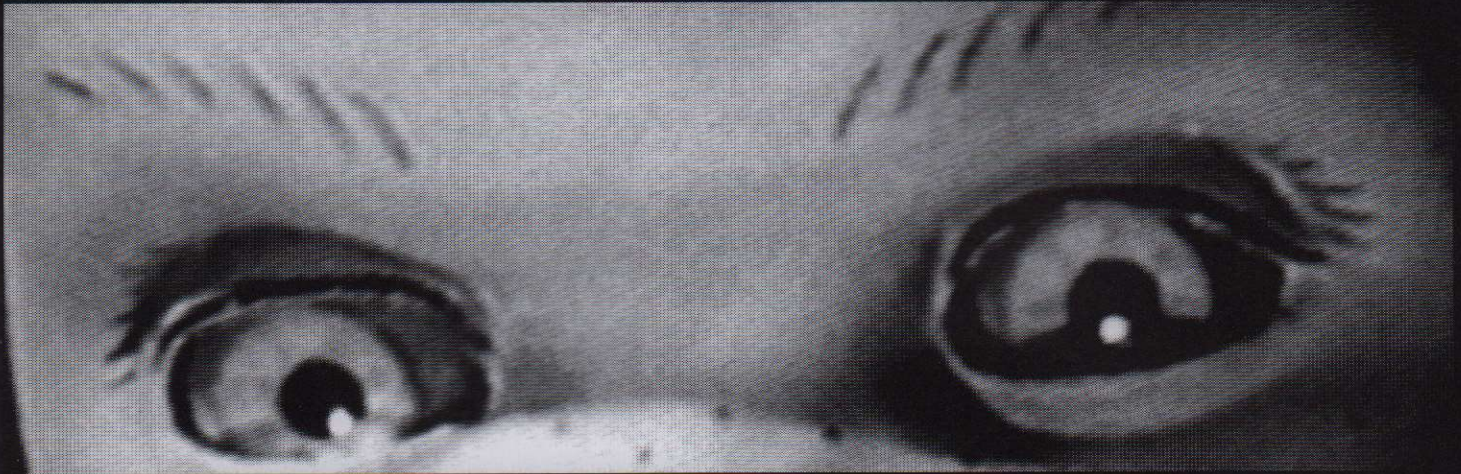
The volume of such statements rose to a crescendo during the Police Federation conference at Brighton in May. The main news story from the conference was the publication of a Gallup poll on arming the police. The results were widely interpreted as a popular mandate for the issue of firearms to protect vulnerable beat officers. It was claimed that 70 per cent of the public wanted the police to have more guns, showing how public pressure was building up for the police to be armed on a routine basis.

This interpretation (which was printed in banner headlines) does not tally with the answers given to the pollsters (which only appeared in the small print). Twenty-two per cent of 1400 constables wanted guns to be carried as routine. Out of 1000 members of the public, 37 per cent believed that officers should have arms as and when necessary, 30 per cent thought that guns should be carried on routine patrol, and almost 33 per cent felt that no more arms should be issued; the '70 per cent support armed police' figure was achieved by disingenuously adding together the first two groups. The results of the poll were then rewritten in block capitals to chime in with the claim by police chiefs and the Home Office that they are only reflecting the call to arms from those on the ground.

From the top

A top-down decision has been taken to go public on police access to firearms, at a time when public opinion has been softened-up by means of a prolonged publicity campaign. The truth about who is the driving force behind the process of paramilitarisation could be glimpsed in unguarded comments by Deputy Assistant Commissioner Larry Roach: 'there is no resistance on principle to an armed police force left now among the service's senior management. If it has to be done, it will be done. Resistance at ground-floor level is still considerable: the workforce joined an unarmed service, with no expectation of handling guns. But higher up opposition has melted away.' (*Observer*, 8 May 1994)

The strategic objectives of 'senior management' determine how many officers will be armed, and when. And, if it suits the purposes of police chiefs and politicians to pretend that they are bowing to pressure from below, the public will be told that it is getting what it asked for—even if it didn't.



A moral panic for adults

Who's afraid of Chucky, asks Alec Campbell

Video nasties are one of the evils attacked in the Criminal Justice Bill. At the time of writing, the relevant clause has yet to be published. But the Home Office has assured crusading pro-censorship MP David Alton that the bill will include an even stricter classification of home videos than the present system, and pave the way towards an identity card for video rental.

There is now a widespread assumption that Britain is being rocked by a wave of youth violence, and that violent video images are an important contributory factor. According to a Mori poll conducted for BBC2's *Late Show*, 81 per cent of parents think that violence among the young is on the increase, and 82 per cent believe that there is a causal link between watching video violence and committing real acts of brutality.

But take a step back and ask 'what wave of violence?', and just about the only evidence that the experts can offer is the James Bulger murder. The killing of a two-year old by two 10-year old boys, an act that shocked precisely because it was unique, has been turned into a general symbol of juvenile malevolence. And it has been widely blamed on violent videos.

During and after the Bulger trial last year, a bleak picture was painted of the nation's youth; a picture of violent schoolchildren, the products of broken homes and collapsed moral standards, victimising the vulnerable on Britain's streets. Whenever anyone volunteered an explanation for the murder, you could be sure that 'video nasties' would be implicated somewhere. They subsequently became a catch-all answer to many of the painful questions raised during the case.

How did the murder of a child by two other children start a hysterical campaign against home videos? The sequence of events reveals the role of the press, police and politicians in exploiting a climate of fear to invent a moral panic that can justify more state regulation of what we watch.

During their investigation into the Bulger murder, the police told the press that they had a list of videos hired by the parents of one of the 10-year olds. The significance of this only became apparent as the press went into overdrive after the boys were found guilty and sentenced by Mr Justice Moreland.

In his summing up of the trial, the judge included the throwaway remark that 'exposure to violent video films may in part be an explanation' for the boys' actions in killing James Bulger. The hacks in the British press were in no mood to doubt. Frontpage banner headlines, editorials and feature articles about the menace of video nasties appeared in tabloid and broadsheet alike.

In the deluge of comment that followed the trial, the attention of the press and middle class professionals quickly focused on the video *Child's Play 3*. It remains unclear just how *Child's Play 3* first came into the frame, but everybody soon agreed that this film was partly to blame for the murder. It was reported that the two boys 'may' have watched it and that there were 'striking parallels' between the film (in which a child 'kills' a manic doll) and the events leading up to the murder.

The day after the Bulger trial ended, the *Sun* led the reaction. A big picture of the doll 'Chucky' appeared with the banner headline 'For the sake of all our kids....Burn your video nasty'. A similar message was carried by all the papers. Often the murder of James Bulger was conspicuous by its absence from the coverage, as journalists and 'experts' analysed how *Child's Play 3* and other videos would turn children violent. The *Daily Mail* brought in Professor Brian Clifford of the University of East London to opine that Chucky would undoubtedly 'make a profound impression upon them and capture their imagination much more than straightforward violence' (26 November 1993). It was reported that *Child's Play 3* was being removed from the shelves in video

shops around Britain and that Scotland's largest video chain had burned all of its copies in a giant bonfire.

At no time during the investigation had anyone involved mentioned *Child's Play 3*. Yet the newspapers felt able to report that 'the last video rented by Neil Venables [father of one of the convicted boys] before little James Bulger was killed was the adult horror title *Child's Play 3*' (*Daily Mail*, 25 November 1993), and furthermore that '*Child's Play 3* has chilling parallels to the murder of little Jamie' (*Daily Mirror*, 26 November 1993).

The hysterical reaction to the Bulger trial stifled any possibility of a reasoned debate around whether violence in film leads to violence in society. The assertion that there is a causal link quickly acquired the status of common sense. The simple fact that, in 20 years' worth of studies, nobody has ever been able to offer conclusive proof of any such link was buried beneath the press assault on video nasties.

Five months later, Merseyside police inspector Ray Simpson revealed a different story. The police investigating the convicted boys' families had, he said, 'looked at all the videos in their houses and checked their lists of rentals from the shop. We did not find *Child's Play 3*, nor did we find anything in the list that could have encouraged them to do what they did. If you are going to link this murder to a film, you might as well link it to *The Railway Children*' (*Guardian*, 13 April 1994). In other words, the entire post-trial panic, started by the police and judge and revved-up by the press, was based upon a lie. But by the time Simpson's admission appeared, hidden away inside the back section of the *Guardian*, the notion that videos cause children to kill had passed into the realm of accepted fact.

The moral campaign against video nasties received the academic seal of approval at Easter, when psychologist Elizabeth Newson joined the fray. Her report, 'Video violence and the protection of children', was greeted by headlines ►

Having dug up just three cases in two countries, connected only by her own fevered imagination, Newson declared her paper to be a response to the increase in child violence

◀ announcing it as the final proof that screen violence caused violence in society. Around 25 top psychologists, professionals and academics had signed their support for Newson's study. Journalists and politicians laid great store by her conclusion: 'Many of us hold our liberal ideas of freedom of expression dear, but now begin to feel that we were naive in our failure to predict the extent of damaging material and its all-too-free availability to children.' Everybody nodded in agreement. Something had to be done.

But what was the substance of Newson's so-called study of video violence? It was a private report, produced for David Alton, and not even published. Photocopied editions proved hard to get hold of, and when you see one, you can understand why Newson and Alton were not to keen to have it scrutinised. It is barely nine pages long, and provides no new evidence whatsoever of any causal link between video violence and violence in society.

Newson's report hangs on the assertion that child violence is reaching epidemic proportions. As usual, the only real evidence she can offer of this wave of child violence is the Bulger case. But she insists that young James' killing is part of a widespread pattern: 'already the most cursory reading of news since then suggests that this is not a "one-off".'

Newson cites three other cases which she claims fit the Bulger pattern. In the first case two boys tried to get a third to touch an electric railway line; for Newson the significance of this is that James Bulger was killed near a railway line. In the second case a young woman was tortured by another woman who apparently went by the name of 'Chucky'. And thirdly Newson highlights a case in Paris where some children threw a tramp down a well. Having managed to dig up just three cases in two countries, connected only by her own fevered imagination, Newson declared her paper to be a response to the increase in child violence.

After establishing the spurious fact that there is a new wave of child violence, Newson goes on to look for non-existent new causes. 'What then', she asks, 'can be seen as the "different" factor that has entered the lives of countless children and adolescents in recent years?'. Clearly the factor influencing children like Bulger's killers couldn't be the circumstances in which they live, since thousands of children have long lived in brutalising conditions without murdering each other. She concludes that the new development was 'the easy availability to children of gross images of violence on video'.

So the solution is not to make conditions fit for children to live in, but to ban home viewing of 18 certificate films.

Newson's report offers no new scientific

evidence that any causal link exists between violence on the screen and on the streets. So what are we to make of the change of heart revealed in her much-publicised statement that she and her liberal friends 'now begin to feel that we were naive' in not recognising the dangers of allowing easy access to 'damaging material'?

What has really changed is not the facts about screen violence, but the political and intellectual climate in which professionals like Newson operate. The nineties are conservative times, in which liberalism is in retreat before the culture of conformity. Rational analysis is out, superstition and prejudice are in, assisted by the uncritical press that has stoked the moral panic about video nasties. Newson's admission of her earlier 'naivety' in not seeing the problem with video violence is simply a recognition that the mood of the times has changed, and that caring, liberal professionals are now expected to support wider censorship of what we see, hear and read.

The public debate about imposing new restrictions on videos in the Criminal Justice Bill has been no more than a difference of opinion within the pro-censorship consensus. Some, like home secretary Michael Howard and top censor James Ferman, argued that enough legislation already exists to censor films, and that more controls could make the system unmanageable. Others, like Alton and Newson, wanted further controls to reflect the new consensus. It was simply a case of sorting out the technicalities in order to reach a form of censorship agreeable to both camps.

Two themes in the moral panic closed the gap between those who wanted more state controls and those who, until recently, remained sceptical about censorship. The first was the fashionable obsession with protecting children from 'evil'; the second was the construction of a new threat from 'irresponsible' working class parents.

Observer columnist Melanie Phillips, the voice of the new pro-censorship liberals, asked rhetorically, 'Do you think children should continue to be exploited for commercial profit by amoral film-makers selling images of sadism, gratuitous violence and explicit degradation, without let or hinderance from a nanny state?' (17 April 1994). By raising the spectre of sadistic paedophiles masquerading as artists, the new puritans of the politically correct left were able to join in the demand for more state controls.

The writer Michael Moorcroft advanced a similar argument, with a paradoxical twist. 'As a passionate and frequently successful anti-censorship activist since the 1950s', he began, 'I've often been censored or silenced by distributors, editors and publishers'. But 'if they [sadistic paedophiles] want to make money from porn or violence, via any medium, surely

they should be held accountable for the possible effects of their actions'. All aboard the bandwagon!

But in the new list of public enemies, exploitative film-makers come a poor second to irresponsible working class parents. The attack on parents who allow their offspring to be turned into psychopaths by watching Chucky & Co was executed without criticism from the old liberal left; after all, who could disagree with the paramount importance of protecting children?

Elizabeth Newson's study made clear which parents are in the firing line; not sensitive folk like 'us', but the brutish 'them': 'Most of us would prefer to rely on the discretion and responsibility of parents, both in controlling their children's viewing and in giving children clear models of their own distress in witnessing sadistic brutality. However, it is unhappily evident that many children cannot rely on their parents in this respect.'

The editorials joined the onslaught. *Today* caught the mood: 'if many parents cannot be trusted to ensure children do not see corrupting material...the government should step in.' (12 April 1994). The underlying contempt for 'the underclass' was spelled out by the *Sunday Times*, worrying about those on the 'sink estates where family values no longer hold sway' (3 April 1994).

Super-parent Sue Cook of *Crimewatch UK* provided the model that 'responsible' parents could measure themselves and their neighbours against: 'Violent scenes coming shortly after the *Nine O'Clock News* have caught us unawares a few times....I try to make sure I am there to put a judgement and moral opinion on what is transmitted.' (*Times*, 13 April 1994) But as Libby Purves reminds us, some parents 'are too idle or stupid to do that'.

That something as innocuous as 'video nasties' should provide a platform for blaming society's problems on those at the bottom, and for demanding more state controls and censorship, is an indication of the danger of government by superstition. ●



James Heartfield explains why China's slave labour camps were no barrier to the renewal of the country's Most Favoured Nation trading status in Washington

Human rights make no cents

Five years ago American TV viewers watched in horror as Chinese students protesting in Beijing's Tiananmen Square were crushed under tanks and gunned down by government troops. The students, riding the wave of protests that swept through the Stalinist world in 1989, were demanding political liberalisation alongside the economic liberalisation that China's ageing leadership had begun to introduce. All the more poignant for Americans was the students' choice of mascot: a model of the Statue of Liberty.

Coddling Beijing

Less than three years ago, presidential challenger Bill Clinton poured scorn on the incumbent George Bush for 'coddling' the Beijing regime. Bush had restored China's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trading status, and the low tariffs which that guarantees, while the survivors of the Tiananmen Square massacre were still incarcerated in Peking Number Two jail.

One year ago president Clinton restated his determination to get tough with China. He renewed Beijing's MFN, but gave warning that the Chinese regime was on 12 months parole. If China had not cleaned up its human rights act within a year, it would no longer be a most favoured nation in Washington.

Since then, the Chinese regime has kept many of the Tiananmen dissidents in jail, even arresting one leading protester, Wang Dan, in the middle of an interview with a US television crew days before MFN status was up for renewal. Meanwhile, evidence has accumulated of the role which slave labour camps are playing in the advance of China's new capitalism. Clinton's response? When the year's trial was up in May, he removed all conditions and fully restored China's Most Favoured Nation status. According to Zhao Hai-ching, president of the dissident National Council on Chinese Affairs, 'thousands of democracy activists and

millions of Chinese people now face a dramatic new wave of repression'.

After he took office in 1993, Clinton's decision to make human rights a cornerstone of US foreign policy was widely interpreted as a defining moment of his presidency. Today, as Washington courts China's leaders, Clinton's image as a champion of human rights is in tatters. But there has been no real change of policy; the Clinton administration's commitment to human rights was always a cynical ploy. The American administration, like any capitalist state, could never seriously be expected to put the question of rights before its share of the world market.

Clinton has emphasised human rights in an attempt to restore the coherence to foreign policy that America lost with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Cold War provided a rationale for US foreign policy and American pre-eminence around the world. The global promotion of American power could plausibly be presented as synonymous with the defence of the free world against Soviet subversion. But since 1989, there has been no external threat to cohere the Western Alliance behind American aims.

Realpolitik

By proclaiming a commitment to human rights and humanitarian intervention against third world despots, Clinton seemed to many commentators to be restoring a sense of purpose to American foreign policy, returning the USA to the moral high ground of world affairs. By cloaking its diplomatic and military interventions in the third world and Eastern Europe in the language of a human rights crusade, Clinton won wide acceptance of America's right to dictate to the Iraqis, Somalis or North Koreans.

In fact, American actions around the world continued to be guided by the hard-headed demands of *realpolitik*. But the general willingness of



Western observers to take Clinton's talk of defending human rights at face value allowed the charade to continue. Even where American troops were massacring people on the ground by the score, as in Somalia, the pretence of humanitarianism could be upheld as long as American authority was only challenged by those with little clout and fewer allies.

But it is one thing for American presidents to lecture people in Rwanda or Somalia about human rights, or to threaten North Korea over its atomic energy programme—all countries where there are no major US economic interests at stake. It is something else entirely for Washington to allow such posturing to interfere with its relations with a key trading partner like China.

In China, America's 'human rights' policy has been exposed as so much hot air, as China's burgeoning domestic market outweighed all other considerations. Since 1978, when China's Stalinist leadership tentatively introduced market reforms in a bid to overcome economic stagnation, growth has averaged nine per cent, reaching 14 per cent last year. With a Gross Domestic Product of £190 billion and a population of 1185m, the Chinese market is one that no economic power can afford to ignore.

Clinton's use of Most Favoured



Only the Chinese army marches in Tiananmen Square now—with the blessing of the American government

Nation status as a stick to beat the Chinese leadership with proved useful for so long as Beijing was willing to play along with the game. Shortly before the decision on whether to renew China's MFN status was due, the Beijing regime released two dissident leaders, Chen Ziming and Wang Juntao, who were accused of being the 'black hands' behind the democracy movement. A supporter of the two told the *New York Times* 'even if releasing Wang Juntao and Chen Ziming involves a great risk for the Chinese government, today's action shows that the Chinese government is willing to take this risk in order to win [MFN status]' (14 May 1994). As the *New York Times* pointed out the trade privileges involved are worth \$30 billion to China.

Unfortunately for Clinton, two freed dissidents was about all that Beijing was offering, and when it came to MFN the Americans had at least as much to lose as the Chinese government. In the event, the human rights of a billion or so Chinese proved a lot less important than American industry's bottom line.

Important as America's domestic market is for the Chinese, the Chinese domestic market is growing so quickly that it is important for the world. Malaysia, Japan and even Taiwan were hostile to any move on America's part

that would dampen China's economic expansion—a major stimulus to growth in East Asia. And Europe was fighting America hard for a niche in the growing Chinese market. As the deadline for a decision on MFN status approached, it became clear that, if Washington did not renew, Air China would drop a £3.3 billion deal with Boeing and buy the European Airbus instead.

Rights or trade?

As American business put pressure on Clinton to renew China's MFN status, Democratic Senator Bill Bradley caught the mood of the administration by demanding the 'decoupling' of human rights and trade. It was no contest. China's Most Favoured Nation status was renewed, and America's crusade for human rights was shelved.

In the run-up to the American decision, an unlikely champion of human rights emerged: the British government. Whitehall was working behind the scenes to scupper China's MFN status. The BBC ran a series of programmes exposing Chinese prison labour camps—including Peking Number Two, where most of the leaders of the 1989 protest were held—as the engine of the Chinese export drive. The secret British campaign was assisted by the publication of Amnesty International's report on the Tiananmen

Square massacre that lists those killed—among details of other Chinese atrocities—for the first time.

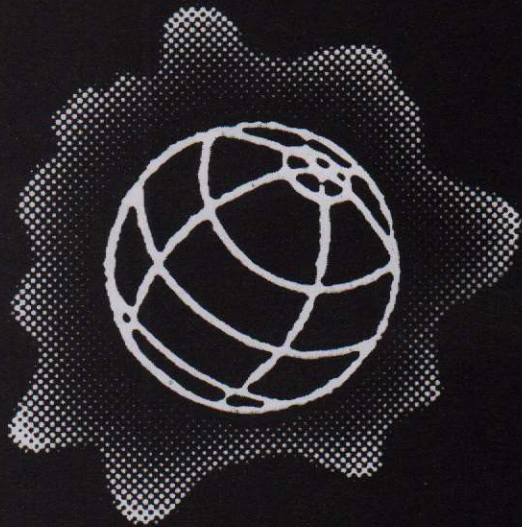
Britain's surprise stand for democracy was as self-serving as Clinton's decision to continue trade with China. The one country that stands to lose out through the opening up of the Chinese market is Britain. Currently Britain has an advantageous position in South-East Asia, and especially with mainland China, because it still holds Hong Kong as a colony. In years gone by, the Hong Kong stock exchange was the principle conduit for Chinese trade, but as China opens up to the world market, Hong Kong stands to lose its special status. In 1997 the colony reverts to Chinese control as governor Chris Patten—'Fat Pang'—hands over.

'Like a lamb'

In an attempt to bolster Britain's standing, Patten has, belatedly, sought to introduce partial democracy to the colony, and tried to guarantee human rights in Hong Kong after 1997. Not surprisingly the Beijing government is unimpressed by Britain's sudden conversion to the idea of democracy for the Chinese, and Britain's relations with China have become decidedly frosty. British business fears being squeezed out of the region altogether by a new Washington-Beijing axis. That is why the British Foreign Office has been working behind the scenes to persuade the American government not to renew China's MFN status, ostensibly because of Beijing's human rights record.

But despite Britain's last-minute conversion to the cause of freedom for the Chinese people, Fat Pang was keen to make sure that Britain did not lose out completely in the rush for China's markets. Within a week of Clinton's renewal of MFN, the British governor had reversed a decision to set up a human rights commission to guarantee democracy in Hong Kong after 1997. Members of Hong Kong's legislature said that Patten had gone to London 'like a lion' but returned 'like a lamb'.

To make matters worse, the British consulate in New York had already refused visas for Hong Kong to two exiled dissidents on the advice of the colony's immigration department. Liu Binyan and Ruan Ming had been invited to take part in Hong Kong's fifth anniversary protests over the Tiananmen Square massacre, but instead they were silenced in a bid to improve Britain's standing with the Beijing regime. Like the US administration, the British government has acknowledged that there is no 'coupling' between democracy and capitalism, and support for repression is a price worth paying in the struggle for a place in the Chinese market. ●



Each month, this *Living Marxism* feature seeks to challenge prejudice and mysticism on matters scientific, technological and environmental

FUTURES

Twenty-five years after a man first walked on the moon, John Gillott and Manjit Kumar argue that today's lack of enthusiasm for space exploration is symptomatic of a malaise on Earth

To boldly go... home?

'Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed.' It was 20:17 hours and 43 seconds Greenwich Mean Time, on 20 July 1969. Half an hour later, Neil Armstrong emerged in his spacesuit and descended the 10ft metal ladder to the lunar surface. Watched by a TV audience of over 600m, he became the first man on the moon. 'That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.'

Armstrong was soon joined by Buzz Aldrin for the remainder of his two-and-a-half hour 'moon walk', to complete the serious business at hand—unfurling the US flag. Before leaving for the biggest ticker-tape parade in history, they collected 44lbs of moon rock, deployed a few experiments and unveiled a plaque—'Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the moon, July 1969AD'—for the benefit of any passing ET conversant with the Christian calendar.

Back then, space exploration captured the public imagination, the American government backed the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) with energy and cash, and most of Nasa's missions succeeded. Today the public only tunes in when there is a disaster, governments lack the will and the cash to sponsor major projects in space, and it seems that most things which could go wrong with Nasa's projects do.

So what has happened? Space is still up there, waiting to be explored. What has changed is the mood down here. The way we feel about space at

any time reflects the way we feel about ourselves and our abilities on Earth. The loss of faith in space exploration reflects the more downbeat outlook of our times.

In the 1960s, the USA and other Western societies were at the end of the most sustained economic boom in history. Governments had more confidence in their own abilities, and people were better-disposed to experimenting with new projects. For a brief moment space exploration seemed to symbolise the potential for achievement, the ability of humanity to shape the future and stamp its will on uncharted worlds. The original TV *Star Trek* was based on the premise that the essence of humanity was to experience the new, 'to boldly go where no man has gone before'.

Twenty-five years later, after more than two decades of recession, the picture has changed dramatically. Society is much less optimistic and confident, less inclined to experiment, scornful of anything that implies planning into the future. Public views of space reflect these changed times. The dominant feeling is that we are an insignificant species drifting on a small and fragile planet in a tiny corner of the universe, and should worry about the survival of our own world rather than cosmic expansion. The new version of *Star Trek—The Next Generation*—is a 1990s soap opera in space, complete with counsellors. Just as lost souls go on month-long treks to the Himalayas in a futile quest to 'find themselves', so the crew of *The Next Generation*



gaze at their navels as they drift among the stars.

When the crew of Apollo 1 died on the launch-pad in 1967, it was generally seen as a price worth paying for human exploration. By contrast the death of the Challenger crew in 1986 was widely taken as symbolising the folly of human ambitions in space, even if it was, in fact, the result of Nasa cost-cutting.

The complaint about space exploration used to be that the Apollo missions were a waste of money which should be spent on solving problems down here. Tony Benn recalled recently how a constituent of his in 1969 asked why we could put people on the moon, but couldn't run a decent bus service in Bristol. These responses reflected the belief that society could tackle social problems. Today, it is more common to see both space exploration and the idea of fighting to abolish poverty dismissed as human hubris. The death

of ambition in space is of a piece with low horizons about what humanity can achieve on earth.

Space missions do continue, of course. Nasa is currently engaged in a wide range of scientific, commercial, and military projects. Some of these are noteworthy efforts—the observation of space from telescopes in orbit, the exploration of the solar system, the study of the Earth from space ('Mission to Planet Earth'). Whatever happens to such scientific projects, commercial and military uses of space will keep Nasa (and its equivalents in other countries) going, come what may. But these bits and pieces cannot alter the fact that Nasa is in a strategic dead-end.

When the Apollo missions came to an end in 1972, Nasa prioritised two future projects—the space Shuttle, and a permanent manned space station in Earth orbit. The Shuttle would ferry materials and personnel to the station, which would provide the base for

manned exploration of the solar system. Both projects have turned out to be disasters. The Shuttle was a flop well before Challenger exploded. Originally budgeted at \$5.6 billion in 1972, the cost of the Shuttle had risen to \$30 billion (in 1972 dollars) by 1986. It was supposed to fly up to 60 missions a year; it managed nine in 1985, its best year. But at least the Shuttle got off the ground. Construction of the space station has not even begun. It seems certain to be scrapped, and may already have been so by the time you read this article.

Some of Nasa's problems are internally generated. But most are the product of a shift in government policy. Like public attitudes, government policies towards space are shaped by events on Earth. The moonshot was a product of the Cold War. In the new circumstances of the 1990s, space exploration is low on the American elite's list of priorities. ►

In a speech before a joint session of congress on 25 May 1961, President John F Kennedy spelled out America's mission:

'This nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before the decade is out, of landing a man on the moon, and returning him safely to Earth. No single space project will be more important to mankind or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.'

Just a couple of years earlier, President Eisenhower had dismissed the notion of a moon mission: 'I'd rather have a good Redstone [missile delivery rocket] than hit the moon. I don't think we have an enemy on the moon!' When he came into office in 1961, Kennedy shared this assessment. Within four months, he was persuaded otherwise by some worrying developments.

The launch-pad for American ambitions in space was the recession of 1958—the first since before the Korean War arms build-up of 1950. Could the terrible 1930s return? they worried. For the next three years Soviet successes in space and elsewhere became the prism through which the American elite's insecurities were expressed. This crisis of confidence brought Kennedy into the White House, and soon led him to launch the Apollo programme.

America's leaders were worried men in the early sixties; but they still had the resources and the confidence in their own ability to get out and do something about their problems. Kennedy was converted to the Apollo mission after Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin went into orbit in April 1961, and the American government was humiliated by the failure of its attempt to invade Fidel Castro's Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. Is there any space programme, Kennedy asked vice-president Lyndon Johnson, 'which promises dramatic results in which we could win?'. And so the mission to the moon was born with Kennedy's bold speech the next month, as a way of reasserting US leadership in the world by demonstrating that America could get things done.

After the Cold War, the US government's primary motivation for space exploration has disappeared. And so has its will to boldly go. Today the American government is much more insecure than it was 30 years ago, and lacks the resolve or the resources to carry through major space projects. Where Kennedy could stride into the unknown in an attempt to resolve his difficulties, Bill Clinton can only batten down the hatches. In June 1984, Ronald Reagan declared that within a decade a space station would be built. It will be



ironic if it is formally killed off exactly 10 years later. In 1988, Bush said America would plant a man on Mars within 50 years. Clinton has now cancelled the project.

The death of ambition in space reflects the US authorities' loss of faith across the range of science issues. In 1991, Leon Lederman, Nobel Laureate

Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake for his dreams of exploring the heavens

and incoming head of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, penned a provocative piece entitled 'Science: the end of the frontier?'. 'Once upon a time American science sheltered an Einstein, went to the moon, and gave the world the laser, the electronic computer, nylon, television, the cure for polio, and observations of our planet's location in an expanding universe', noted Lederman. His question was, what can America give in the future if it has lost the ambition to explore?

The message from government and others today is that we should forget about bold space projects and settle for observation of the heavens and Earth. A 1991 *Economist* survey observed that 'dreams are the hardest things to kill' but insisted that ambitions in space must be killed, because we don't know why we should go there and we can't afford the ticket. Indicative of the drift in government circles is the fact that George Brown, chairman of the US House Science, Space and Technology Committee, has come out against the space station he once championed.

So is there a case for space exploration today? The astronomer Ian Crawford argues that human colonisation of space is a necessity since some day the sun will expand and burn up the Earth. Correct as his point is, this is, of course, a very long way off. There are some more immediate reasons for space exploration.

Even if there were no other reason, it would be worth supporting space exploration simply to raise people's expectations of what is possible, and to combat the mood of pessimism in society. For centuries mankind has dreamed of exploring the heavens. Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno wrote these lines in 1584:

'Henceforth I spread confident wings to space; / I fear no barrier of crystal or of glass; / I cleave the heavens and soar to

the infinite. / And while I rise from my own globe to others / And penetrate ever further through the eternal field, / That which others saw from afar, I leave far behind me.'

Bruno was burned at the stake by the Papal authorities for his dreams. It would be cruelly ironic if we abandoned those ambitions now, when, thanks to Bruno and those who came after him, we have a far better understanding of our position in the universe and are on the verge of acquiring the technical ability to 'cleave the heavens'.

There are some good practical reasons for space exploration. The most immediate gain is the new technology we are forced to develop in order to get up there. While it is a myth that Teflon was developed for the Apollo missions, many more important products in circulation now are spin-offs from space research. In particular, the moon mission opened the modern age of micro-electronics, the effects of which we all feel today. Research to build a reusable space rocket in America (still at the prototype stage, and threatened by funding cuts) has created even better alloys and other materials which will find wide application soon.

Beyond these spin-offs, the more important point is that we don't know what we might find or develop in the future. Space exploration is all about opening humanity up to the unknown. As the astronomer Frank Drake puts it: 'space provides us with an endless frontier: an endless supply of new places to explore, new adventures, new things we have never seen before, new sources of joy, perhaps even new sources of fear.'

If instead the old fears are to prevail, and space exploration is to be ruled out, where will the line be drawn? Why not abandon all forms of exploration and experimentation in the realms of the unknown? Why not abandon the study of the oceans? In fact, why not abandon the study of anything else at all if humanity has no idea of what it might lead to? Let's just dismiss the foresight of a supporter of space colonisation like Ian Crawford as idle day-dreaming, and instead settle down in the 'real world' with a mug of tea to watch endless repeats of *Neighbours*.

A know-nothing, try-nothing attitude is seeping into science policy and practice today on both sides of the Atlantic: not only space exploration, but any area of science is under threat if it does not address known applications and possibilities and deliver a short-term profit. It is a sad comment on those who rule the Earth that they want to close off the 'endless frontier' before we have even begun to explore it.

TOWARDS 2000

Marxism for the new millennium



Friday 22 July - Thursday 28 July 1994

*University of London Union,
Malet Street, London WC1*

*A week of discussion
and debate organised by the
Revolutionary Communist Party
and sponsored by* **LIVING
MARXISM**

TOWARDS 2000 is the summer conference that sets out to break all of the old taboos, and to answer the questions that others will not even ask.

Whether you have read Living Marxism once or 69 times, TOWARDS 2000 is the place to be for stimulating debates that aim to develop a new generation of Marxist ideas for the twenty-first century.

Turn the page to find out what's on offer at TOWARDS 2000, and to find out how to get your ticket.

*At TOWARDS 2000, there is a choice
of more than 20 different courses to
follow through the week.*

Marxis

TOWARDS

INTRODUCTORY COURSES

Morning

AN INTRODUCTION TO MARXISM



Afternoon

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
POLITICS OF THE FA



OTHER COURSES

Morning

THE SCIENCE OF POLITICS: ELITES, CLASSES AND MASSES

JUSTICE, LIBERTY AND RIGHTS

POWER AND POLITICS IN EASTERN EUROPE

HOW CAPITALISM TRIES TO COPE

IMPERIALISM TODAY

THE CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS

WHAT IS HUMAN NATURE?

EVENING COURSES

The science of war ↔ *Understanding the new Ireland* ↔ *The culture*

*PLUS: plenty of afternoon and evening sessions on everything
from soap operas and sex to football and theatre*

ism for the new millennium

DS 2000

THE MARXIST THEORY OF THE STATE ↔ AN INTRODUCTION TO
FAMILY ↔ AN INTRODUCTION TO MARXIST ECONOMICS



Afternoon

SOCIAL REGULATION, THE FAMILY AND THE STATE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

NATURE AND SOCIETY

THE STATE OF WELFARE

THE MYTH OF THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

of conformity ↔ Unscrambling Africa ↔ Art and culture

*↔ top class debates on Marxism v the free market ↔
the Irish 'peace process' ↔ censorship ↔*

WHERE TO GO

You will find the University of London Union (ULU) on Malet Street, off Tottenham Court Road in central London. The nearest tube stations are Goodge Street, Warren Street, Euston, Euston Square and Russell Square.

REGISTRATION

Registration for the conference begins at ULU on Friday 22 July from 6pm, or on Saturday 23 July from 10am. Sessions begin at 8pm on Friday and 10.30am on Saturday.

CRECHE

A full programme of activities to suit children of different ages will be organised during the day. The creche is free but places are strictly limited so we recommend you book early.

WHAT TO PAY

Tickets for TOWARDS 2000 cost £55/£38 concessions in advance of the event, or £60/£40 on the door. School/FE students pay £20.

School/FE students pay £15 each for a block booking of 10 or more. Students in higher education pay £30 each for a block booking of 10 or more.

HOW TO GET THERE

We are organising coach transport to TOWARDS 2000 from many cities in Britain, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Birmingham, Cardiff, Bristol, Oxford, Brighton and Canterbury. Book when you buy your ticket.

WHERE TO STAY

We can advise you on accommodation in London, and may be able to provide you with somewhere to stay.

ENTERTAINMENT

Music, dance, comedy and films will be provided free every evening throughout TOWARDS 2000.

FOR BROCHURES, TICKETS OR MORE INFORMATION ON ANYTHING TO DO WITH *TOWARDS 2000*, RING KATE FLINT ON (071) 278 9908 OR USE THE ORDER FORM BELOW.

Please send me tickets and free brochures at £..... I enclose a cheque for £.....

Please send me a free brochure for TOWARDS 2000 (delete as applicable)

Name

Address

Telephone

Make cheques payable to RCP Association and send to TOWARDS 2000, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.

Society is suffering from mourning sickness, says Frank Füredi

Funerals, memorials, anniversaries and plenty of nostalgia; modern Britain seems to be a society that loves to mourn. There was something singularly morbid, not to say unreal, in the public reaction to the death of Labour leader John Smith. It recently dawned on me that you cannot watch the TV news these days without seeing the stock image of a cheap bunch of cellophane-wrapped flowers in front of some desolate garage. And that made me think of John Smith's funeral in a new way.

My most abiding memory was the transformation of the death into an occasion. Everyone seemed to be vying with everyone else to demonstrate the depth and breadth of their grief. Soon it became clear that nothing less than a state funeral was required to mark this unique occasion.

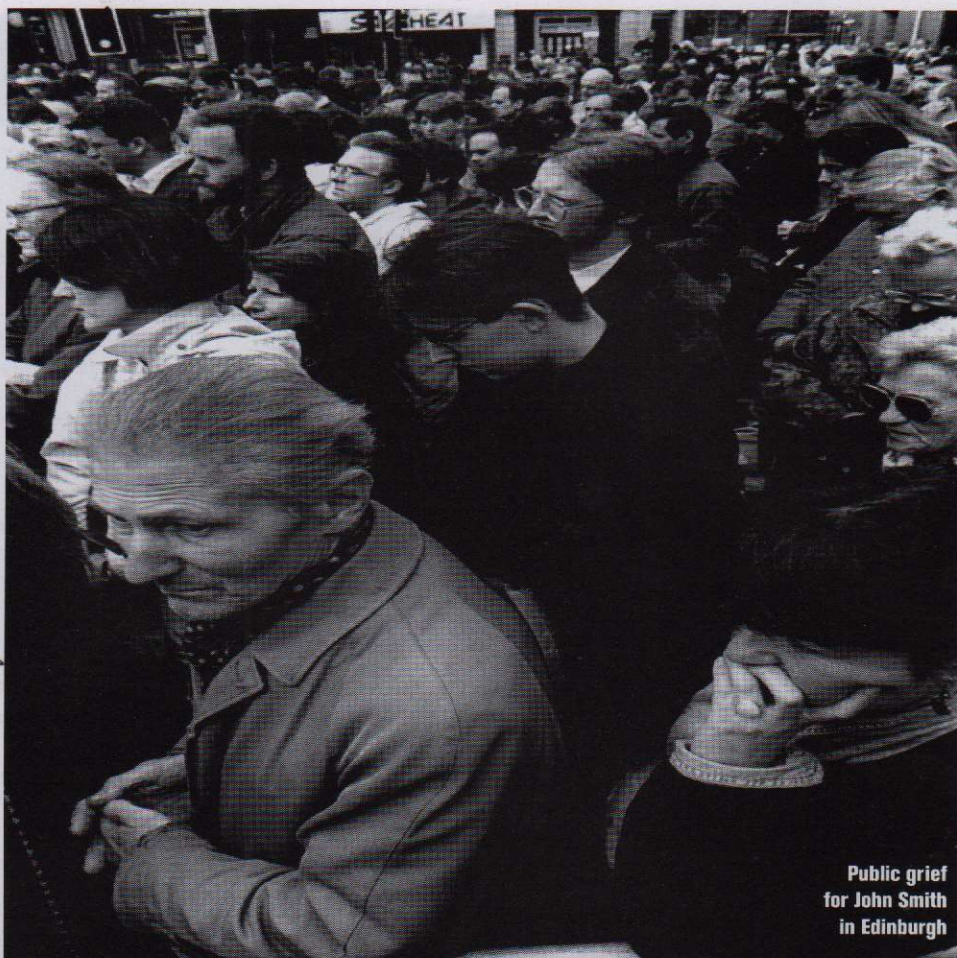
Are all deaths of political leaders treated like that of John Smith? Or do you have to be a leader of Her Majesty's opposition? But if that is the case, why was the response to Hugh Gaitskell's death 30 years ago so much more low-key? Pose a few questions, make a few comparisons with the past, and it readily becomes clear that something new is astir.

We are living in a period when society is continually in search of occasions and of characters, usually from the past. This is the Sir Matt Busby syndrome. The funeral of the former manager of Manchester United was a model of late twentieth-century public grief. In record time a man relatively far from the public gaze was transformed into a durable figure of affection. His funeral became an occasion for 'bringing people together'.

Young and old were united by a common sentiment, at least for one afternoon. And once this event had demonstrated its potential for affirming social cohesion, the incantation of 'Matt Busby' acquired the character of a religious ritual. Before, during and after Manchester United's FA Cup triumph, the standard rhetorical statement from commentators and celebrities was that it was a pity that Sir Matt was not alive to savour the occasion. After a while it became routine for United players to swear that they were playing for Sir Matt's memory.

Contemporary British society has become highly ritualised. In our conservative age, the observance of rituals remains one sphere where there is still considerable scope for innovation and experimentation. There is a veritable scramble to invent symbols of social unity. The public need to demonstrate a sense of community is palpable. In this climate, a rare violent crime like the murder of James Bulger can be turned into a moral parable for our times, a symbol of common fears and feelings.

Death, especially in major tragedies, has become an occasion for mass public displays of community. When I review the media over the past decade it becomes clear that it is through the reaction to major disasters such as Hillsborough



Public grief for John Smith in Edinburgh

The crying game

that expressions like 'the community coming together' can be convincingly used. It is as if mourning has become a real social ritual, quite separate from the act of remembering the dead.

One major innovation in the sphere of symbolism has been the elaboration of the ritual of leaving bunches of flowers near the place where someone has died. Television now regularly shows pictures of flowers placed outside a public building, or near a wall where a child was knocked down by a car, or on the footpath in front of the house where somebody was murdered. Even before words are spoken, the audience knows that someone has died. For this is what we do in Britain.

And yet the image of bunches of unwrapped flowers on a city pavement would have meant very little to television viewers 20 years ago. It was not until the eighties that this particular display of grief acquired the character of a routine. The flowers on the pavement are symptomatic of the general tendency to bring mourning more and more into the public domain.

Mourning is one of the few social acts that seems to have the capacity to remind people that something binds them together. At a time of social malaise and fragmentation, when the old values have little authority, any opportunity to affirm what is good about British society is readily seized upon.

The legacy of John Smith's death was the message that, in spite of everything, British politicians and public figures really are a decent lot. Through their expression of the 'loss' which they all felt, they demonstrated their humanity, compassion and basic decency. Talking up John Smith was a roundabout way of celebrating the whole system of British parliamentary democracy.

The same process is at work through the newly ritualised display of mourning in our inner cities. Unemployment, urban decay, economic insecurity and elementary anxieties about survival prey on the imagination of isolated individuals. The new public mourning rituals can momentarily bring people together, but in a way that solves nothing. Indeed a preoccupation with weeping over the loss of the past can only anaesthetise us to the real problems of the present, and weaken our resolve to do something about them.

The term community is a fiction which professionals peddle when they apply for grants for their next project. But for a brief moment the act of public mourning can help to forge the illusion. Captured on camera by the media, it will be deployed throughout society to help institutionalise a new public ritual, and to reinforce a mood of morbid passivity in which we all stand silently, heads bowed, waiting for another hearse to pass. Probably the only beneficiary is Britain's flower industry. ●

Who killed Rwanda?

Media hype about tribalism in Rwanda hides the West's responsibility for the violence, argues Sabine Reul from the German magazine *Novo*

Rwanda has become a metaphor for tribal bloodletting thanks to media coverage of the conflict there. Since the assassination in April of the Rwandan president, Juvenal Habyarimana, the carnage and the corpses have never been out of the news. As far as most people watching TV are concerned, ancient tribal hatreds among Rwanda's minority Tutsi and majority Hutu peoples are to blame for the orgy of killing.

A modern conflict

Habyarimana's plane was shot down over Kigali airport. Immediately after the killing, rebel troops from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) moved out of the parliamentary compound near the airport and attacked the presidential guard. At this point, the Rwandan war, which had been simmering since the RPF invaded the northern border region from neighbouring Uganda in 1990, exploded into a life-and-death struggle between the government and the rebels.

After two months of massacres, the United Nations security council authorised the despatch of a 5500-strong peacekeeping force to Rwanda. The fact that the UN had played a big role in precipitating the violence there was ignored by a media obsessed with the gruesome details of the carnage.

The RPF was installed in Kigali by the UN as part of a plan to put pressure on Habyarimana to include the rebels in an interim government. Belgian troops belonging to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda sub-let their quarters to RPF troops and trained them. The Belgians controlled the airport in Kigali and the area around the presidential palace. It is unlikely that the rocket-launchers which fired the missiles that shot down the president's plane could have been used without the connivance or at least the knowledge of the Belgian UN contingent. Belgian troops also stood by when RPF forces attacked the presidential guard.

Once the events leading to the

outbreak of fighting are examined, it becomes clear that the Rwandan masses are not victims of tribalism, but of Western meddling. In fact, there are no ancient ethnic conflicts in Rwanda. In pre-colonial times, Tutsi and Hutu were not ethnic groups, nor even fixed social layers, but social positions attached to people depending on their proximity to the court and their access to wealth and power in a complex hierarchy (see C Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda 1860-1960*, 1988). The modern antagonisms among Rwandan people are a product of the divisions imposed on the country under colonial rule (see 'The invention of tribalism' below).

These divisions have come to the fore again today as a result of attempts by outside powers to change the balance of power in Kigali.

Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, Africa has been at the sharp end of Western governments' attempts to renegotiate their relationships with third world states. Under the banner of a 'democratisation' campaign, the USA has led the way in opening up Africa to greater Western tutelage.

Become a democracy!

There are many motives for the USA's democratisation crusade in Africa— from trying to stabilise the region by replacing dictatorships with elected governments, to improving the West's international image by dumping old stooges—but the effect is always the same. The West's democracy campaign has not empowered the people of Africa—on the contrary, it has given them less say in their own affairs by opening up their countries to more direct Western supervision.

How is democracy being introduced into Africa? The pattern so far is one of Western governments telling African states that unless they introduce some kind of multi-party system and market reforms they will not get economic ▶



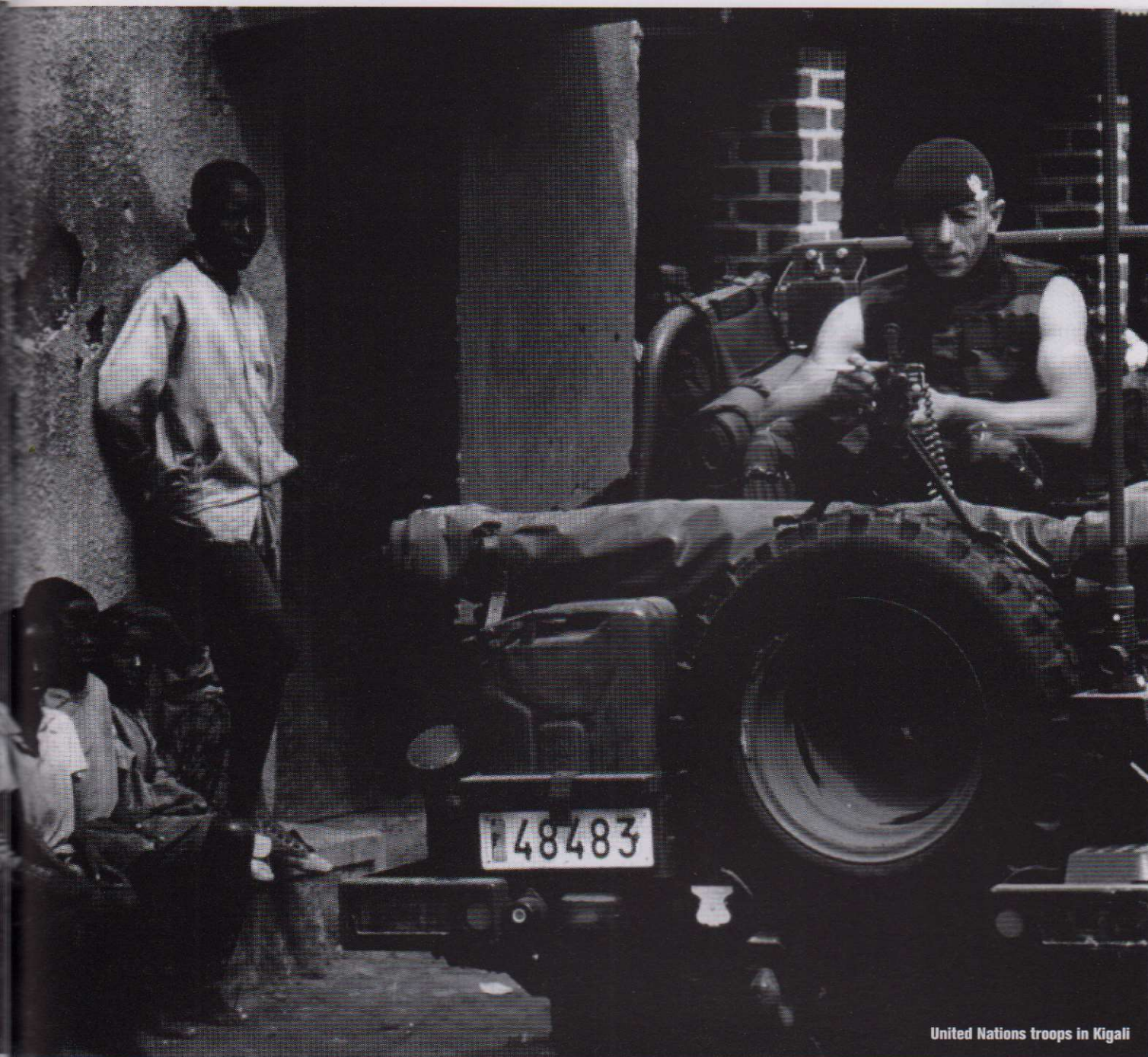
The invention of tribalism



The assumption that African tribalism is ancient implies that it is too deeply entrenched to be cured. But tribalism as a political force is a relatively new phenomenon in Africa. It was invented during the colonial era by occupying powers as a way of undermining resistance to imperial authority.

Before the Second World War, in the period preceding the decolonisation process, the European colonial powers selected from the many facets of African culture a handful of practices that would create an indigenous political force capable of dividing and confusing national liberation movements.

The European colonial powers created the caricature of African tribes that we know today from *Tarzan* movies. In particular, they tried to mould an elite of tribal chiefs out of the innocuous custom



United Nations troops in Kigali

of consulting rural elders. Heterogenous peoples were slotted into an artificial framework of tribes each of which had its own 'authentic' tribal chief.

According to Oxford Professor of Race Relations Terence Ranger, this attempt to divide Africans along tribal lines often went to ridiculous lengths:

'Primordial characteristics and capacities were attributed to these "tribal" peoples and then arranged in hierarchies of occupational ethnicity: some were "manly" and useful as policemen or overseers, others "submissive" and useful in menial occupations; some were naturally industrious and intelligent, while the unfortunate Tonga of the Zambezi Valley were held to have "a natural affinity to night-soil work".' (St Anthony's College lecture, 19 January 1994)

The results of such 'occupational ethnicity' can still be seen

in modern Rwanda. According to one Rwandan source, 'Hutu simply means "servant" in our language. Somebody with lots of cows has the right to have servants. "Tutsi" just means rich. It was during the 1950s and the 1960s that the difference became politicised' (*Guardian*, 3 May 1994).

The division of Africans into tribes aimed to thwart the spread of anti-colonial nationalism among the masses. Frightened by the development of the Indian national movement after the First World War, British colonial authorities elsewhere sought to make use of that experience to avoid a similar situation in the rest of the empire. Tanganyikan governor Sir Donald Cameron argued that it was essential to cultivate tribalism to counter the anticipated rise of African nationalism:

'If we aim at indirect administration through the appropriate Native Authority—chief or council—founded on the people's own traditions and preserving their own tribal organisation...we shall ►



assistance. African regimes are at the mercy of Western banks and financial institutions which threaten to withhold desperately needed dollars if they are not obeyed. Western officials are drafted in to oversee the election process, and to decide who has won the election (if the results are not to their liking, as in Angola, they will delay recognising the new government

American, British and Belgian governments back the RPF against the Kigali regime

until they can engineer a settlement on their terms). Meanwhile, Western advisers arrive to run the ministries, overseeing the sale of national assets at knockdown prices to Western businessmen.

Everywhere that this 'democratisation' process has been imposed, the result has not been the arrival of democracy, but the centralisation of economic and political control over African affairs in the hands of international bankers, global financial institutions and foreign advisers. The democracy crusade that has been promoted by the American, British and other governments has already had disastrous consequences throughout the continent, increasing hardship, inflaming divisions and igniting civil wars from Angola to Somalia.

In Rwanda, the US-sponsored democratisation campaign is largely to blame for the bloodbath of recent months. The three-year old civil war between the government and the RPF

was ended by a UN-sponsored peace agreement signed in Arusha, Tanzania, on 4 August 1993. The Arusha Accords provided for a new office of president, a multi-party government, a multi-party national assembly and a new national army. The implementation of the accords was to be supervised by the UN, but by the outbreak of fighting in April only the institution of presidency was in place.

These moves by outside powers to change the political arrangements inside Rwanda were presented as an exercise in democracy. In reality they were part of a cynical plan by powerful Western governments to impose their own preferences on the Rwandan people.

The Arusha Accords were forced on Habyarimana under threat of economic and political reprisals by the IMF, World Bank, UN, the USA, Britain and Belgium. The Rwandan government has been denied access to the \$30m due to it under the structural adjustment programme until it implements political reform. The accords are the culmination of a sustained campaign by Western governments and institutions to overturn the old order in Rwanda.

Museveni's game

This has involved the American, British and Belgian governments giving strong backing over several years to the rebel RPF army's attempt to oust the Kigali regime. The RPF's invasion of Rwanda in October 1990 was directly encouraged by Washington. Although the USA disclaimed any involvement, it had been training RPF forces in US military facilities since 1989.

The RPF was also being sponsored by the USA's proxy in the region, the Ugandan regime of Yoweri Museveni. The RPF was formed in Uganda in 1987 by Rwandan exiles who had

helped Museveni's National Resistance Army take power after the fall of Milton Obote in 1986. Museveni had his own reasons to encourage the RPF, as he was keen to increase his influence in the region.

But the real mover behind the scenes was Washington. America has financed, armed and trained Museveni's forces since the mid-eighties. Uganda has become a favoured client regime and a solid base of US influence in the heart of Africa. From Sudan to Liberia, where the Ugandan army is sponsoring Washington's men, Museveni's regime increasingly acts as a proxy for the USA.

Belgians switch sides

It is not only the Americans who are interfering in Rwanda, either. Since 1990, the country has been the focus of intense meddling by an assortment of Western powers, often competing among themselves to shape events inside the country, and extend their own influence in the region.

For example, after the 1990 US-sponsored invasion of Rwanda by the RPF, France threw its weight behind the government in Kigali, replacing Belgium as Rwanda's single largest supplier of economic and military aid. The Germans also got involved. Thanks to discreet German support, in addition to the open backing of the French, the Habyarimana regime was able to delay its demise for a while.

Meanwhile, Belgium, the former colonial power in Rwanda which had brought Habyarimana to power in 1973, ditched its former stooge. In the summer of 1990, a few months before the RPF invasion of Rwanda, Brussels suddenly expressed a commitment to democracy in Rwanda. When the RPF invaded from Uganda, the Belgians withdrew their troops and let the rebels do what they wanted. By backing

◀ be building an edifice with some foundation to it, capable of withstanding the shock that will inevitably come when the educated native seeks to gain possession of the machinery of government and to run it on Western lines.' (quoted in J Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp321-22)

Africans tried to obstruct this process. One exasperated British district officer recounted how people picked tribal chiefs from 'the imbecile, the leper, the syphilitic, ex-convicts, ex-rickshaw boys, ex-domestic servants and so on. Anyone in fact who was incapable or unlikely to exercise authority'. The British had to intervene time and again to impose 'traditional' tribal chiefs to their own tastes.

In Uganda, the process of converting village elders into government-appointed chiefs eventually became routine. First, the elder would be recognised by the British as a chief within the terms of the Native Authority Ordinance of 1919. Then he would be retired and replaced by a mission-trained son or relative chosen by the colonial state. Next, the new chief would be transferred to a post other than the traditional one. Finally, having separated the

chief from his traditional political base, the original post would cease to be hereditary and be made by appointment.

Lord Frederick Lugard, who committed a series of atrocities in Uganda in the 1890s during the scramble for Africa, spent the rest of his career perfecting his system of 'indirect rule' in West Africa. As governor of Nigeria he elevated to positions of power the Fulani cattle-owning Emirs of northern Nigeria whom he conquered in 1902, while imposing strict limitations on their rule. They were not allowed to carry arms, levy troops, raise taxes, legislate, sell land, or interfere with non-'natives' in their district. Lugard retained for himself 'the right of confirming or otherwise the choice of the people of the successor to a chiefship, and of deposing any ruler for misrule or other adequate cause'. Britain continued to rule, but indirectly—through the emirs and the tribal chiefs they had appointed in the first place.

Before the arrival of the Arabs and Europeans, African chiefs had been ceremonial figureheads or acted only under strictly limited conditions. Land and other property like cattle were held in common. The Western prejudice of a tribal chief as a despotic dictator was alien to most of Africa because without private

US policy in the region, the Belgians figured that they could reinforce their position in the area.

Together with the Belgians, the British, also staunch backers of the Museveni regime in Uganda, have armed the RPF. And, like its US and Belgian counterparts, which banned Kigali government officials from visiting their capitals, the British government has denied admission to Habyarimana's men. While RPF representatives have been granted visas to travel to England to raise support, Kigali government officials had their applications for visas turned down.

Stirred-up hatred

The more the Western powers have manoeuvred to their own advantage in Rwanda, the more they have fomented divisions in the country and made the prospect of a bloodbath more likely. After the US-sponsored 1990 invasion, and the successful seizure of the northern border region by the RPF in 1991, the Habyarimana regime reacted by stirring up hatred against the minority Tutsis. The government's increasingly rabid anti-Tutsi propaganda was a desperate attempt by Habyarimana to secure his hold on power.

In any country riven by severe economic scarcity, such as Rwanda, violence is never far from the surface. Given that access to resources is a life-and-death question, it is hardly surprising that the struggle to control those resources often leads to intense conflict. When outside powers intervene to overturn the old political

arrangements, as they have done in Rwanda, violence is a certainty. What happened in Rwanda is an extreme but not exceptional example of the inevitable destruction unleashed by Western intervention.

From this perspective, the activities of many Western aid organisations and charities are an obscenity. For example, the British charity Oxfam runs peace and tolerance classes in Rwanda, aimed at getting Rwandans to confront their inner violent impulses. If we accept Oxfam's assumption that Africans are naturally violent it makes sense to support the calls from US organisations such as Human Rights Watch (Africa) for more Western intervention to stop the killing in Rwanda. On the evidence available, however, we must draw the conclusion that Western intervention is to blame for the bloodbath. ●

property there was no basis for tyranny. As a result of the imposition of tribalism on African society, however, the perception grew that all Africans lived in primitive tribes, each with its distinctive language, culture, sense of identity and so on.

The reality behind the myth of African tribalism is that the colonial powers invented tribalism by transforming relatively benign cultural traditions into instruments of political patronage. For the sake of imperial stability, the colonial authorities fostered the power of African chiefs and emirs, who in turn benefited from maintaining a pseudo-feudal relationship to the masses.

The invention of tribal identities by the colonial powers bequeathed a bitter legacy to Africa after independence. The divisions imposed under colonial rule have been manipulated ever since by new elites desperately trying to cling to power in very poor and fragile countries. And, as recent events in Rwanda demonstrate, those divisions can still be used by the old colonial powers which invented them in order to impose a new servitude on Africa.

Andy Clarkson



The stereotype of the savage tribesman disguises the fact that it was the colonists who manufactured the tribal system, not the Africans

Situation

Tony Blair is likely to succeed John Smith in July, amid predictions that he will be the next Labour prime minister.

Mike Freeman sees the bland Blair as the ideal candidate to fill an empty space in an empty party that stands for nothing

It would please us no end if a natural leader emerged. If the politicians within the Labour Party believed they had a consensus on their next leader, I'm fairly certain that would be welcome throughout the trade union movement.' Bill Jordan, president of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union (*Guardian*, 16 May 1994)

This statement from a prominent union leader shortly after the death of John Smith was revealing in a number of ways. Despite all the talk about 'one member, one vote', Jordan indicated how the Labour leadership is actually decided. It was clear within hours of Smith's death that 'the politicians within the Labour Party' had a consensus on who should succeed him and this was rapidly communicated to sympathetic media commentators. Over the next few weeks they persuaded Gordon Brown, a bachelor vulnerable to invidious speculation, to stand down in favour of Blair, an unimpeachable family man. The succession was virtually assured.

At the same time, Jordan's intervention provoked howls of derision from 'the politicians'. They wanted Blair to win, but they recognised that he needed the legitimacy conferred by a contest; they also understood that due respect had to be paid to Labour's fiercely contested internal procedures and the appearance of democracy upheld. Furthermore they resented the public interference of a union leader in Labour's leadership contest.

Jordan's comment inadvertently revealed the most striking feature of the Blair ascendancy: he is destined to be



the first leader of the Labour Party not appointed by the trade union chiefs. Recall only the most recent leadership contests. The polls had scarcely closed on Neil Kinnock's 1992 general election defeat before John Edmonds of the GMB announced his backing for the 'dream ticket' of John Smith and Margaret Beckett. In a similar way, his predecessor David Basnett had proclaimed in 1983 after Michael Foot's defeat that Labour should 'skip a generation' to find a new leader: Kinnock was given the key union nomination.

After James Callaghan's defeat in 1979 a cabal of union barons conspired to block Denis Healey's advance to the top job. Though he was the heir

apparent, the union bosses were so embittered at Healey's anti-union record as chancellor in the late seventies that they made sure that Michael Foot took the leadership.

Whatever procedure Labour's leadership election has followed, the outcome has always been determined through the network of formal and informal ties that have bound Labour to the unions since the party was established at the turn of the century. The Labour Party was founded to advance the interests of the trade union leadership in the parliamentary sphere: the union leaders have always controlled the party machine, dictated policy on key issues and decided who filled the top job. For most of Labour's

vacant

history, the party leader was more or less a personal appointment of the transport workers' union, whose headquarters also housed the Labour Party until the early eighties. Ernest Bevin's celebrated public termination of the leadership of George Lansbury at the 1935 Labour conference was only the most conspicuous illustration of how this relationship worked.

Over the past 15 years, the world of Labourism has changed utterly. Recession turning into slump, permanent mass unemployment, the end of consensus politics in the Thatcher era, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of socialism worldwide: all these factors have led to the effective collapse of the old labour movement. They have also brought to an end the role of the trade union and Labour leaders as intermediaries between the state and the working class.

Christian rocker

According to one recent survey, relations between employers and workers in British industry are returning to the master-and-servant relationship that prevailed in the nineteenth century (N Millward, *The New Industrial Relations*, Policy Studies Institute, February 1994). Trade unions still exist, but play little role in most workplaces. The TUC, for most of the postwar period a major institution in national life, has lost up to a third of its members, disbanded most of its committees and put its public relations in the hands of a prominent Liberal Democrat, Des Wilson.

For its part, the Labour Party has long sought to 'modernise' by distancing itself from the unions, reducing their role in all spheres of policy and organisation. Blair's record in repudiating Labour's traditional support for the unions over Conservative legislation against the closed shop has stood him in good stead in recent weeks. Nor is Blair alone in repudiating traditional Labourism. Three of his main challengers in the early stages of the campaign (Gordon Brown, Robin Cook and John Prescott) were all involved in drawing up the recent policy document 'Financing Investment in Infrastructure'. This proposes abandoning Labour's historic commitment to public ownership in favour of a partnership with the private sector extending even into health and education.

The death of John Smith has not only created a vacancy for the

leadership, it has focused attention on the vacuum at the heart of the Labour machine, on the exhaustion of the tradition of Labourism. Today's Labour Party has changed its constitution to reduce the union role and abandoned the state socialist policies that provided its distinctive political identity. What then is the new Labour Party? It is simply a clique of career politicians with an organisational shell they have inherited from the old labour movement, and an undynamic electoral base concentrated in declining regions of the country.

In the past, contenders for the Labour leadership came from two broad camps. Many had roots and a continuing relationship with the unions: Ernest Bevin, George Brown, even James Callaghan. Others were by birth, education or assimilation members of the establishment who identified with Labour as the alternative party of government: Stafford Cripps, Hugh Gaitskell, Harold Wilson, Denis Healey. In recent years such figures have been replaced by leaders whose deepest roots are to be found in student politics: Kinnock, Smith, Cook, Brown. It is ironic that for John Prescott, the only current contender with some background in the unions, these roots are generally held to be a liability.

Tony Blair is clearly the ideal candidate to fill an empty space in an empty party. He has no roots in the unions, no record of intellectual or political achievement. He wasn't even a student politician. It seems that when the students at Oxford were revolting, he was fronting a rock band and staying up late at night drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes with earnest Anglican vicars discussing Christian socialism. What a rebel. We can only hope that the coffee was decaffeinated and that he did not inhale the cigarette smoke.

Mod revival

Blair offers an empty autocue on which the market researchers, opinion pollsters and public relations experts whom Bill Jordan dignifies as 'politicians' can write their soundbites. What is remarkable about Blair and his team is that the more they talk about the need for new vision and new ideas, the more they recycle the visions and ideas of Labour's past. It seems that their ignorance of Labour's traditions condemns them to return to them despite all their attempts to break out. So Blair talks about putting 'community' above class or sectional

interests in the same terms as Labour's first leader Ramsay MacDonald. He spouts the pieties of Christian socialism just like Keir Hardie or George Lansbury. Even he concedes that most of his supposedly novel policies on crime are derived from ministers in Clement Attlee's postwar Labour government.

No winner

What then are the prospects for Blair's Labour Party? One of the most pathetic features of the current leadership contest is the campaign against Blair from the remnants of the old left. They accuse him of trying to remodel Labour along the lines of Clinton's Democratic Party, of retreating into something like David Owen's Social Democratic Party or even of realignment with the Liberals. These arguments about Blair 'betraying Labour's principles' underestimate the extent to which the old Labour Party has long ceased to exist: none of the alternative candidates even stands for a return to traditional Labourism, now the zenith of radical aspirations.

They also underestimate the difficulties facing Labour in attempting to transform itself into something new. If only it was as easy to metamorphose into the US Democratic Party as it was to destroy the old Labour Party. A new party requires a new programme, a new core of activists and a new constituency of support. As a recent survey suggests, Labour faces a serious danger in its search for a new role; by opting for a low-tax policy, for example, it risks losing some of its old base without gaining a stable new one (A Heath, R Jowell and J Curtice, *Labour's last chance? The 1992 Election and Beyond*).

That Blair will become Labour leader seems certain. Whether he becomes prime minister, now widely assumed as inevitable by Labour activists and many pundits, remains more doubtful, despite the favourable results for Labour in the Euro-elections. His prospects depend far more on what happens in the crisis-stricken Conservative Party than on any developments in Labour. And if Labour's man with no policies did manage to scramble into office over the dead body of his Tory equivalent, what difference would it make to the rest of us? One thing is certain; no party led by Blair or any of the other contenders will ever fulfil his promise to bring full employment in capitalist Britain.

Labour's heir
apparent sums
up his principles

Management's flexible friend

Proposals for more flexibility in the workplace only bend in one direction, says Phil Murphy

Jobs row fires life into Euro campaign' was the *Independent's* frontpage headline on the eve of the June European elections. Hardly, unless your view of life has become sadly degraded. However, we did have the unedifying spectacle of the three main parties squabbling over whose economic policies were being endorsed by the Jobs Study document from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). But what were they fighting over?

The OECD report was in tune with the current fad of focusing on the issue of mass unemployment (See 'Unemployment fall-out', *Living Marxism*, June 1994). The report outlined policies which the authors believe can do something to reduce the ranks of the 35m officially unemployed in the world's 25 leading industrialised countries. The key theme of its 60 recommendations was the need to increase labour market flexibility. This same point has dominated just about every international economic gathering over the past couple of years. It was the centrepiece of the British government's white paper on competitiveness published in May.

Structurally workshy

The OECD view confirms the contemporary consensus that the problem of unemployment is 'structural', and not to do with the recession. This conveniently serves to put some distance between the global economic slump, of which unemployment is a symptom, and the day-to-day operations of the capitalist market. The report instead insists that 'the single most important cause of rising unemployment, as well as a growing incidence of low-wage jobs, is a growing gap between the need for OECD economies to adapt and innovate and their capacity and even will to do so'. At first sight this might look like a welcome attack on inertia and conservatism, and a call for innovation, adaptability and change. But who exactly is being asked to change?

The report may be written for governments but its recommendations are about changing life for us, whether in work or out of work. The starting point for the OECD is that today's employment problems began in the infamous 1960s, when the living standards of working people apparently began to rise too fast. From then on, it seems we were on the slippery slope: too many rigidities in the labour market, too much easy public sector employment, and too many disincentives to accept low-paid work.

Bending over backwards

Following on from this diagnosis, the 'structural' solutions which the OECD experts propose are primarily to do with restructuring the labour market—that is, strengthening the hand of the employers. The emphasis is on flexibility, and the unerring trend of the recommendations is that we have to be the flexible ones in order that they might more easily enhance their profits. There is never any suggestion of 'flexibly' increasing our pay or 'flexibly' reducing our workload.

Here are just some of the OECD recommendations:

- 'Increase' flexibility of working time: that means more low-paid part-time jobs, and fewer laws which can 'impede flexible arrangements'—ie, get rid of what limited legal protection we do have at work. The Tories' proposal to cut health-and-safety regulations is one such measure.
- 'Increase' wage and labour cost flexibility. This always means bending wages in a downwards direction. They also want to make collective bargaining agreements more flexible, to give employers a chance to renegotiate terms in times of difficulty—that is, give them the right to tear up wage deals and pay us less.
- 'Reform' unemployment and related benefit systems. Welfare is supposedly a disincentive to work, so they want to cut the dole and other benefits to force people to take lower paid employment (an ingenious solution to the problem of 'low-wage jobs').



- 'Reform' employment security provisions. That means making it easier to impose redundancies (an especially helpful measure to cut 'rising unemployment').

All of the main proposals centre on the supposed deficiencies of the workforce. We are being made the fall-guys for the failures of the market economy. If the OECD is really interested in the lack of innovation, why not focus on the desperate need for heavy investment in new technology? But capitalists cannot and will not make those investments today, because their profitability is too low. So they are trying to blame our inflexibility instead.

The OECD proposals for training and education programmes, which the British Labour Party is always keen to emphasise, complement the focus upon the weaknesses and deficiencies of the workforce. Here the problem of unemployment is not due to the market's failure to provide us with enough decent jobs, it is our fault for not being educated, trained or skilled enough. The call for more training schemes is really a call for more substitutes for proper employment, not preparation for it. Anyone who's been on a government training scheme knows what a waste of time they are. In reality most skill is developed on the job, not away from it. So the problem is having a job in the first place to reap the opportunity to become skilled.

PHOTO: OPUS



You would need to be the fastest milkman in the West to keep up with a franchised-out round

But reports such as the OECD's are about more than allocating blame; they are practical prescriptions for making us bear the costs of capitalist survival. In Britain and America, many of the ideas on flexibility are already in operation. The British government's recent white paper on improving the competitiveness of industry was in the same mould. It argued that people, and young people in particular, are not trained and skilled enough; and that those in jobs are not flexible enough.

Over the past 15 years of labour market deregulation we have seen more not less unemployment, and worse not better jobs. These measures have facilitated the loss of three million full-time jobs over that time; today's proposals for even more flexibility offer many young, even qualified people little better than the prospect of part-time shiftwork in a fast-food outlet.

Only a decade ago expectations were very different. The talk then was of a prosperous post-industrial society. Driven by rapid technological change and the shift from manufacturing to service-based employment, new patterns of working and living were on the horizon. Higher productivity and information-based technology held out the promise of less work, more leisure-time and a better life. In the words of British management guru Charles Handy we were moving from a 47-hours-a-week, 47-weeks-a-year,

47-year working lifetime to a 35-hour, 42-week, 35-year alternative.

All of this was supposed to be realised through the switch to more flexible working patterns. Everybody would benefit from multi-skilling and more cooperative 'teamwork systems'. The shift to 'non-standard' employment—part-time work, temporary work, self-employment, homeworking—would be a boon to us all. We would have a greater choice in our lives, and employers would reap the advantages of a less rigid, more flexible workforce to meet the exigencies of a fluid market demand.

The reality has been very different. The working week has been lengthening for the first time in over 100 years. After 15 years of more deregulation and labour market changes than in most other countries, Britain remains the low-wage, low-investment, low-productivity capital of the West. Part-time work means less employment protection and lower hourly wages; temporary work means an easier way of sacking staff with no redundancy payments; self-employment means a disguised form of contracted wage labour and an average extra 10 hours on the working week; homeworking means lower wages, paying your own overheads, and never getting away from work.

As a typical instance of who benefits from deregulation and flexibility, take the franchising-out of milk deliveries

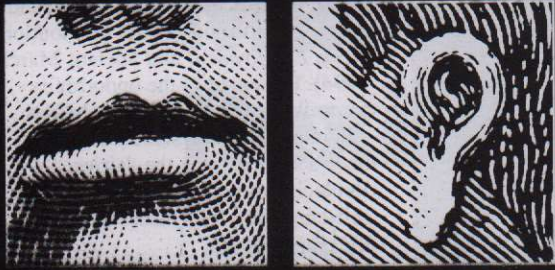
(see J O'Connell Davidson, 'What do franchisers do? Control and commercialisation in milk distribution', *Work, Employment and Society*, March 1994). Presented as the opportunity for milk men to be their own bosses and improve living standards, it has been a big hit...with the dairies. Replacing direct employees with self-employed franchisees allows the employers to:

- charge the worker thousands of pounds for the privilege of doing the milk round and giving the dairy a hefty percentage per pint delivered—some charge for training too;
- save national insurance and pension contributions;
- avoid responsibility for holiday or sickness benefits; indeed, if the worker is sick or hasn't arranged cover for his (unpaid) holiday, the dairy will charge him for relief workers;
- put the onus for collecting customer debts entirely on to the worker;
- receive a compensation payment from the worker if the amount of milk delivered declines over the contract period—as has been the trend recently;
- receive hire charges from the worker for the use of the milk float and depot space;
- benefit from a drop in absenteeism and sickness as milkmen are compelled to work harder in order to survive.

In exchange for these 'opportunities', milk men have had to work longer and earlier hours in worse conditions, sometimes rope in their families to help, and have no entitlement to sickness or holiday pay, redundancy or retirement benefits. Nice deal!

Less isn't more

Flexibility in practice means greater management power and intensified work. The universal theme is cost-cutting, primarily by driving down the wages bill. This might mean using sub-contractors, homeworkers, temporary staff or part-timers—and usually some combination of them all. And what does the government, with OECD endorsement, promise us as a future reward for the sacrifices we are making today? More flexibility. 'The objective of labour flexibility', secretary of state Michael Forsyth told the commons on 29 March 'is to support economic growth, create jobs and reduce unemployment'. After our experience of the past 15 years, this is like saying that the more cigarettes you smoke, the better you will be able to run.



Each month, this *Living Marxism* feature takes a critical look at today's conventional wisdom on social, moral and sexual issues

TABOOS

These days, family planning projects in the third world are presented in feminist-speak. But, says Amanda Macintosh, the message is still 'the fewer black babies, the better'

Family planning or population control?

Descriptions of Cairo often depict a hot, dusty city bursting at the seams with dark-skinned, dangerous Arabs. In September, Cairo's numbers will be further swelled by the delegates to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD '94). Hundreds of family planners, population experts, government officials and charities from around the world will gather to debate the latest ideas on population. For those delegates who believe there are already too many people in the world, ICPD '94 in Cairo will be the living, breathing and slowly suffocating proof of the problem.

The Cairo conference will be a platform for population experts who believe that the world's problems can be explained by looking at numbers. In their eyes, the poverty and hunger that is endemic throughout the third world occurs because there are too many people trying to get a share of limited resources. Rather than scrutinising the limits of the economic system that causes poverty and food shortages, and trying to increase the resources available for distribution, those attending ICPD '94 will look for ways to stop population growth. The delegates, world leaders, officials from government and non-governmental organisations are also nervous about population movement. They fear that hard-pressed people from 'over there' will try to migrate *en masse* over here, tempted by the better standards of living.

Professor John Guillebaud, Britain's first Professor of Family Planning, addressed the issue bluntly at his recent inaugural ceremony. Speaking to a large audience of family planning professionals, he motivated the need to fund and develop family planning projects abroad, and warned of the dangers of population growth in Africa:

'No wall will be high enough as people see the enticements of the consumer society and vote with their feet. No wall will be high enough to keep the hordes out.' Professor Guillebaud could be blunt because he was speaking to people who probably already agree with him. For those outside the population club, especially uncooperative African or Asian governments, family planning projects designed to curb third world populations have to be presented in a different way.

Although the entire agenda of the Cairo conference is about keeping down the numbers of third world people and teaching them to exist within the resources currently available, much of the language of the conference will be about 'enabling women in developing countries to exercise their reproductive choices'.

These days, population control has to be delicately packaged. The authorities in the West recognise that third world governments do not necessarily share the assumption that numbers of people are the cause of their problems. They also have different views on the appropriate number of children each family should have. In the past, Western-funded projects have been accused of coercing people into sterilisation and abortion, making local people unwilling to come forward. Not surprisingly, many third world governments have been actively resistant to such intrusive intervention into their societies. Delegates to ICPD '94 will be very sensitive to this problem.

Today's public discussions on family planning come in a coded form, cloaking their arguments in liberalism. Family planning is dressed up as a way of safeguarding people's health in the



third world. Family planning projects abroad are motivated as a means to improve standards of healthcare, to educate women about sexual health and to give women as much control over their lives as possible. Those who doubt that Western agencies' motives are that cynical should take a look at a document called 'Maternal education and the vicious cycle of high fertility and malnutrition', issued by the World Bank in 1988. 'The progressive integration of programmes in health, nutrition and family planning', it explains, 'has partly been a response to the failure (and the political costliness) of past attempts to run population programmes separately'.

Simply scratch the surface of today's feminist-speak arguments for family planning in the third world, and straight away the old motivation of population control begins to reappear.

Health projects, we are told, now concentrate on the area of reproductive and maternal health and contraception services, because it is the most effective way to save the lives of third world women. It is estimated that every year half a million women die from causes associated with childbearing. Unsafe abortion is a frequent killer. In Burundi the chances of a woman dying as a result of pregnancy are about one in 18, in stark contrast to the one in 10 000 fatalities that arise from pregnancies in Britain.

Each of these deaths is, of course, a tragedy, but it is interesting that the proposed solution in Burundi is so different to the one put forward over here. If a woman dies during childbirth in the UK, the call goes out for improved maternity care, better hospitals and more midwives and doctors. When the same thing happens in Burundi, however, the demand from

Western agencies is for ways to prevent women becoming pregnant in the first place. Doubtless if fewer Burundi women get pregnant, fewer will die. But fewer pregnant women would die if the conditions in which they gave birth were improved. Many pregnant women are seriously undernourished and subsequently too weak to fight against complications or infections. Obstetric procedures routinely carried out in Western hospitals simply do not exist for most women in Burundi. Surely there is a simple argument for international resources to be put into maternity hospitals where women could give birth in sanitary conditions with trained medical assistance. But this is an argument that is seldom made, except perhaps by the Vatican which has its own agenda.

In any case, it is important to keep the discussion about the maternal death toll in perspective. Childbearing may be one of the most publicised killers in the third world, but it is not the biggest.

Each year 17.5m people die as a result of infectious and parasitic diseases, most of which can be cured by modern medicine. Cholera and influenza are major killers, but there are no international summits to combat these problems. If life-saving were the prime motivation, the money which currently goes into family planning would be spent on finding new ways to prevent infectious diseases. The fact is that Western-financed projects concentrate on providing better healthcare in the specific arena of reproductive health simply in order to persuade more people in the third world to use contraception. The individual lives that are saved are incidental to the real agenda, which is to reduce the number of people.

In fact, reckless disregard for the

lives of third world women is evident even in many of the family planning policies themselves. In the UK much is made of the need for family planning advice to be given by qualified professionals. Many methods are only available from doctors, and organisations like the Family Planning Association often protest that even GPs are not up to the job. Standards are different for third world projects.

Population Concern, a British charity dedicated to raising funds for third world population programmes, recently launched a campaign to raise money for family planning in Tanzania. The appeal leaflet explained how Population Concern would use the money on short-term training projects so that Tanzanian women could learn how to provide *each other* with contraception services. Imagine the uproar if they launched a similar appeal in Britain. We would not accept that three weeks of training is sufficient to allow anyone to begin dispensing contraceptives, any more than we would be happy about those people being our friends and neighbours. If it's not good enough for us, why should it be good enough for Tanzanian women?

Third world women have long protested about family planning programmes being used to 'test' contraceptives, to ensure they were safe before use in the West. The first contraceptive pills, the Depo Provera injections and the Norplant rods are known to be safe for Western women because thousands of third world women tested them out for us. Linda Grant's recent book *Sexing the Millennium* explains how the Pill was developed and funded by people who wanted to solve the population 'crisis', and tested on Puerto Rican women ►

who were not properly informed about what they were taking. These women were thought of as 'a "cage" of ovulating females to experiment with'.

Another misleading argument used to motivate family planning projects is that access to contraception allows women to make real reproductive choices. It is claimed that women will be able to decide when to become pregnant, or how many children to have, or not to become pregnant at all.

In reality, decisions about family size are affected by far more than the availability of contraception. Even if women are supplied with the means to limit their families, they will be unable to exercise their choice to have fewer children if they live in a society where their future welfare is dependent on the support given by a large family network. In societies where there is no old-age pension or reliable healthcare, your future depends on sons and grandsons. In these circumstances the desire to bear fewer children is likely to be overridden by the need to safeguard the future. The only way to provide real 'reproductive choice' is to give people the means to organise their lives independently of the need for family support. But Western agencies seem unconcerned about



financing women's reproductive choice in this broader sense, by raising their living standards to a decent level.

The argument that the provision of family planning projects is a means to extend to third world women the reproductive choice enjoyed by Western women is false in another way too. In recent years, for women

motivated to choose infertility treatment if it were available. But it isn't, and it isn't likely to be. Those who fund and administer family planning projects are only interested in allowing women to 'choose' to have fewer children, not more.

The feminist language of health, choice, rights and education is simply a cover to win wider support for population control. If people are involved in family planning projects in the third world for genuinely altruistic reasons then the best that we can say is that their hearts are in the right place. Unfortunately, what they are doing will not help to bring any positive change.

Every penny spent on family planning for the third world carries the message that more black children is bad and fewer black children is good. Family planning projects can only force third world people to make decisions about their personal lives according to an agenda set by Western governments and agencies. That amounts to colonial-style interference, even if it is couched in the language of women's rights. The notion that family planning in the third world is a benevolent exercise is a dangerously persuasive myth of our time.

Women can 'choose' to have fewer children, but not more

in Western countries the concept of reproductive choice has expanded to include access to infertility services to assist those who wish to have children but are unable to produce them. Because of their dependence on the family, the enhanced status that goes with motherhood, and the stigma of sterility, it is arguable that women from third world countries might be particularly



Red Pepper

OUT NOW!

The magazine where reds and greens meet

Dennis Potter calls his cancer Rupert because: "There is no one person more responsible for the pollution of what was already a fairly polluted press. And the pollution of the press is an important part of the pollution of British political life."

Red Pepper is a healthy cell in the body politic. A magazine which: refuses to conform to money grabbing individualism; assumes its readers have brains; looks at the real facts without fear; is owned by its readers and staff; lifts the spirits and refreshes the imagination; challenges cultural complacency; and gives voice to the growing opposition to a political system paralysed by corruption and lack of vision.

Politics and culture with hope, humour and style... Red Pepper

Our writers and supporters include: Tony Benn MP, Billy Bragg, Victoria Brittain, Louise Christian, Julie Christie, Noam Chomsky, Caryl Churchill, Tony Cook, Charlotte Cornwell, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Larry Elliott, Diane Elson, Mark Fisher MP, Glyn Ford MEP, Maureen Foster, Stanley Forman, Fruitbat of Carter USM, Carlos Fuentes, Paul Gosling, Trevor Griffiths, David Hare, Michael Hindley MEP, Pete Jenner, Rana Kabbani, Helena Kennedy QC, Bruce Kent, Andy Kershaw, Jean Lambert, Colin Lindsay, Ken Loach, Mike Mansfield QC, Gabriell Garcia Marquez, Jacquetta May, Ralph Miliband, Ursula Owen, John Palmer, John Pilger, Harold Pinter, Ruth Rendell, Yvonne Roberts, Tom Robinson, Sheila Rowbotham, Prunella Scales, Anthony Scrivener QC, Dick Scroop, Jeremy Seabrook, Denise Searle, Margaret Sharkey, Sting, Sue Townsend, Hilary Wainwright, Timothy West.

SUBSCRIBE NOW! SPECIAL OPENING OFFER: SAVE £10

Use this form and we'll send you a one year subscription to Red Pepper for £20 (usual price £30). Concessions: (students, senior citizens and those on benefit - UK only with documentary evidence) £15. Europe: £35. Rest of the world: £40.

Name (ref:94F1LIMB1) _____ Address _____
 _____ Postcode _____

I enclose a cheque / postal order for: _____ (Please make cheques payable to Red Pepper)

PLEASE RETURN TO: **RED PEPPER, 3 Gunthorpe Street, LONDON E1 7RP. Tel: 071 247 1702**



There'll be racoons over...

A German we found, who said he spoke for all of them, told us that it was "the last hurrah of a fading power", growled Charles Wheeler through gently gritted teeth on BBC1. As Garry Bushell noted approvingly in the *Sun*, 'unlike the Falklands there was no reluctance to side with "our boys"' from the TV hacks. (That's right, *unlike* the Falklands.) Spirited stuff, but there was really no hiding the fact that outside the media circus, the D-Day jamboree in Normandy was falling flat.

The rain poured down and a few hundred spectators huddled behind the huge array of barriers erected in anticipation of massive crowds. British veterans fumed when French bureaucrats hung the Union flag upside down. Retired teacher Therese Mearing couldn't get through to the BBC's jammed lines, but managed to contact the papers to complain when a technical cock-up meant the Vera Lynn concert was replaced by a wildlife documentary—'How dare they show us urinating racoons when we should be watching a tribute to our D-Day heroes. It's insulting.'

Insulting perhaps, but somehow fitting. With the empire gone, Europe marching on regardless, the World Cup without a British team, and the BBC (another 'best in the world' act) unable to link up with events a few miles away, things are looking bleak. But one thing we Brits have always prided ourselves upon is our sense of humour. They can't stop us laughing.

I found myself laughing slightly, and then watching in horrified fascination, when I got home from work on 6 June and turned on the BBC coverage. Having run out of racoon footage and failed to regain contact with Dame Vera, they were showing something that looked like a school sports day, but was presumably one of the commemorative events held in England. In the middle of a field, a thin line of subdued spectators carrying golf umbrellas shivered behind a rope, watching a kind of cut-price Royal Tournament with a modest marching band and a bunch of sailors climbing a mast and waving flags about.

Then a pink-cheeked 19-year old sailor climbed to the top of the pole. 'Young Dougie', began the commentator in the hushed tones of 'whispering' Ted Lowe setting the scene on a particularly audacious snooker shot, 'will now slide down the rope and then run round the field to collect his shilling from the Queen Mother, all to the theme tune from the film *Superman!*'. It could have been the start of the Monty Python Twenty-Fifth Anniversary celebration (without the spam, spam, spam), or a themed evening of family viewing to commemorate Mary Whitehouse's retirement. But no doubt it filled Mr Bushell's heart with pride.

As I have said before, of the Last Night of the Proms and other attempts to drum up a bit of patriotic fervour, the problem is one of content, not packaging. In the end, a low-key D-Day commemoration was less embarrassing than a jamboree. But it was still a bit embarrassing. Even the TV hacks couldn't completely ignore the 'disappointing turnout' or the way the other countries all pursued their own agendas. The problem was never that the celebrations were too frivolous or disrespectful: it was that the past inevitably becomes an awkward reminder of the present. The more France and Germany talk of the future, the more Britain seems stuck in the past.

D-Day had the useful side-effect of distracting attention from the embarrassment of the Mull of Kintyre helicopter crash, which we are told wiped out the 'First XI' of 'IRA hunters' (and there was me thinking they were peacekeepers). Not that I'm suggesting that it's a conspiracy, although there are always question marks hanging over military accidents. For example, it is common practice for SAS deaths during secret counter-insurgency operations (ie, shoot-to-kill missions) to be transferred to mysterious 'accidents' on mountain tops in less embarrassing parts of the world.

The death of a gang of state assassins is no reason to mourn, but I do have one slight regret. As yet, the BBC has not seen fit to extend its ban on Paul McCartney records, which currently stands at a paltry two numbers: his protest song 'Give Ireland Back to the Irish' (opening line: 'Great Britain, you are tremendous') and the innocuous ditty, 'Hi Hi Hi'. Surely the time has come to bring back the Gulf War ban on songs with disturbing associations, such as Phil Collins' pernicious 'In the Air Tonight'. Even anti-censorship campaigners would make an exception for 'Mull of Kintyre'.

I can't remember what I was doing when Kennedy was killed, but I can still just about recall hearing the news about John Smith. I was at work, and someone put his head round the door and gravely said 'John Smith's dead'. 'Who?', I replied, trying to think which department this John Smith worked in. A similar thing happened in my schooldays. The classroom door opened and someone said 'Wilson's resigned!'. Great joy ensued, until we discovered later that it was the prime minister, and not our teacher Mr Wilson who was leaving.

So, before the John Smith legend becomes the official version, it's worth reminding ourselves that until about a minute after hearing of his death, most people regarded him as a nonentity (if they knew who he was at all). I don't often find myself in agreement with Peter McKay, but for once he hit the nail on the head in the London *Evening Standard* on 11 May, just before the fated day:

'John Smith? Well, he's not Neil Kinnock. That was Smith's attraction for Labour...He's a bland Scottish lawyer, not a fiery Welshman who punches the air in moments of triumph. But is it enough? Mr Major wasn't Mrs Thatcher and that didn't work. Are Labour supporters any happier that "Mr Not Neil Kinnock" will cut the mustard? A sizeable rump of Labour supporters think he's a wet blanket, although all that's forgotten in the John Major hue and cry. Labour's best hope is that Tories, having tasted inspirational leadership, then non-inspirational leadership, might now dare a taste of Labour's version of the latter.'

We should either remember John Smith as he really was or forget him, like the obscure Scottish kings he is buried with. The fact that politicians (including Mr Spam Fritter) and the political system in general gain gravitas from hypocritical tributes and displays of grief makes this all the more important. ●

In defence of Damien Hirst

James Heartfield puts the case
for a dead sheep

Not that Damien Hirst needs any defending by me or anyone else—he's just sold a sheep suspended in formaldehyde for £25 000. Hirst's dead sheep has provoked a chorus of tutting at the profligacy and pointlessness of the art market, as the army of people who don't know about art but know what they like, sound off. One letter in the *Times* from a highland sheep farmer in dire straits offered cut-price dead sheep at £12 500 each. One artist one-upped Hirst by tipping black ink into the sheep's glass case and renaming it 'Black Sheep'. For his troubles he was arrested, but the sheep has now been returned to its original off-whiteness.

Hirst's sheep seems to be proof of Kurt Vonnegut's proposition that the art market is a conspiracy between the artists and the rich to make poor people feel stupid. It ranks alongside Carl Andre's bricks—a pile of fire bricks bought by the Tate Gallery for thousands in the seventies. Then, too, the chorus demanded 'What's all that about, then?', before adding 'Any fool could do that!'

But the truth is that it takes a special kind of fool to sell fire-bricks to the Tate or hawk pickled sheep in the Serpentine Gallery: it takes an artist. More than 100 years ago Walter Sickert sued the critic John Ruskin who said of his impressionist painting, completed in a matter of hours, that he had thrown a jar of colour into the face of the public. Sickert's case was that the painting might have taken hours rather than days or months, but it was the product of years of training. He won.

The Scottish sheep farmer thinks she can undercut Damien Hirst by selling dead sheep half-price. But the price of a dead sheep is £45 at my butcher's not £12 500. And if Highland landowners cannot compete in the meat market they have no business bleating to us, not after they cleared the crofters off their estates to make way for their uneconomic sheep. In any case, Hirst's buyer is not buying a dead sheep any more than the Tate Gallery was buying fire bricks. What was on sale was an original Damien Hirst, not a gamey old sheep that has been stinking out some moor for the last two weeks.

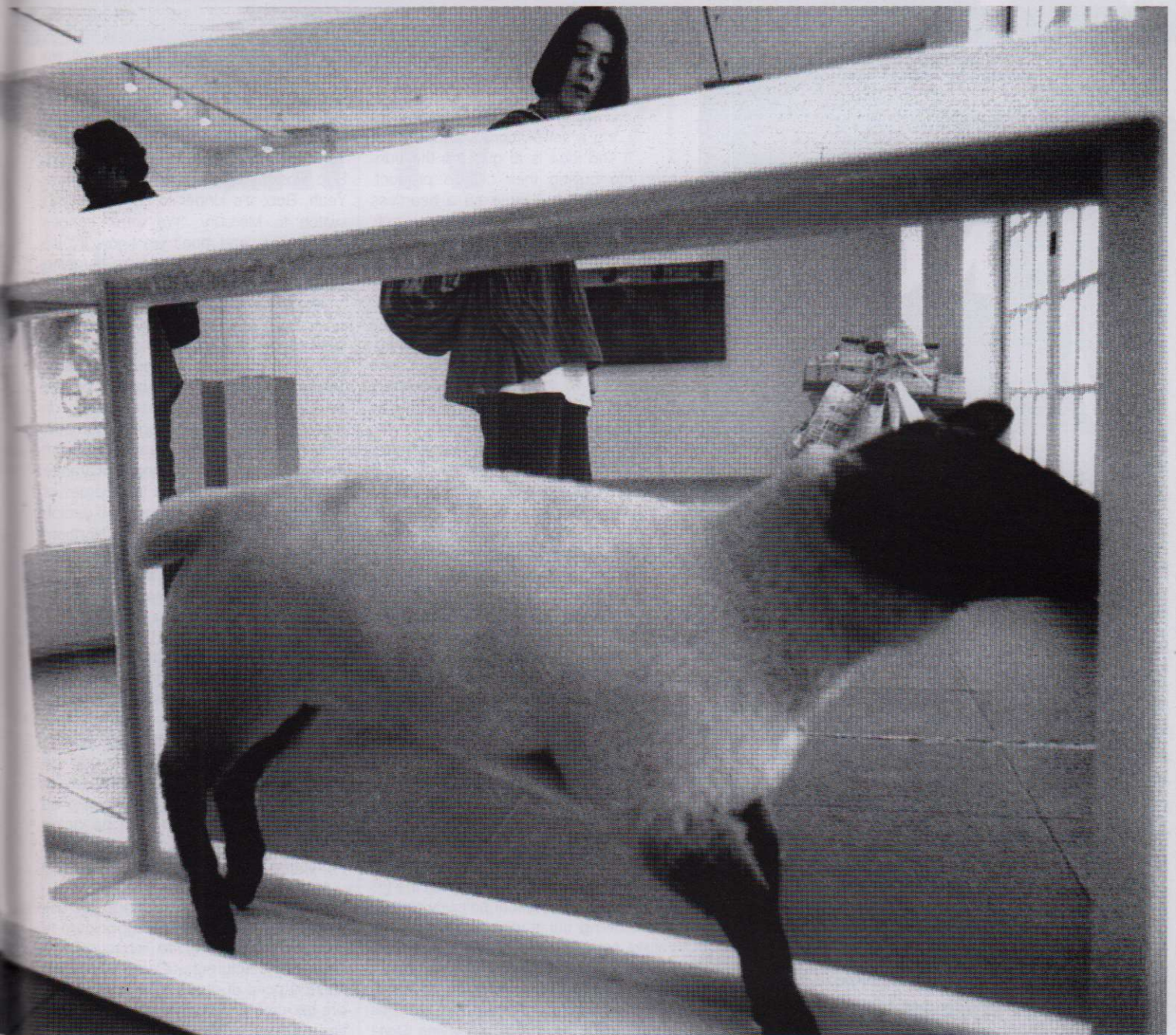
Hirst's sheep has been soaking up the formaldehyde in the great vat of animal parts that spews out from his studio. These include a fully-grown shark, similarly preserved and suspended in a tank of fluid, as if caught in motion; and *Mother and Child*—cow with calf, this time cut in half down the middle so you can see their innards and walk between their dismembered parts as they stand motionless in four glass cases.

As Vonnegut says, some art is a private joke between dealers, buyers and artists. Throughout the eighties, Joseph



Beuys exhibited great quantities of lard and felt. Unless you were aware that Beuys had been shot down over Siberia while serving in the Luftwaffe, and then saved by nomadic herdsmen who packed his frozen body in felt and lard, you would never guess the significance that this stuff had for him. If you knew the story, you could share in his attempts to recreate the experience of coming back from the brink. If you didn't, you were just another pleb who thought it was a load of old lard and felt.

But Hirst's joke is far from private. His dead sheep is everyone's property. The image belongs to us all, though the work does not. Cartoonists across the country immediately made the connections between a sheep immobilised in fluid and the prime minister, in an echo of Denis Healey's quip that being attacked by Geoffrey Howe was like being



savaged by a dead sheep. The real measure of the sheep's success—after its price tag—is that like Carl Andre's bricks it has become a point of reference, featuring in the news and editorial pages of most newspapers. This dead sheep savaged us all.

Why are people surprised at the price of an original Damien Hirst? They are not surprised at the price of a piece of canvas decorated by Leonardo da Vinci—even though canvas and colours combined can only have cost a few bob. Art has to be expensive otherwise nobody would ever engage in this unrewarding and precarious career. It's a bit like that scene in the *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, when the old-timer explains to his fellow gold-diggers that the man who strikes lucky will gain by the efforts of all the other poor suckers who

Damien Hirst in a pastoral mood at the Serpentine

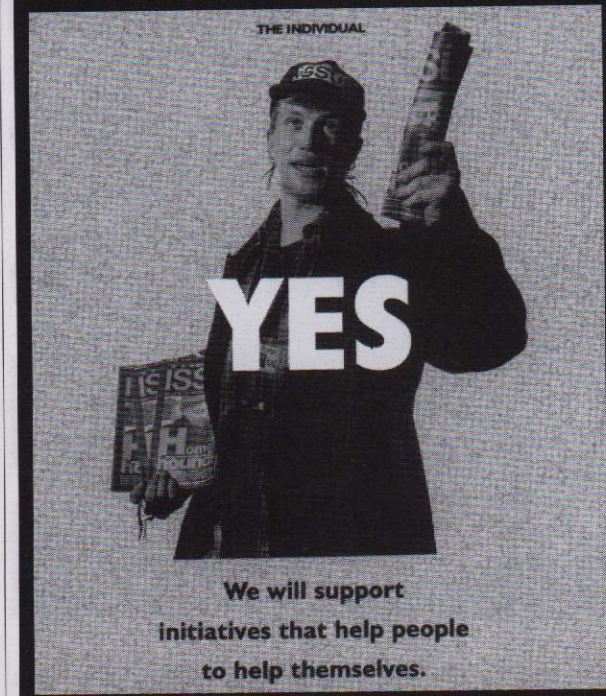
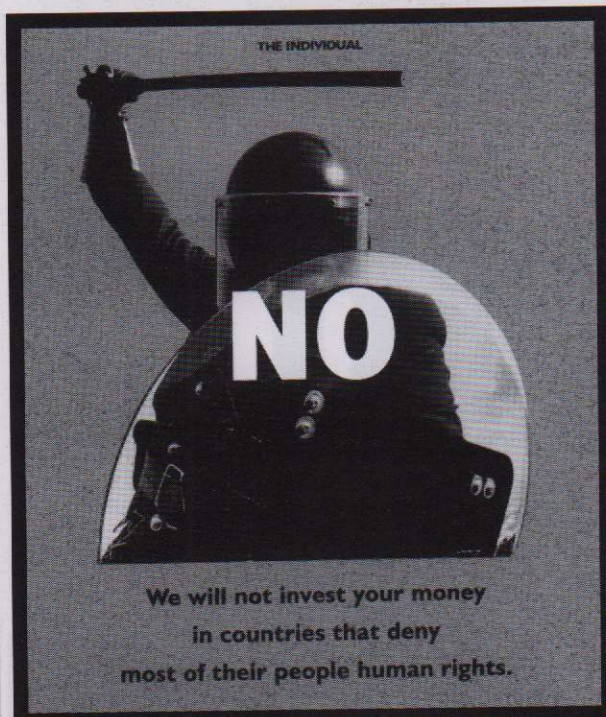
dig in vain. The bad artists are the ones that make the good artists expensive. The extra the collector pays for is their unsuccessful labours (and a number of them seemed to be on show at the Serpentine alongside Hirst).

Of course there is always someone who misses the point and thinks that it's just a dead sheep in a glass case. Perhaps someone who thinks that some of the notoriety will rub off if he tips some black ink in to stain the sheep. But nobody ever remembers these martyrs to philistinism. A few years ago the excellent sculptor David Mach built a U-boat out of old tyres on the South Bank, to the usual uproar. One unfortunate was so overcome with hatred for the tyres that he snuck up one night with a can of paraffin and set light to the rubber, only to be overcome by fumes and fall to his death in the flames he himself had ignited.

It's sad, but you have to laugh at such a wilfully ignominious end.

Militant philistines, like the gang of traditionalist hecklers who hissed Birtwistle's latest opera, only end up advertising their target. Nobody is interested in the hecklers' leader, a conservative musician of little note, any more than they are interested in the other work of the sheep stainer, or the opinions of the man who burned himself to death amid David Mach's tyres.

Meanwhile, Hirst's dead sheep floats gracefully in its case, caught mid-gambol. Guaranteed against rot for a hundred years, it shows the futility of catching an image, by taking all the life out of it. It hasn't the drama of Hirst's floating Shark, or the ghoulishness of the Mother and Child. More pastoral, really. ●



Ad-men guilt trip ethics girl

Helen West objects to adverts using moral blackmail

Raised as a Catholic, I'm an authority on guilt-tripping. I've also had more than my fair share of it, which is why I cannot stand the new drift in advertising.

Today's ad agencies are pitching a set of moral values at me. The idea is to guilt-trip the punters into buying their client's product. If I don't buy it, I must be a heartless bastard.

Well I'm definitely not sold on the idea. I think it's just another image-building gimmick. A couple of years ago it was Green consumerism, now it's human rights and ethnic cultures. This girl isn't heartless, but she isn't stupid either.

'Then make sure your money isn't backing them.' The new campaign from the Co-op invites you to put your money in a bank which doesn't do business with oppressive regimes. The Co-operative Bank also boycotts companies who needlessly damage the environment or are involved in animal experiments for cosmetic purposes, as well as organisations connected with blood sports, and companies using exploitative factory farming methods.

Note the judicious use of the word 'needlessly'. The advert's portrayal of 'oppressive regimes' consists of a photograph of a baton-wielding riot cop which could have been taken at Orgreave, Trafalgar Square or any Saturday night rave banned under the forthcoming Criminal Justice Act. When British police are 'oppressive', presumably they are not doing it 'needlessly'.

The Co-op campaign highlights the bank's ethical policy launched in 1992. Not that the Co-op has jumped on the PC bandwagon. The ethical policy 'was simply following our traditional outlook and values established over 100 years ago'. So the Co-op Bank was already established during the scramble for Africa a century ago. If I look in the archives I can expect to find adverts saying 'Don't invest in colonial repression'. I think not.

Turn-of-the-century missionary societies used to invite the middle classes to sponsor little black children. If you have a yearning for those good old days, you can achieve a warm moral glow with Cafedirect: 'You discover excellent coffee, they discover school.' Drink enough to give yourself caffeine poisoning, and somebody somewhere will be handed a free pencil.

Anita Roddick's endorsement of American Express makes my flesh crawl. It goes along the lines of: I'm a caring business person who respects cultural differences, and I carry an American Express card. Never have the words 'plastic' and 'Green' seemed so closely linked. I wonder how many Body Shop employees are respected enough to qualify for American Express. Or is the contrast between rich and poor just another example of cultural difference?

In the USA, the Working Assets Long Distance network says 'Be responsible, talk on the phone. Every time you call, we give one per cent of your charges (at no cost to you) to groups like Amnesty International, Planned Parenthood and Greenpeace'. Over here we have British Telecom's 'It's good to talk' campaign. Bob Hoskins tells us 'it's kinder, innit?'. Yeah, Bob, it's kinder to BT if we don't switch to Mercury. 'We care' echoes British Gas, and don't we know it? It's because they care that they're laughing all the way to the Co-op.

But it's no laughing matter because we're not allowed to laugh. On 12 May 1994 cigarette companies were told by the government to cut out the gags. This followed the ban imposed by the Advertising Standards Association on a campaign promoting Regal cigarettes. The campaign was to have been shown up north, and featured a comic character called Reg. It was feared that hordes of youngsters would see the ad and decide 'I too want to be an old, bald, Northern codger called Reg, stunt my growth and die of lung cancer'. At this point they would give up playing team sports and disappear behind the bikesheds.

Besides cutting out all the funnies, the new code of practice means that adverts for cigarettes can no longer be sited within 200 metres of a school entrance. I assume this measure is meant to benefit pupils who live less than 200 metres away from school, and who never go anywhere else. In addition, the health warnings on cigarette packets are to be increased in size. Soon we'll be going into shops and asking for 'a packet of Premature Births, please'.

You can already go into shops and ask for '20 Death'. But I was disappointed to hear that the Enlightened Tobacco Company, manufacturers of Death cigarettes, make a point of donating 10 per cent of pre-tax profits to cancer research charities (anti-vivisection, of course). I'd be happier if they invested in Bupa on behalf of smokers, because let's face it, there's no guarantee we'll get treatment on the NHS.

We're not allowed to choke and chuckle, but you can titter at tits—if you're a woman that is. Although 27 viewers (that many) complained to the Independent Television Commission about the busty advert for Gossard's Ultrabra, the ad escaped a ban when its makers presented market research showing that the majority of women in the target audience were more likely to find it humorous than offensive. Agency bosses also claimed that the public expects to see the effect of 'performance' lingerie. So, as well as being humorous, the heaving cleavage was brought to you in the interests of consumer choice. Onwards, I say, to the crotch shot in tampon commercials. But only for the sake of public information and moral uplift. ●



Victim TV

It first came across Paula Gray about eight years ago on a morning television programme, during a phone-in about whether soaps were becoming too realistic. I was there in my capacity as the Man Who Killed Damon Grant. Paula rang in from Market Harborough and talked about how her brother had been killed in much the same way as the soap hero. She had not been able to mourn him properly, but when Damon died she locked herself in her room and wept for three days. It had been a cathartic experience for her.

The studio was a pretend living room with an atmosphere about as conducive to the spontaneous overflow of emotion as the Changing of the Guard. Yet there was something in the careful seriousness with which Paula chose her few words that touched everyone there. The chilly draught of truth had got in under the studio door. Eight years on, Paula is at the centre of one of the most sensational law cases in media history and is celebrated as the Lymph Gland Liar.

When the show was over, the producer called Paula and asked her to be a member of the audience at a discussion about the victims of crime hosted by Kilroy. Unlike most of the other members of the audience, she did not ramble. On the contrary, she seemed to stop short of saying all that she felt, so that you wanted to hear more of what she said. Kilroy began actively to solicit her opinion. Shortly before the end of the show and against the grain of the whole discussion, she announced that she wanted to meet her brother's killers only to assure them that she had forgiven them. This created a sensation in the studio. Next day, Paula was quoted by Rabbi Lionel Blue on 'Thought for the day'. The producer of the show wanted Paula to appear as a guest in her own right on a mid-morning chat-spot hosted by Denise Roberts. Paula turned this down—one of the very few occasions on which she ever turned down the chance to emote in front of a camera.

Back in Market Harborough, Paula did not go down so well. She had mentioned that the neighbours had been less than supportive. This was true. They had not been supportive because there was nothing to support. Paula had not lost a brother in a random stabbing because she never had a brother in the first place. She lived alone with her mother, behind curtains that were always drawn to keep the light off the screen of their inextinguishable TV. When one of the neighbours threatened to phone the BBC and tell them the truth about her, she broke down in tears and promised never to do it again. One of the odd things about the story is that in the years that followed nobody ever did bother to put the record straight. In the end, it was Paula who pulled the plug on Paula.

Paula had had a wonderful time with *Kilroy*. The Beeb put her up in a city centre hotel. Kilroy himself bought her a drink. The hotel staff all raved about her performance. At some point during her stay, she cottoned on to the fact that TV researchers often advertise for people in the personal columns. You may have seen little boxed paragraphs that ask things like 'Have you suffered from traumatic hair loss?' or 'Were you abused by nuns?'. Paula now began to scan these greedily.

She got herself onto Miriam Stoppard and astonished the audience with the story that she had raised a family of four despite the fact that her heart was missing a left ventricle. She talked to Judy Finnigan about how it felt to recover your sight after 20 years of total blindness. At Pebble Mill she spoke about how a bust enlargement operation she had been forced to undergo by her husband had gone horribly wrong. After their initial objection to being mentioned was accepted, the neighbours seem to have relished her appearances. One of them even showed up in the audience at Pebble Mill to testify to her courage. Her mother took polaroids of the TV screen whenever Paula was on it. She seems to have had no sense at all that what Paula was saying was

supposed to be true. When I went to speak to her she proudly pointed to the one of Paula on *Central Weekend*, where she created another sensation by claiming to have been sexually abused by her mother.

It was on *Central Weekend* that she bumped into the producer who had originally got her on to the screen. The producer didn't seem to think there was anything awry. She simply said that Paula seemed to have had 'a hell of a life' and reiterated her offer of a one-to-one with Denise Roberts. Once again Paula refused. She knew she had had a close shave and began to look for pastures new.

She found them with the *Late Late Show*, an Irish talk show hosted by Gay Byrne and popular in both England and America. She got herself on by claiming to be the daughter of a Catholic bishop. Once again, it was her self-restraint and her ability to forgive that attracted attention. We know now that her forgiving nature came from a fear of getting innocent people into trouble. While on the show, she made a daring new move. She hinted at some 'condition' she had developed through the stress of having to keep her parentage a secret. One researcher seemed obsessed with wrenching the nature of this condition from her. By the simple expedient of saying nothing Paula span out her stay at the Connaught from one night with breakfast to three with evening meal. In the end, she confessed. She had a disorder of the lymphatic gland which made it imperative that she eat half her bodyweight in saturate fats every day. The researcher was a hungrily ambitious young woman who had good contacts in the States. She thought that this condition was nothing to the Irish who consume saturated fats as a patriotic duty. In America, on the other hand, it would be a fantasy as enticing and salutary as the touch of Midas.

Paula looked at America as a leopard would look at a herd of fat three-legged antelope. Innumerable TV channels, all desperate for human stories and she with an inexhaustible fund of suffering and strength. She had no intention of returning to Market Harborough.

The reality turned out to be different. Paula had expected a thousand variations on *Oprah*. In fact at the cable TV level, emotional suffering is no longer enough. Now, as Paula puts it, you need three legs. On her first appearance in Idaho, she shared the show with a man who had a dorsal fin. The producer was not happy with a few words about living with her condition. He wanted her to eat butter live. Paula refused. He offered to sue for breach of contract and that was when Paula made the intuitive leap that turned her from a media ligger into a *cause célèbre* and—possibly—a great artist. She had the researcher from Gay Byrne call *Oprah*, the one show where emotional history still sells, and tell her true story. The story of a woman whose life was empty until she filled it with spurious and increasingly bizarre forms of suffering.

Oprah's lawyers are defending Paula in court in Idaho. Their defence is that she suffers from a pathological condition. So even in admitting that she lied about all those medical conditions, Paula managed to get herself an even more freakish and fascinating medical condition. Susan Sontag has criticised the defence for perpetrating the notion that she believes Paula was attacking—that ordinary people only exist as freaks; that they are only important as long as they suffer and the odder the suffering, the better the media likes it. She sees Paula as an artist in the Cindy Sherman mould—projecting a multiple image of herself into the interstices of a vast, embracing medium. Paula, on the other hand, says she couldn't help it. She has grasped fully something that Sontag can only perceive intellectually—that to be listened to today you have to be able to project yourself as the victim of something. Paula is auctioning the rights to the story of her terrible addiction as we speak.

Alec Campbell flags up the failings of Brit-pop

Blurred vision

To their credit, Blur want to be different. Parklife, their third album, is proof enough that they're on a different track. A crop of sharp-edged songs, jaunty but wry, make it an enjoyable ride. But where's it heading, and have we been there before?

Imagine a cocktail of The Small Faces ('Lazy Sunday Afternoon'), The Kinks ('Sunny Afternoon'), XTC for quirkiness, Robert Wyatt for plaintiveness, and a touch of *Carry On*-camp: shake 'em all up and the result would be something like Blur.

Derivative, yes. Revivalist, no. The art of pop music, as Nick Lowe once said, is knowing what to steal. He could have gone on to say that, once you've stolen what you need, the trick is to put it together in unforeseen combinations. That's how you get new wine out of old bottles. And the sound of Blur is nothing if not intoxicating.

If only they'd left it at that. But Blur have set themselves up as leaders of the pack known as 'Brit-pop', which also includes Pulp, new entry Gene (named after the flip-side of 'This Charming Man'), and honorary members Suede. The self-proclaimed mission of Brit-pop is to save us from all things American.

'America is so violent in the way it exports itself', says 26-year-old Blur frontman Damon Albarn. 'I get physically ill when I go there.' Instead of the frustrated anger and neurosis of the American slacker, Blur insist that pop music should be about 'good haircuts, your mates, sex, smoking, drinking and looking good'. I always thought it was about all those things *and* anger and neurosis.

Blur's idea of 'looking good' is based on the gawkiest dancers in the archive footage of *Ready Steady Go*. They like to think they're at home in down-to-earth places like Walthamstow dog track. But they dare not go there on Saturday nights, when their affected appearance and artschool demeanour draw the mirth of local kids, and stronger reactions from elder siblings. Never mind. Art student Pete Townshend was copying working class mannerisms 30 years ago, and getting them wrong. But it didn't stop him writing some of the best pop songs ever.

The pop musicians of Townshend's generation were unlike Blur in one important respect: they loved America as much as Blur seem to hate it.

The burning desire for American clothes, American records and American dance-steps, was the impetus behind the birth of British pop. The desire for all things American was partly derived from a yearning to get away from fuddy-duddy Britain: the Light programme, Billy Cotton, brass bands and Harold Macmillan.

In the sixties, every swinger in London was trying to break the boundaries of stale Old Blighty. But Blur regard the pop culture of this period as the epitome of self-contained Britishness, and they are holding it up as a shield against the invasion of slacker culture, the insidious cancer of out-of-town shopping malls and theme restaurants, and the increasing incidence of American voiceovers on British adverts.

The siege-mentality exhibited by Blur would have been totally alien to the

sixties Mods they claim to be descended from. When Damon Albarn insists on the importance of 'community...we all need to fit in, to belong somewhere', he echoes the crusty left-wing intellectuals of the fifties and sixties who celebrated traditional communities and objected to new-fangled Americanisms such as juke boxes and espresso bars.

Blur do a pretty good imitation of sixties-style tongue-in-cheek, in the manner of John Lennon or The Kinks' Ray Davies. They are tongue in cheek about the Union Jack, which is why Albarn could appear on the front cover of *The Face* against a Union Jack backdrop (May 1994), while Morrissey got into all sorts of trouble when he wrapped himself up in red, white and blue.

Blur 'take the piss' out of sixties style, but they also adhere to it as the best there is. Their double-take on the Union Jack is in the same vein. They share wry smiles about being British, while suggesting that the British capacity for gentle self-derision is the mark of a superior culture. Blur can justifiably claim to have made some superior pop music. But their capacity for future development is threatened by their own narrow-mindedness. ●

The Auteurs Now I'm a Cowboy The Acclaimed New Album



See them on the Melody Maker stage at Reading Festival Friday 26th August

"A stunningly articulate second album which will establish The Auteurs as most precious contenders for the crown jewels of British music ...The new album marks Haines' evolution as a writer of the most scathing diatribes against social pretention.Dry, sarcastic, clever. And, as his records prove, quite brilliant".

Mojo

"Luke is perennially there, an outgrown urchin in the corner, intent on being left out, forever being dragged out of the kitchen at parties. This time....he's the gunslinger....and there's going to be a High Noon for everyone, every day, from now on. 'The Upper Class' is the big one, as Luke annihilates a strata of society single-handedly..." (8/10) *NME*

"Their second album finds them resplendent and rocking out, with some of the most infectious English tunes since the Kinks stared into the Waterloo Sunset." *Elle*

Hut

As seen on "Later"

THE

MARXIST

REVIEW OF BOOKS

Alan Harding asks what's behind the reassessments of Winston Churchill's career

A Churchillian hero?

Churchill, Clive Ponting, Sinclair Stevenson, £20 hbk

Whatever you make of the life and career of Winston Churchill, he is a central figure in the history of Britain and its Empire throughout the first half of the century. His own military and political career put him at the heart of things for much of this period. And if he was not there when history was being made, as with the relief of Ladysmith from the Boers in 1900, he wrote himself into it afterwards for the benefit of posterity.

A junior officer who joined the last British cavalry charge at Omdurman in 1896 and killed five unarmed Sudanese with a Mauser firing dum-dum bullets; a highly paid correspondent in the Boer War who escaped from a prison camp using the plan of two fellow prisoners whom he left behind; a leading member of Herbert Asquith's pre-First World War Liberal government who found time at the office to supervise personally the Siege of Sydney Street (a gun battle with East European radicals in the East End of London) and to promote the forced sterilisation of social undesirables; the main perpetrator of the military disaster at Gallipoli in Turkey, where a mostly Australian force were all but wiped out in the First World War; a Colonial Office minister who urged the formation of the Black and Tans as a terror gang in Ireland and advocated gas warfare as 'an effective and humane' way to put down the natives; a Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer whose return to the gold standard exposed the growing subordination of the pound to the dollar and Britain to the USA; a rabid right-wing propagandist during the 1926 General Strike who pushed for draconian anti-union measures in its aftermath; and finally, after the years of marginalisation in the 1930s, the war leader and then the arch exponent of the Cold War. Churchill was by any standards a man of many parts and some achievement.

It is not surprising that today, when the British ruling class is sensitive to its international decline and its domestic decay, there should be a renewed debate about the man who epitomises Britain in the twentieth century. Clive Ponting's biography is only the latest in a spate of reassessments of Churchill's life, most notably John Charmley's *Churchill: The End of Glory*, published last

year. Amid the D-Day celebrations and other expressions of British nostalgia, the re-examination of the past is just as likely to become a reflection on 'where we went wrong'. Everyone has their own version of Churchill according to their answer to that question.

The vitriolic attacks on Ponting's book say more about the battle lines already drawn than the violence of his own arguments. Richard Gott of the *Guardian* has fulminated against Ponting: 'This is not a reassessment, it is a character assassination—a hatchet job designed to stir up controversy rather than a search for some kind of approximate truth. It should neither have been written nor published.' (*Guardian*, 4 May 1994) One wonders whether Gott would be happy to supervise the public burning of Ponting's and other nefarious texts which the *Guardian* editorial team judges unfit?

In fact, although useful, Ponting's book is anodyne. There is nothing here that you can't find already on public record. The major fault of the book is the lack of a unifying theme or idea. John Charmley, himself a Churchill historian, put this well in his review of Ponting in the *Times Literary Supplement*:

'What Ponting does not emphasise fully is the extent to which Churchill remained a product of the Edwardian era. It was not only his racial attitudes which were formed then, but also his view of Germany, of the British Empire and of British politics. Views which had been liberal in Edward VII's reign were conservative by the middle of his son's reign, by which time Churchill appeared to be the political equivalent of the dinosaur.' (*Times Literary Supplement*, 13 May 1994)

Churchill's life is the story of how a member of the higher reaches of the aristocracy railed against Britain's declining status. But, as Charmley explains in his own contribution to the debate, Churchill did not get his way:

'Churchill stood for the British Empire, for British independence and for an anti-socialist vision of Britain. By July 1945, the first of these was on the skids, the ►

second was dependent solely upon America, and the third had just vanished in a Labour election victory.'

In order to examine the Churchill myth, we need to look at him through three different lenses: the conventional view of Churchill as saviour, the left's image of Churchill as anti-fascist, and the right-wing revisionist's notion of Churchill as the betrayer of Empire.

Churchill the saviour is Churchill's view of himself. Throughout his long career he felt destined to play a determining role in the life of the nation. The reproduction taken from Churchill's self-portrait is of a steadfast statesman, a lone warning voice against dangers ahead, finally to be vindicated as the worshipped war leader who saved the nation in its hour of need.

In reality Churchill was regarded by the political class to which he belonged as unscrupulous, unreliable and an arrogant bully to boot. He was only included in the governments of Lloyd George, Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain because they thought it more of a danger to have him outside the tent pissing in. Even during the war itself, before the prospect of victory mellowed the reaction, he was popular with neither the Tory Party nor with the public. On his first appearance in the House of Commons after replacing Chamberlain as prime minister, he was greeted by polite applause while the great Tory majority cheered Chamberlain to the rafters. On his first wartime visit to the blitzed East End, Churchill was roundly booed.

As for being a prophetic voice in the wilderness, Churchill seemed to be following the Goebbels dictum that the big lie is better. True, for most of the thirties Churchill was in the wilderness. He was out of office and marginal, regarded as an inveterate 'diehard' on Empire matters. On his sporadic visits to the commons he spoke only to oppose any measure whatsoever of self-government for India, and to warn of the dangers of socialism.

Churchill's retrospective self-aggrandisement is a microcosm of the way historians have tried to write as if Britain were at the centre of the world stage when it was already peripheral

While 'the appeasers' Baldwin and Chamberlain pursued a policy of rearmament which ensured that British aircraft production exceeded that of Germany in 1940, Churchill opposed research on both radar and the Spitfire—key components in the Battle of Britain victory that year. On the other hand, Churchill did not oppose the ceding of the Sudetenland to Germany, nor the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. As with the government, it was only the signing of the German-Soviet pact in the early summer of 1939 which made him realise that war with Germany was inevitable and imminent.

Churchill's retrospective self-aggrandisement is a microcosm of the way historians have tried to write as if Britain were at the centre of the world stage when it was already peripheral. The cult of Churchill and his decisive role in the war reflects the myth of plucky Britain standing alone against the Nazi menace. Wartime US president Franklin D Roosevelt was always loath to spend time with Churchill whom he regarded as arrogant

and unreliable. As the war progressed the US Supreme Command paid less and less attention to British strategic interests in general and to Churchill in particular.

Britain was a military irrelevance during much of the war. Hitler carried through his long-term aim of attacking the Soviets in June 1941, despite the fact that the British were still undefeated, and nothing Britain did between then and the reversal of the German advance at Stalingrad made the difference between defeat and victory. To put this in quantitative terms: Montgomery's Eighth Army faced two German divisions in North Africa while there were 198 German divisions on the Russian front.

In order to preserve the left-wing myth of the anti-fascist crusade, Richard Gott ends up endorsing the whitewash of Churchill's Tory imperialism

There is a left-wing version of the establishment myth which emphasises Churchill as the heroic leader in the struggle against fascism. This is the point of view that Richard Gott has rushed to defend against Clive Ponting, and the right-wing historian Andrew Roberts.

'The reassessment of Churchill, it seems, is partly due to a reassessment in the 1980s of the myth of the Second World War', says Gott: 'For while one half of the nation was then content to see Margaret Thatcher deck herself out (inappropriately) in Churchillian garb, the other half still liked to remember the last war as a radical left-wing, anti-fascist cause—in which the national champion, by some curious happenstance, was Churchill. So attacks on him today are primarily an attack on that rather special heritage.'

But the British ruling class in general and Churchill in particular did not go to war to defeat the evil of fascism. In February 1945 General Alexander commented to Churchill that Britain was fighting 'to secure liberty and a decent existence for the peoples of Europe'. Churchill replied: 'Not a bit of it, we are fighting to secure the proper respect for the British people.' Churchill meant his people, his class. His concern was Empire, race and the institutions of the British establishment. His respect for the popular choice did not extend to the Labour victory of 1945, when he denounced Labour as a 'Gestapo'.

As for his anti-fascism, Churchill called Mussolini the greatest Italian of the century and sought accommodation with Italy to safeguard British interests in the Mediterranean, to the point of supporting the Italian invasion of Abyssinia.

For many in Britain, especially on the left, fighting a war to defend the empire was not appealing. But they could be persuaded to fight for the cause of defeating Continental fascism. They ended up fighting beneath the banners of anti-Nazism, when the British establishment running the war effort was only interested in saving its own skin. In his attempt to perpetuate the myth of the anti-fascist war today, the liberal Gott rubber-stamps the establishment view of Churchill. He concludes his defensive polemic in the *Guardian* by quoting Martin Gilbert, the establishment Churchill historian:

'As the years pass and the historical record is studied without malice, Churchill's actions and aims will be seen

to have been humane and far-sighted. His patriotism, his sense of fair play, his belief in democracy, and his hopes for the human race, were matched by formidable powers of work and thought, vision and foresight. His path was often beset by controversy, disappointment and abuse, but these never deflected him from his sense and his faith in the British people.'

In order to preserve the left-wing myth of the anti-fascist crusade, Gott ends up endorsing this whitewash of Churchill's Tory imperialism.

Much more refreshing are the right-wing revisionist historians like John Charmley and Cameron Watt. Here the self-interested strategy of the British ruling class is discussed openly. As Charmley puts it in his review of Ponting, the appeasement strategy of Baldwin and Chamberlain was rooted in the 'precarious hold on being a Great Power'. This was a continuation of imperial policy throughout the century—a policy predicated on the reality of British decline. In the thirties this policy took the form not of a struggle against fascism, but of appeasement. Unlike the out-of-touch diehards, the government recognised that it could not defend the status quo on three fronts: the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the Pacific. The British imperialists therefore sought an accommodation with their German counterparts, while quietly preparing for the war to come.

The revisionists argue that appeasement was a necessary, pragmatic response to the exigencies of British power. It is a powerful argument from an imperialist point of view. But it is corrupted by the ideological baggage which they carry as apologists for the British ruling class.

It was only in the shameful aftermath of the Final Solution, Hitler's realisation of racial policy, that the British establishment publicly distanced itself from the idea of its own racial superiority

The revisionists go beyond the attempt to demonstrate the pragmatism of appeasement, and come close to normalising fascism as an unexceptional political outlook. Hitler and his regime was a potential enemy, they argue, but it should have been possible for the British Empire to reach a lasting deal with him. In these circumstances, the Second World War could have been avoided, and the decline of British influence in the American-dominated postwar world could have been arrested.

By treating fascism as unexceptional, the revisionists also seek to give new credence to the racial and nationalist ideas which were once openly espoused by Churchill and the British ruling class. It was only in the shameful aftermath of the Final Solution, Hitler's realisation of racial policy, that the British establishment publicly distanced itself from the idea of its own racial superiority.

There is of course a limit to how far such revisionism can go in Britain, which accounts for the pained response to such rewriting of the Second World War. The wartime image of Britain as the doughty fighter for democracy against tyranny is too important a part of national folklore to permit too great a normalisation of fascism.

But the revisionists also make an important

methodological error. Just as the school of Churchill as saviour attributes British success to his personality, so the revisionists attribute British decline to Churchill alone. They argue that his personal commitment to fighting the war when a compromise peace was possible opened the way to the loss of Empire, the subordination of Britain to the USA and the hated collectivism of the postwar era.

The revisionist school has conveniently forgotten its correct contention that Britain had become irrelevant to the military conduct of the war. If Britain had stood aside in 1940 or early in 1941 the struggle for world hegemony would still have taken place between the USA and Germany. Britain would not have been able to defend the empire. It would have been much more forcefully asset-stripped by the Americans.

It made sense for America to keep Britain in the war as a springboard for an invasion of Europe. And it made sense for the British establishment to follow America's lead. For all the contempt the Americans felt for British power, the association with the USA did give Britain a disproportionate global position after the war, with a seat on the UN Security Council to this day.

Churchill is an accidental figure in this process. He is lauded today because, whatever the reality of British weakness and decline back then, it wasn't as bad as it is now. In British ruling class circles the past is not only a different country, but a better one.

So what are we to make of Churchill? He was a ruling class snob of the worst kind who, Ponting reports, made his valet turn the taps on and off when he was in the bath.

He was a racist, notwithstanding Richard Gott's incredible efforts to free him of this charge. Another Churchill historian, Andrew Roberts, peppered a recent *Spectator* article with examples of Churchill's racist attitudes. Of course, as Roberts says, this was by no means exceptional for a member of the British elite:

'For all his public pronouncements on the "Brotherhood of Man" he was an unrepentant white—not to say Anglo-Saxon—supremacist. For such a zealous child of the empire anything else would have been astonishing. Part of the British Empire's *raison d'être* was its assumption of racial superiority, even if, as with so much of that "boyish tyranny", this was usually expressed passively.' (9 April 1994)

Roberts does not seek to criticise Churchill, but to use the authority of Churchill to legitimise racism. Churchill once again becomes the prophet in the wilderness. Robert's notes how the current Winston Churchill MP was condemned for his call to defend 'the British way of life' against immigrants last year. But, says Roberts, 'his grandfather would have been proud of him'.

Churchill was unremittingly hostile to the working class. I recall that after Churchill's death, in 1965, a national collection was taken in his name for some worthy establishment cause. I still remember with satisfaction the shock and outrage in the press when they reported how little money had come in from South Wales. The miners and their families had still not forgotten that it was Churchill who sent troops in to break a strike in Tonypandy in 1911. I can't think of a better way of remembering the man.

My Story, Eric Cantona,
 Headline Book Publishing, £15.99 hbk

On the last day of the football season, as thousands of Manchester United fans gathered outside the ground to celebrate a second successive championship, one huge home-made banner caught the eye: 'Cantona—Fils de Dieu, Roi de Old Trafford.' Pardon his French, but you get the message.

Five years ago this month, I wrote a book review for *Living Marxism* about 'the decline of my religion', Manchester United. It was a doom-laden little article, bewailing the club's 20-year slump and predicting that it would never rise again. It proved a brilliantly prophetic piece; in the five years since, United have won a major trophy every season, and this year completed the Championship-FA cup double for the first time.

There are various reasons for the renaissance, but the final breakthrough came when Eric Cantona arrived from Leeds in the autumn of 1992. To date Cantona has played 70 games for Manchester United. They have lost just three. Last December, Old Trafford rang to a new carol: 'On the first day of Christmas my true love sent to me/An Eric Cantona/On the second day of Christmas my true love sent to me/Two Cantonas and an Eric Cantona....' They were still singing it in May; when he plays, it's Christmas every day.

Qui-est il, this, err, idiosyncratic individual whom my mother-in-law believes was christened 'Ooh-ahh', the only man to win consecutive championship medals with different clubs and to be named Players' Player of the Year while suspended for violent play? 'He's a nutter!', declared the *Sun* after Cantona was sent off twice in four days in March. And far worse, he's a French nutter.

The British media have mauled Cantona. They have poked fun at his 'Continental' intellectual pretensions (he is more likely to talk about feeling 'spontaneous as an artist' than sick as a parrot). They have condemned the dodgy 'Gallic temperament' for getting him into trouble on both sides of the Channel for hitting opponents (and at least one team-mate), and insulting managers and officials. Funny, nobody ever suggested that the 'genius' Gazza's sad antics were caused by the English national character. Nor was the supposedly infamous French tendency to 'bottle it' much in evidence when Eric the Red bet Chelsea's Dennis Wise £100 that he would score from the penalty spot in the FA Cup final, and then proceeded to do so twice.

In the face of the xenophobic ignorance of the boo-boys from the press and the opposing terraces, United fans fly the French tricolour, wear berets and sing Cantona's name to the tune of the Marseillaise; the Beautiful Game, so often abused as a vehicle for nationalist poison, can sometimes be a universal language (a point confirmed in May when Diego Maradona's second goal against England in the 1986 'Hand of God' game won BBC2's telephone poll for the Greatest Goal Ever Scored). Of course, there are limits to the spirit of brotherly love. Most United fans would be quite happy to see Cantona carry on back-heeling the odd Leeds or Liverpool player in the neck with one foot while back-heeling the through passes for Ryan Giggs with the other.

Even in the age of all-seater stadiums and executive boxes, when middle class writers and TV producers claim to have given the game 'intellectual respectability', a true terrace idol has to have a bit of the dirty street-fighter about him; that is why the Tottenham boys only admired Goody-Two shoes Lineker, but the Arsenal lads really love Ian GrrrWright.

There were moments at Old Trafford last season when I thought I really did love Eric Cantona. With the help of the Herculean Mark Hughes, he scored some great goals and did magic tricks. There was a moment against Everton when he trapped the ball, turned and volleyed it against a post, all done while floating with both feet off the ground; there was another moment against QPR when, standing on the halfway line with his back to goal, he flicked the ball up and hit it over his head, into the sliver of space where he knew Andrei Kanchelskis would be running, all of 40 yards away.

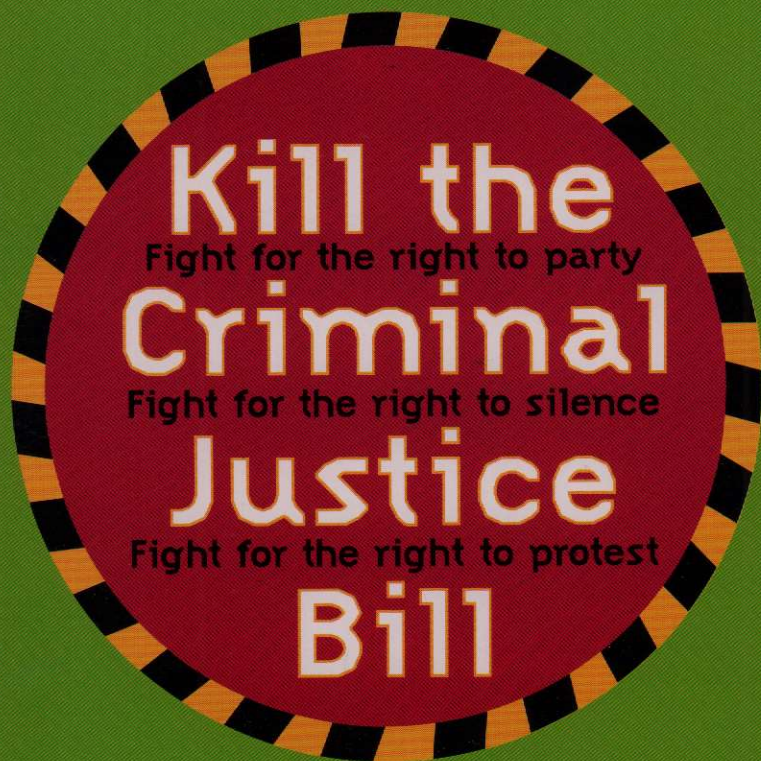
Unlike a lot of English players, Cantona looks better on grass than he does on paper. *My Story* mixes his home-spun philosophising (be true to yourself, cherish the innocence of children, football is the greatest art, etczzzzz), with his version of some of the more colourful episodes in his career; why he called the French national manager a shitbag on TV, why he fell out with Leeds boss Howard Wilkinson, and so on. It is all done in strictly non-footballer speak (it appears that Monsieur Cantona has never been 'gutted', nor felt that 'the lads done brilliant'), and contains some strictly non-footballerish opinions. For instance, Cantona thinks it outrageous that Maradona was witch-hunted for imbibing certain substances: 'The important distinction is that he did not take cocaine to be the best player on the field. His private life does not concern me.' Surely there's a 'Cantona tells kids "coke's OK"!' headline in that for the Wapping hacks?

Où va-t-il? Cantona now has a big international price tag and captains the French national team. He has been insulted over here many times since Sheffield Wednesday demanded he have a week's trial, like a schoolboy, when he first arrived (he declined the generous offer and went to Leeds). Yet despite all of this, Cantona continually reaffirms his love for English football in general and Manchester United in particular. 'Now we are the good team who would be the kings of Europe', he said after the cup final. The fact that he is suspended for the first four games of next season's European Cup campaign (after The Turkish Incident), is just one reason why that ambition seems unlikely to be realised in 1995. In which case his famed wanderlust might yet return to whisk him away to Real Madrid or some other exotic location.

Even if that happens, Cantona is already assured of a place alongside Best, Law, Charlton and Robson in the nostalgia-clogged hearts of the United faithful. In Manchester city centre, on that May Sunday when United received the championship, I passed a pissed man singing to a souvenir poster of Eric Cantona. He was singing an old Diana Ross number that we used to smooch to at seventies teen discos: 'All of my life/I have walked alone in search of a star/You are that star/You're the one I've waited for.' It was a truly pathetic spectacle, a grown man behaving like a love-sick schoolgirl in public. And I knew just how he felt.

Eddie Veale

New summer T-SHIRTS



**KILL THE CRIMINAL
JUSTICE BILL**

Three-colour screen print
on extra large white shirt



BACK

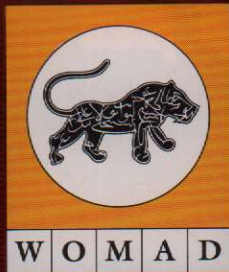
FRONT



BAN NOTHING
question everything

Black text on front and back,
with *Living Marxism* logo on
extra large white shirt

Both shirts £10 each plus 80p p&p
Make cheques payable to Junius
Publications Ltd, and send to
BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX



Womad Festival

Rivermead · Reading
22-24 July 1994

- ★ The only WOMAD festival in the south in '94
- ★ Glorious location on the banks of the Thames
- ★ 50 acts from 25 countries setting 4 stages alight
- ★ WHIRL-Y-GIG global dance environment from 6pm until dawn with special guests including African Headcharge, Loop Guru, Transglobal Underground, Banco de Gaia and Astralasia
- ★ A carnival of workshops
- ★ drumfire! The world's greatest percussionists
- ★ Loads of free activities for children

WOMAD Artists - Gil Scott Heron (USA) • Lucky Dube (South Africa)
• Apache Indian (UK) • Jah Wobble's Invaders of the Heart (UK)
• Flora Purim & Fourth World (Brazil) • Boukman Eksperyans (Haiti)
• Pan African Orchestra (Ghana) • Lokua Kanza (Zaire)
• Cesaria Evora (Cap Verde) • Boys of the Lough (Scotland)
• Gary Clail's On U Sound (UK/Jamaica) • Ansar & Afzal Hussein (Pakistan)
• Stella Chiveshe (Zimbabwe) • Cheb Mami (Algeria) and MANY MORE

Main WOMAD Ticket Office **0734 591 591**
Weekend Tickets £40 (£34 concs.) with FREE camping and other perks.
Day Tickets £17.50, £12.50; (£12.50 concs.)
Reductions bookable in advance. Children under 14 come free.
Ring 0734 591 591 for a free leaflet with full details.

Media
Sponsor



Local Media
Sponsor

Evening **POST**



Reading
BOROUGH COUNCIL