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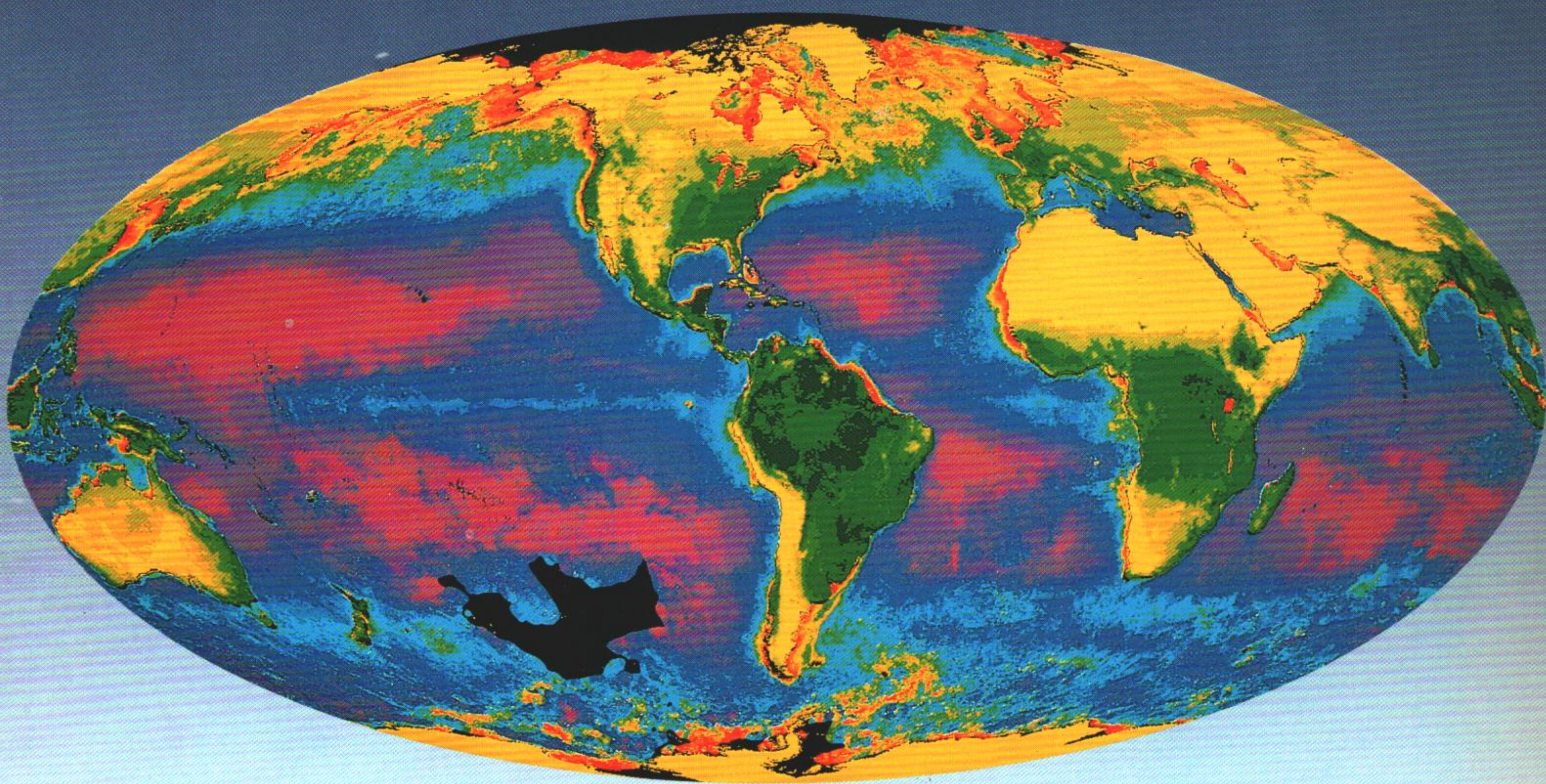
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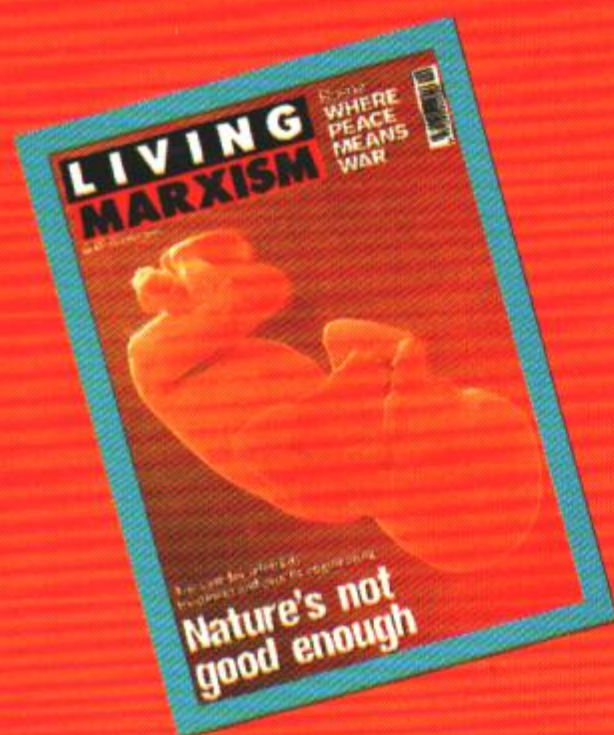
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How 'globalisation' theories distort the truth about world politics,
economics and everything

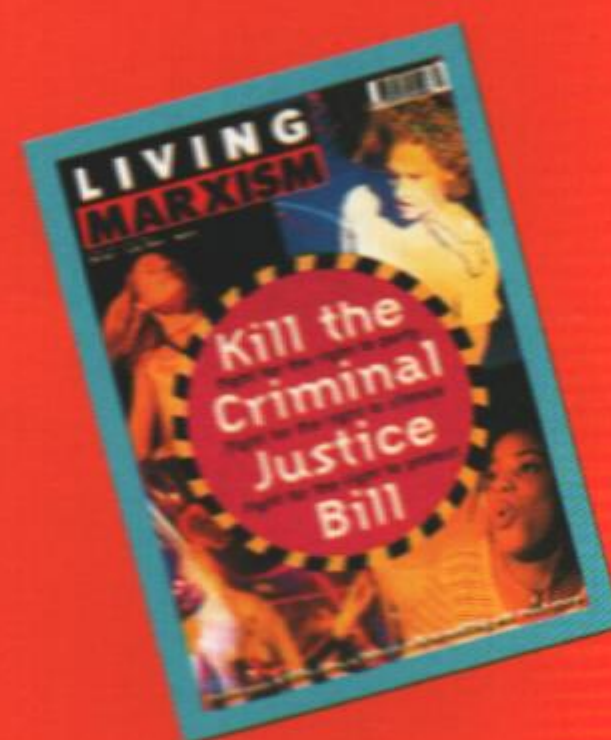
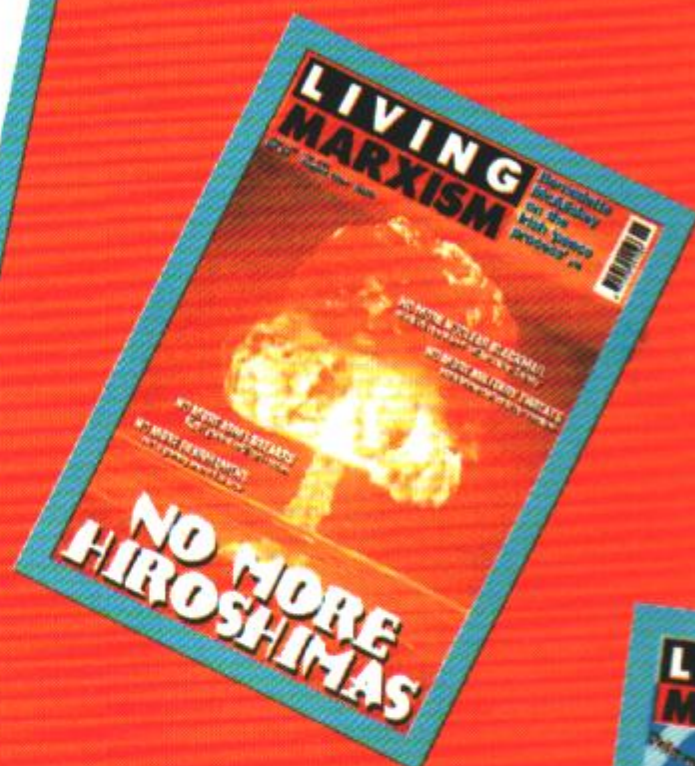
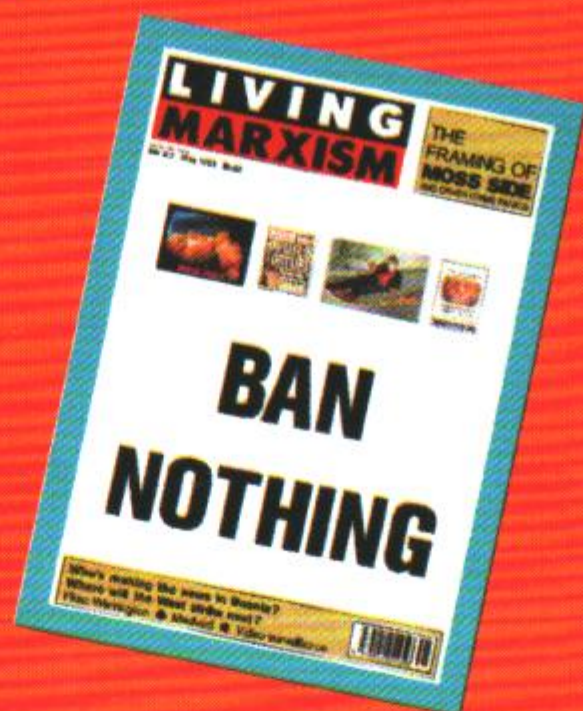
GLOBAL-DEGOOK

Divorce • David Edgar • Oklahoma bomb • Criminal genes? • War crimes trials



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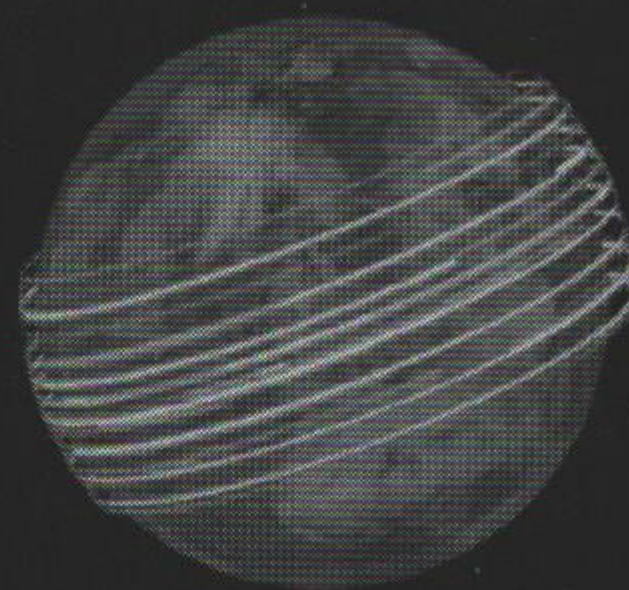
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Another world

'Globalisation' is a buzzword in all kinds of contemporary debates. From the Internet and unemployment to the United Nations and Aids, it seems that everything can now be discussed in terms of new global processes and global risks. What's it all about?



This month's *Living Marxism* focuses on how the new globalisation theories are distorting the truth about world politics, economics and everything today.

Global-degook

page 12

Mike Freeman presents a layman's guide to the most fashionable globalisation theories, exposing some of the confusions and dangerous conclusions that lurk behind the global-degook.

A mad, mad, mad, mad world economy? page 17

The notion that the new global economy is beyond anybody's understanding or control acts as an apology for the destructive effects of international capitalism, argues Phil Murphy.

Supranational illusions

page 20

Does the higher profile of international institutions like the UN herald a new age of 'global governance'? Not exactly, says Helen Simons.

The risk zone

page 47

In this month's Marxist Review of Books, James Heartfield asks why today's sociologists are scared of society.

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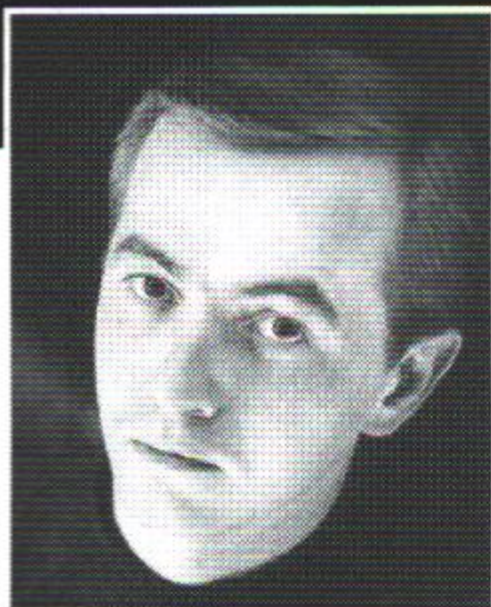
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Mick Hume

What's a war crime between friends?

The war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is set to try its first case, and the war crimes tribunal for Rwanda is also warming up for action. The wheels of world justice, we are told, are finally turning. But the peoples of the world are far from equal before this new system of globo-law.

The UN-sponsored tribunals are institutionalising a double standard in international politics. They have been set up on the implicit assumption that the white, Western powers and their allies do not commit war crimes. In their eyes it seems that war criminals are always Serbs, Hutus, or Iraqis—in any case, wogs of one sort another.

Dusan Tadic, a 39-year old Serb, has been extradited from Germany to face trial before the war crimes tribunal in The Hague. Tadic has been charged with 13 counts of murder, torture and rape of Muslim prisoners in Bosnia. When he appeared at the pretrial hearing to plead not guilty in late April, it was proudly announced as the first international war crimes hearing since the Nuremberg trials that followed the Second World War.

Yet the crimes of which Tadic stands accused are hardly the first—and far from the worst—atrocities that have been committed during the wars of the past half-century. So why is the UN Security Council suddenly setting up war crimes trials for the first time in 50 years?

When the American government dropped the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August

1945, killing at least 200 000 people, it was considered a matter for celebration, not a war crime. In the late sixties and early seventies, the US military destroyed Vietnam and Cambodia with carpet-bombing, napalm and Agent Orange, leaving literally millions of casualties in their wake. Yet the chief architect of that murderous bombing campaign, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, was given a Nobel peace prize instead of a war crimes summons. Nor did anybody at the UN whisper 'war crime' during the Gulf War, when the US-led alliance dropped missiles into Baghdad air-raid shelters and buried Iraqi conscripts alive in the desert with bulldozers.

For their part, British governments have been involved on average in one foreign war, invasion or intervention in each of the past 50 years. Yet judging by their record of never having been charged with a single war crime, the British forces must have behaved like perfect gentlemen as they conducted brutal wars of repression in colonies such as Malaya, Kenya and Aden. A few eyebrows were raised after the 1982 Falklands War, when British paratroopers were found to have collected Argie ears as souvenirs, and corroborated reports detailed how Argentinian POWs had been executed in cold blood. Last year, however, the Director of Public Prosecutions reassured the nation that no British soldier would be charged with any offence.

Meanwhile in Northern Ireland over the past 25 years, where the British security forces have killed over 350 people, only two

soldiers have been found guilty of murder. One was quietly released from jail and allowed to rejoin his regiment after just two years; the other is Private Lee Clegg, whom leading politicians and newspapers are now demanding should be freed and canonised after shooting dead a teenage joyrider.

Nor was there ever any suggestion that the West's allies were committing war crimes as they crushed resistance throughout the Cold War. The apartheid regime's slaughter of black South Africans at Sharpeville in 1960 and Soweto in 1976; the Israeli army's complicity in the massacre of Palestinian refugees in Beirut camps in 1982; and countless other killings carried out by Washington's allies from El Salvador to East Timor were all let through on the nod. After all, what's the odd atrocity between friends?

If half a century of massacres, mutilations, carpet-bombings and carnage did not qualify, then what is a war crime anyway? 'War criminal' is clearly a politically loaded label, and one that is used in highly selective fashion.

Atrocities are committed in all conflicts; warfare is not cricket. Whether or not they become branded as war crimes, however, has nothing to do with the amount of violence used or the numbers killed. It is all a question of whose finger is on the trigger, or the button or the windpipe. The general rule is that the government ministers and generals of the great powers do not commit war crimes, regardless of how much blood they have on their hands, while the little militiamen and camp guards of the third

world and the East can be presumed guilty of genocide without worrying too much about the facts.

This double-standard is widely accepted because it is underpinned by a powerful racial prejudice. The belief that only people 'over there' are war criminals rests upon the assumption that they are somehow less civilised than us. That is also what enables the white, Western powers which possess the greatest firepower on Earth and are responsible for most of the death and destruction of our century, to pose as peace-keepers and prosecutors of war criminals.

The racial double standard has always played a key role in the definition of war crimes. During the trials which followed the Second World War in the Far East, the Indian judge Mr Justice Pal was moved to ask why Japanese militarists were being accused of war crimes by the British and Americans, when their aggressive behaviour had been no different from that of the earlier, Anglo-Saxon conquerors of Asia. Nobody listened.

Shortly afterwards, the United Nations adopted the Genocide Convention, but the US Senate refused to ratify it for 40 years. American legal authorities expressed the fear that the convention could be used to accuse the USA of genocide over the discriminatory treatment of its black citizens. They remained determined that no American soldier or agent should ever stand trial for genocide under international law for what they had done in Vietnam or Nicaragua. So when the Senate finally did ratify the Genocide Convention in 1986, it added a set of conditions effectively stating that it could not be used against American citizens.

It is in that same spirit that the US authorities have supported the setting up of war crimes tribunals for the former Yugoslavia

Nobody at the UN whispered 'war crime' during the Gulf War, when the US-led alliance dropped missiles into Baghdad air-raid shelters

and Rwanda. And the double standards and selective definitions of war crimes do not stop there. Within the non-Western countries that have been targeted for war crimes investigations, attention focuses narrowly on the actions of a few individuals with machetes and handguns. The wider causes and contexts of the conflicts tend to be ignored when apportioning blame—which is handy for the Western governments and agencies, since it excludes consideration of their strategic role in igniting and sustaining local wars around the world.

The unspoken message behind today's international tribunals is that war crimes and genocide are the work of evil men, driven by tribal bloodlusts and ancient ethnic hatreds in Africa or Eastern Europe. Any suggestion that there might be wider geopolitical considerations involved is carefully removed from the agenda. Yet, as *Living Marxism* has consistently pointed out, it is impossible to understand the civil war in the former Yugoslavia without studying the role of the USA and Germany (not to mention Britain and France) in stirring up the conflict. The spring offensive by the Croats is only the latest bloody assault that could not have happened without the green light from Berlin and Washington.

And Western governments and UN agencies are equally culpable in the

Rwandan tragedy. The recent massacres of Hutu refugees followed on directly from the West's support for the victorious Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front in the civil war. Yet still some Western commentators demand more forceful intervention, claiming that the Tutsi 'moderates' were only taking vengeance on the Hutu 'extremists' (as if political views were just another tribal characteristic), because the war crimes tribunal had not acted quickly enough to deliver retribution.

The war crimes tribunals can ignore the facts behind their chosen conflicts because their brief has nothing to do with achieving justice. These are political showtrials, set up by the USA and its allies on the United Nations Security Council to demonstrate the divide between the moral nations of the West and the essentially immoral peoples of the rest of the world; between the savages in the dock and civilised men who sit in judgement on them.

The aim of this charade is to boost the authority of the Western elites by denigrating the third world and the East. At a time when no Western government enjoys public support or respect, they are all eager to seize an opportunity to make their systems look good by comparison with those on the wrong side of the global tracks. That is ►

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◀ why the rulers of the Western world love a good war crimes trial today. All right, they are telling us, you might not trust the British government to run a local council; but thank God it is still helping to run the world and keep these bloodthirsty Hutus and Serbs in their place.

The war crimes trials give the politics of racial inferiority a veneer of legality. Their real character as an exercise in demonstrating Western authority and power is revealed, however, by the lack of any basis in law for these tribunals. The UN Security Council is simply making up the law on war crimes as it goes along, handing its appointees the right to interfere in the internal affairs of member states and put their citizens on trial—a direct infringement of the UN charter. This precedent can only pave the way for further military interventions around the world in the name of law and order—like the 1993 US 'posse' which blew apart Mogadishu in search of the Somali 'warlord' General Aideed.

The racially based assumptions about immoral peoples 'over there' is at the heart of the discussion about war crimes and criminals. Indeed, it is one of the most important characteristics of contemporary international politics. This is the modern equivalent of the old imperial politics of race, and it runs deep in our societies.

If you doubt that assertion, look at the American and British reactions to the bomb in Oklahoma. All sides immediately assumed that the guilty parties were foreigners, and probably Arabs. When it became clear that the suspects were in fact American patriots, some still tried to claim that, to have done such a thing, the right-wing militias must have been 'infiltrated' from abroad. The fact that the man accused of the bombing is a former US soldier who learned to kill by playing his part in the butchering of some 180 000 Iraqis killed in the Gulf War gives a far better idea of where the major threat to peace and justice comes from in the world today. But nobody called him a war criminal when he was doing the business for Uncle Sam in the Kuwaiti desert. After all, everybody knows that GIs don't commit genocide.

Abusing the accused

In criticising Michael Fitzpatrick's article "'Recovered memory': a morbid symptom" (April) Naomi Walker (letters, May) has failed to consider the position of a person accused of child abuse. Her readiness to trust methods of extracting evidence by counselling, hypnosis, etc, is frequently found in legal proceedings. This highly emotive subject can instil such prejudice that an accused needs protection from juries. The public are all too ready to accept scientific and pseudo-scientific evidence as infallible proof of guilt.

This is of still greater importance due to the changes in the way the courts now treat child witnesses. Sixty years ago children were incompetent as witnesses. Legislation then allowed teenagers to give evidence if, firstly, they could satisfy the judge that they understood the nature of the proceedings, and secondly, that supporting evidence, eg, medical or another witness, could corroborate it. Now that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 is in force, the protection against injustice provided by corroboration rules has disappeared. The same act also abolishes the maturity test and requires that a child's testimony shall be received if intelligible.

As can be seen throughout the laws of evidence, the position of the accused has now weakened considerably, the prosecution having the widest armoury since the days of the Star Chamber. Given the number of bad convictions that the CPS achieved before recent legislation, and the pointless nature of the retributive justice system, there is nothing to be gained by deeming dubious prosecution evidence admissible.

Darryl Stickler Leeds

Safety in anonymity?

Am I the only one who has mixed feelings about Ann Bradley's article on anonymity in rape cases ('Victims anonymous', May). She raised some important questions, such as why should a woman who has been raped feel any more ashamed than someone who's been assaulted or burgled. But Bradley must address herself to the way things are, not how they 'should' be. There isn't a single woman in the real world who would not feel ashamed about having been raped, and Bradley's philosophy of publicly disclosing the identity of the accused and the accuser in rape trials could only have the effect of compounding the sense

of shame and ignominy. Incidentally, it would also be a godsend to voyeurs. How would Bradley like it if she had been raped and perverts everywhere could put a name and a face to her ordeal?

There is another problem with her demand for maximum disclosure. She pours scorn on *sub judice* rules which 'allow the authorities to decide what the public should and should not be allowed to know'. But the guiding principle of *sub judice* is to protect the defendant from public prejudice and its potential effect on the verdict given by the jury. Its aim is to ensure that the defendant is tried only for the offence on which he is charged, not convicted on the basis of his previous life history. From her opposition to *sub judice* rules, presumably Bradley thinks that disclosing everything would have benefited Winston Silcott during the trial of the Tottenham Three. In an already hysterical atmosphere, would it have helped Silcott to prove he did not kill PC Blakelock if everyone knew that he had a criminal record which already included an earlier conviction for homicide? I think not—and I think Bradley needs to think twice before she comes out with any more irresponsible demands.

Julie Daley Chesterfield

Gay morality

John Gilmore (letters, May) criticises me for not 'joining in' the debate within the gay community about how to gain equality. My argument, however, is that this debate is about morality, not equality.

In Britain's gay community the debate is between the 'moderate' Stonewall view and the Outrage/Peter Tatchell position. Stonewall's campaigning emphasises the respectable, caring, 'alternative families' view of homosexuals, while Tatchell tends to assert the moral superiority of gay men over the aggressive, irresponsible, ignorant attitudes of heterosexual (working class) males.

The 'gay community' should be seen as a two-sided ethical construction, with cringing middle class respectability on one side and radical moral elitism on the other. *Anybody* with an interest in equality should be deeply suspicious of this increasingly self-righteous 'community'. Instead of attempting to find moral justification for particular lifestyles, the struggle for equality can only be advanced if we first understand the increasing cross-fertilisation between pink morality and new forms of social regulation. This is what I began to draw

attention to in the book reviews ('Going straight', April) which provoked Gilmore's response.

As to his assertion that I 'must be straight' because I do not agree with him, I can only say, 'how dare you presume I'm a heterosexual?'.

Peter Ray *London*

Afraid of global warming. Not

Clare Tyler (letters, May) accuses John Gillott and myself of complacency and 'blind faith in humanity' in the face of the disastrous consequences of global warming ('Who's afraid of global warming?', April). As far as trusting to humanity, what are the alternatives? Should we trust nature or God? I cannot promise a solution to global warming, but I can safely say that a man-made attempt at solving it is the only option we have.

The world is going to get warmer irrespective of whatever action we take now, including conservation. The real question is how do we prepare ourselves for the inevitable consequences of climatic change.

Conservationist strategies would leave us ill-prepared for a warmer world, leading to the destruction of human society especially in the poorest parts of the globe. More human intervention is required, not less. In the short term we must prepare ourselves against the consequences of global warming, and in the long term we need to increase our management of the natural environment if we are to avoid a continuous cycle of having to adapt society to climatic changes.

The greatest obstacle we face is not nature, but the nature of the society in which we live. Capitalism is a barrier to effective measures for coping with global warming, never mind managing the climate. The sort of planning and cooperation required is impossible in today's society. Rather than being complacent about this challenge, the article makes a start by showing that the doomsday scenario associated with climatic change is not given by nature, but arises from the constraints on human ingenuity imposed by present-day society.

As for being 'the Beavis and Butthead of environmental debate'—cool.

Dominic Wood *Oxford*

The dignity of indigenism

It's easy to laugh at the romantic celebration of indigenous peoples. But Ben Brack's cynical posture ('Exploiting the Indians', May) is as one-sided as the naivete he sets out to expose. Ben would be a more creative person, if he could bring himself to recognise the criticism of present-day society and the quest for human dignity which is implicit in the 'indigenist' ethos.

Ben is pedantic as well as cynical. Identifying with indigenous peoples does not lead to the literal imitation of other cultures. Neither do those who empathise with different cultures lose all sense of their own time and place, as Ben seems to imply. Our empathy with indigenous peoples is more of a symbolic celebration of all that is authentically human, and a rejection of the debasement and degradation which is so much a part of today's artificial society. If only Ben could see the positive, dignified side of what he calls 'indigenism'.

Liam Mayhew *St Albans, Hertfordshire*

Women's rights and wrongs

Whilst I agree with most of the points made by Linda Murdoch ('Danger: women's work ahead', May), I was surprised that one element seemed to be missing from her analysis, namely that many of the formal elements of discrimination against women workers have now been eliminated.

For example, recent legal changes mean that part-time workers now have the same rights as full-time workers as regards unfair dismissal and redundancy. They no longer 'have to wait five years for any kind of employment protection'. It is important that any analysis of the position of women takes into account these changes as they are being loudly trumpeted by organisations such as the Equal Opportunities Commission.

In my view, this change from formal discrimination to a mainly informal system needs to be analysed in a similar way to the end of petty apartheid in South Africa. The formal barriers are removed but the real position is little changed. For women working part-time, the extension of formal rights is of little value for two reasons: first, because the value of these rights

in their position is lower, and second, because the value of these rights to all workers is constantly being attacked.

Consider the example of a part-time worker who is unfairly dismissed. She now has the same right as a full-time worker to bring a case of unfair dismissal in an industrial tribunal (IT). However, a part-time worker will find it much more difficult to persuade an IT to award a realistic amount in compensation. The IT would generally view part-time employment as casual, and thus be reluctant to award more than a few weeks' pay in compensation.

The value of ITs to all workers will be much reduced if the proposals in the government's recent green paper are accepted. The replacement of the chair and two lay members by a legal expert alone, and the requirement for applicants to prove that they have attempted to settle their grievance with their employer, will reduce both the number and level of awards.

Whilst the extension of formal rights should be welcomed, the continuation of informal discrimination means that the real position of women workers is not improved at all.

Hilary Salt *Manchester*

Party on?

James Heartfield's piece about the decline of mass parties left and right ('The parties are over', April) is far too simplistic. Membership has declined, but both Labour and Tory parties continue to attract the voting allegiance of many millions. Equally, while trade union membership may have declined, as any trade union activist can tell you they remain mass organisations which, with the decline of the church, now have to deal with every imaginable problem. The landscape may be changing but the old map is not so out of date as Heartfield seems to think.

Bron O'Brien *Stoke Newington, London*

Gene ownership

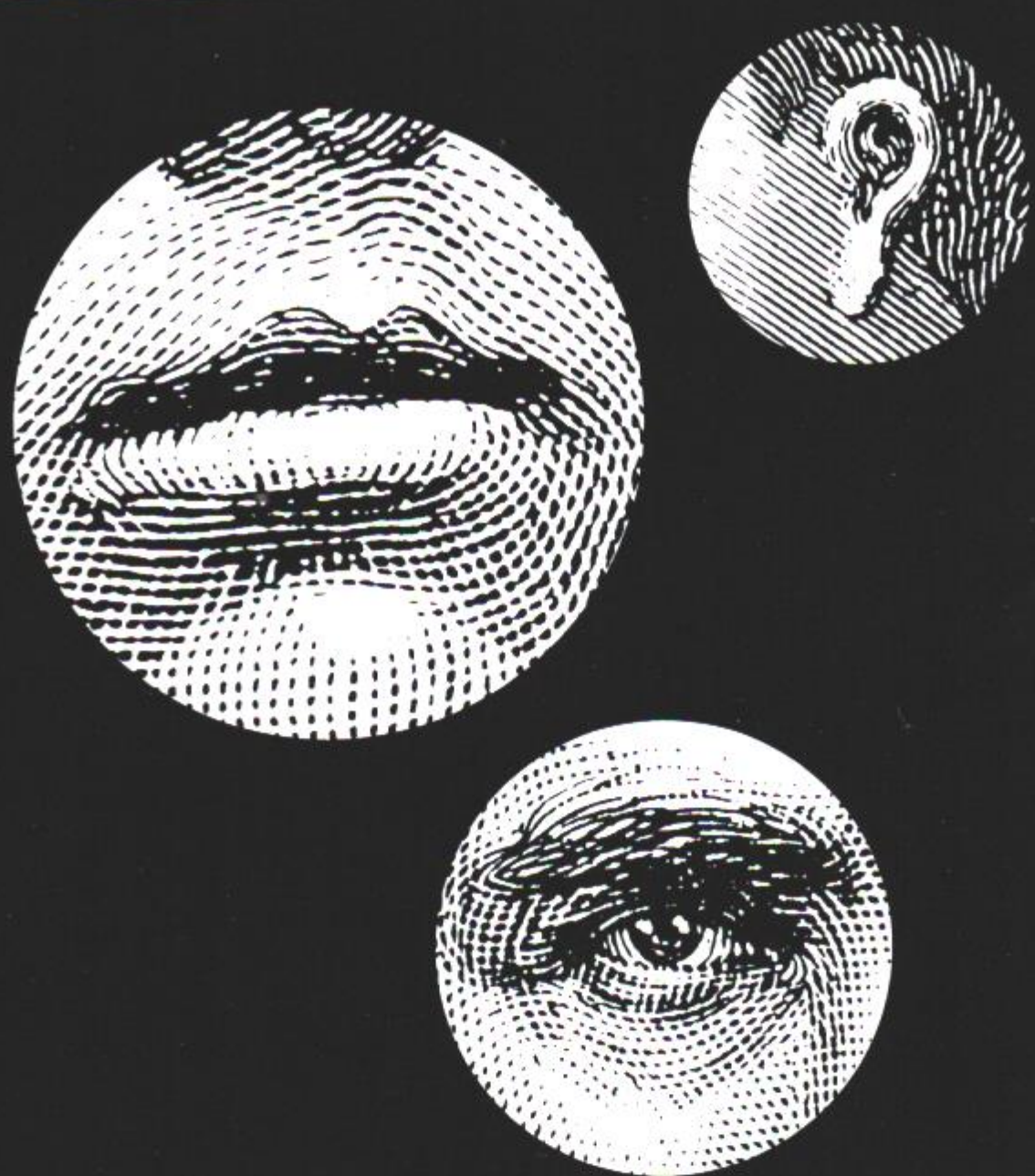
I apologise to David Males (letters, May) if my illustration confused him ('Who owns your genes?', March). A 'c' within a circle is a copyright sign.

Nick Smith *Hammersmith, London*

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A critical look at the conventional wisdom on social, moral and sexual issues.

TABOOOS

Divorce law reforms which would mean more counselling and mediation are an infringement of personal autonomy, argues Ann Bradley

What's wrong with divorce on demand?

Most people, I suspect, only get married in the first place because of the relative ease of divorce. The idea of being bound to somebody for life whether you wish to be or not is as abhorrent to us today as the notion of walking away from your spouse would have been a century ago. The official figures produced by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys confirm that Britain has the highest divorce rate in Europe. In 1993 there were 299 000 marriages and 162 000 divorces—that is more than one divorce for every two weddings.

For many of us, marriage might still be for life, but the person to whom we are married is not. Although four marriages in every 10 end up in the divorce court (with the average union ending just before the tenth wedding anniversary), it seems that we are gluttons for punishment. As one marriage ends so, often, one or both partners wend their way towards tying the knot again. Last year almost 40 per cent of marriages involved at least one

partner who had been through the ceremony before. We dump our partners but not the institution—which, ironically, is probably one reason why the divorce rate is so high. If, when your marriage ended, neither partner wanted to marry again, there would probably be no need to divorce. You could simply pack, leave and move in with somebody else—no solicitors, no rules and regulations, no sweat.

Divorce has always been a messy business. There is something particularly sordid in having to justify to a third party—particularly if it is the state—why you no longer wish to share your life with somebody else.

At present divorces can be granted only if the petitioners meet certain legal criteria. It has to be shown to the court's satisfaction that the marriage has broken down through adultery, unreasonable behaviour, desertion for at least two years, living apart for at least two years where both parties consent to divorce, or living apart for five years where one party does not.

Bizarre as it may seem, 'I do not like this person very much any more, I never want to see him again and I do not want to share my fridge with him, never mind my bed', is not considered grounds for immediate divorce, even if your partner feels the same way. This is probably why three quarters of couples swallow their pride and cite either adultery (the most common reason cited by husbands) or unreasonable behaviour (the most common reason cited by wives) as the grounds for wishing the marriage to end. At present, these are the only two grounds on which you can be granted a 'quickie' divorce, which can be effected in three to six months—providing you have been married for at least a year. There is no chance of divorce at all in your first year of marriage, even if it only takes your honeymoon to discover that you detest your spouse. And, if current government plans go ahead, it is going to get even harder to escape from a miserable marriage.

The new government white paper, *Looking to the Future: Mediation and the Ground for Divorce*, is the most comprehensive review of the divorce legislation since the Divorce Reform Act was passed 26 years ago, in the context of the broader social reforms of the 1960s. The white paper appears to simplify, some have claimed liberalise, divorce by introducing a single ground of marital breakdown, so removing the need to cite adultery or unreasonable behaviour as the basis for a quick divorce. This, it is claimed, will be better for all involved, as it takes away the concept of blame and so will reduce the tensions, trauma and recriminations that are a feature of modern divorce. In this respect the proposals in the white paper, drawn up under the auspices of Lord Mackay, the Lord Chancellor, sound sensible. They have been welcomed by everybody from the Church of England's Board of Social Responsibility to the Labour Party's legal beagle, Paul Boateng.

The proposed change in the divorce law has been particularly welcomed by the more liberal press. A *Guardian* editorial claimed it is as a 'major social reform'. The only people to have lodged a complaint are the pro-family values group Christian Action Research and Education (Care), which has bleated that the proposals are designed to make divorce less painful rather than less common.

If only Care was right; but, as usual, it has missed the point by a million miles. This white paper is a regressive step which will make divorce a more arduous and painful process for countless couples. By introducing compulsory conciliation, the proposed reforms put even more onus on

a separating couple to account to the authorities for their personal problems.

If Mackay's white paper becomes law, and it will, anyone seeking a divorce will be required to attend an 'information-giving session', where supposed experts will inform the unhappy couple about conciliation services, the effects of divorce on spouses and children and the mechanics of getting a divorce. The courts will be able to veto divorce where they decide that to grant one would cause grave hardship, financial or otherwise. You may no longer have to claim that your bloke has had his leg over your best friend, but before the marital knot can be officially severed you will have to submit to the greater humiliation of compulsory counselling, and satisfy officials that your domestic arrangements have been suitably wrapped up.

The notion that Mackay's recommendations would make divorce more straightforward are laughable. His five-fold objectives from the start of the review were: (i) to support the institution of marriage; (ii) to include practical steps to prevent the irretrievable breakdown of marriage; (iii) to ensure the parties understand the consequences of their actions; (iv) to minimise the bitterness and hostility between the couple and minimise the trauma for children; and (v) to keep costs at a minimum. This final point reflects a concern, not to ease divorcees' financial problems, but to cut the cost of divorce to the government. The net spending on legal aid in family matters was £332m in 1993-93 compared with £272m the year before.

However, the Tory government's concerns in tightening up the divorce law are as much moral as fiscal. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, the government fears that the present system provides little incentive or opportunity for reflection on whether the marriage has indeed broken down irretrievably, or whether the couple might stay together if given help (28 April 1995). Hence the existing compulsory one-year wait for everyone, and the new emphasis on mediation and pre-divorce counselling.

The white paper's proposals for more counselling have been welcomed on all sides, perhaps most notably by the *Guardian's* often quite sensible columnist, Maureen Freely. She suggested that the compulsory mediation should be extended beyond marriage, to make cohabiting couples with children seek official sanction before they are allowed to separate: 'If Lord Mackay wants to promote the cause of family stability', Freely argued, 'surely he should be thinking about the 25 per cent of children whose parents won't ►



have to go near a mediator *or* a divorce court should they ever want to split up, because they are not married in the first place. The standards for the great unmarried masses should be the same as for everyone else'. The *Independent* editorial drew the same conclusion, suggesting that relationship counselling could be integrated into antenatal classes.

Enthusiasm for the counselling and mediation aspect of the divorce reforms seems boundless. Yet they are the most objectionable part of the package. In the name of reducing the role of solicitors, the white paper proposes to take away our ability to decide how we negotiate our own relationships. In so doing it represents the most extensive intrusion into personal relationships yet.

State intervention in marriage is nothing new—the entire institution is state regulated from beginning to end. But to suggest that we should be forced to justify not just whether or not we meet a set of legal criteria, but how we are to 'negotiate' the way our marriages end, is to insist on a new level of intrusion. Imagine the humiliation of having to justify to a third party such matters as your future living arrangements, whether any home is to be sold or the tenancy transferred, what contact and living arrangements have been made for the children, how the furniture and other possessions will be divided up.

Currently, if I want a divorce, I hammer out the arrangements with my husband. It is a matter for the two of us. If we have irreconcilable differences we engage solicitors—I expect mine to pursue my interests, he expects his to pursue his. The one with access to the best solicitor will probably win. Of course, it is unfair in that women are often disadvantaged, usually having less access to resources, and it is traumatic for both parties and any children involved. But how is counselling, conciliation and mediation going to improve any of this?

In so far as women are financially disadvantaged in divorce it is because they often enter the process after years of dependency on a husband. No amount of prying by government-appointed counsellors will change that reality. A woman divorced after exchanging a career for full-time motherhood will still leave marriage disadvantaged, regardless of whether she has had access to mediation and conciliation. And the pain and trauma of divorce to all concerned is caused by the breakdown of the relationship, not the details of the final break. When civility ends, it ends.

Besides—if you are fed up with living with a total bastard—you don't want counselling, mediation and



conciliation. You want a way out, as quickly and easily as possible. If your husband is trying to kick you out of the house, you want legal help to secure your rights and set you free—not mediation. If your wife is trying to deny you access to your kids, you want someone who is committed to fighting for your best interests. The new

What gives the authorities the right to decide what is 'reasonable' in our personal affairs?

proposals will withdraw legal aid from claimants, if the authorities decide that they are not acting reasonably in negotiating a divorce. But what gives them the right to decide what is 'reasonable' in our personal affairs? And where do these proposals leave people whose reasons for divorce are not susceptible to a cosy chat in a conciliator's office?

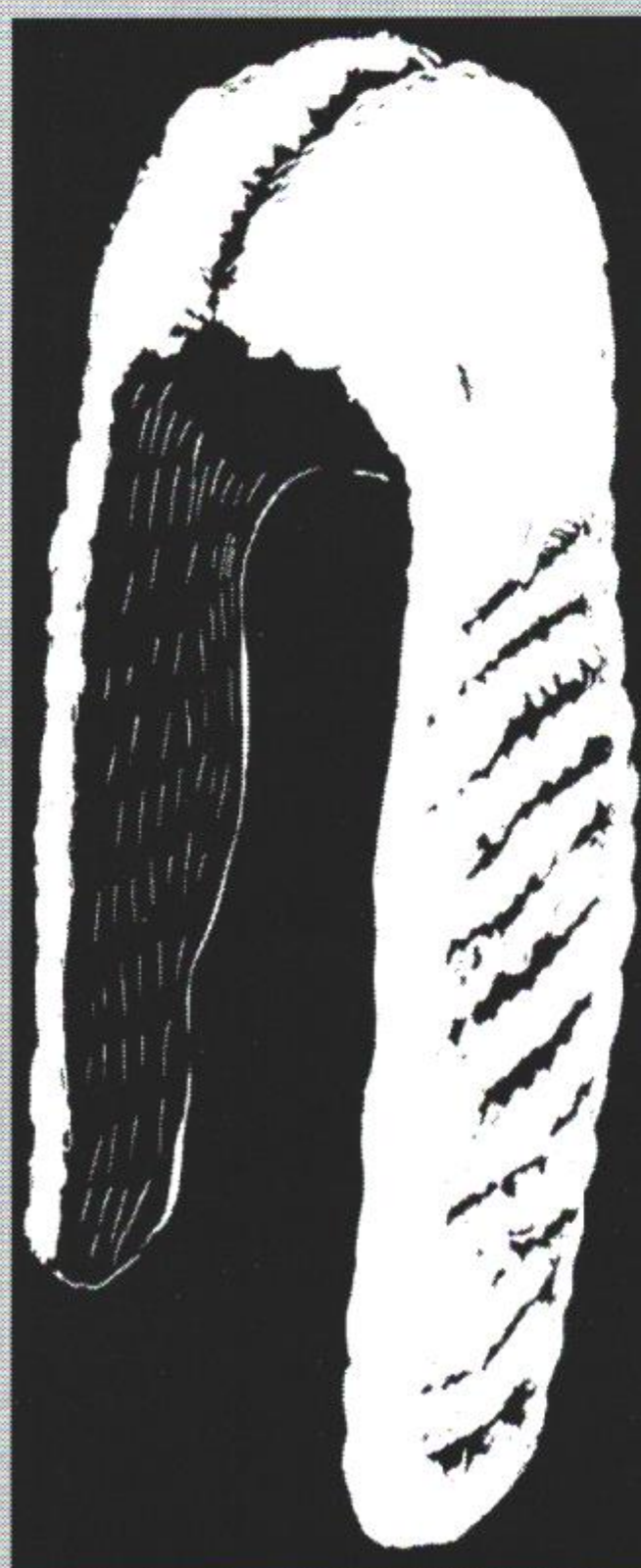
The enthusiasm for compulsory mediation and counselling seems to betray a total lack of confidence in our ability to sort out what have previously been regarded as our own personal matters. Of course divorce is an

important, serious step, and it is insulting to assume that people do not treat it as such. But we sort out all manner of serious commitments for ourselves without compulsory mediation. There is no compulsory instruction, and no waiting period before you take out a joint mortgage, before you get married in the first place, or before you have children. Although maybe it is only a matter of time....

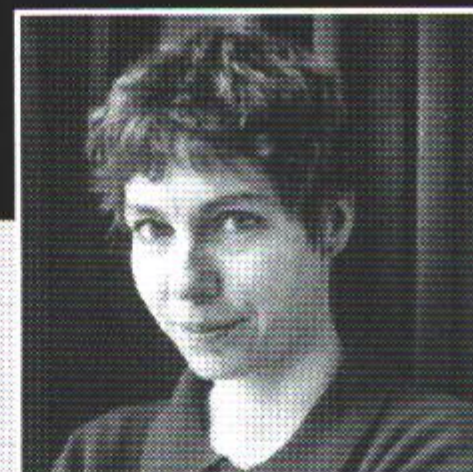
Following the publication of the white paper, the main counselling agencies, the Family Mediators Association, the Solicitors' Family Law Association and Relate, are considering forming an Institute of Family Mediators. They know they are set to have an expanded role in the future. We have to realise that their role can only expand at the expense of our personal autonomy.

The divorce law does need changing—but in the opposite direction to that proposed by the government. In a civilised society of mature adults, divorce should be available immediately and on demand to either partner. The only kind of 'help' we need from the authorities in sorting out our relationships is a decent living standard and facilities—like childcare—to make us truly independent, so that we do not have to ask anybody's permission to leave somebody we can no longer stand the sight of.

Lord Mackay's proposals



- The sole ground for divorce will be irretrievable breakdown of marriage.
- The ban on beginning divorce proceedings in the first year of marriage will stay.
- There must be a period for 12 months' reflection after divorce proceedings are filed.
- Courts have the discretion to refuse divorce if they decide it would cause financial or other hardship. Couples must satisfy the courts that satisfactory arrangements have been made on matters involving children, property and finance.
- Anyone who starts divorce proceedings must attend a compulsory 'information-giving' session which explains the benefits of counselling and marriage guidance.
- Couples will be encouraged to take part in family mediation sessions.
- Legal aid can be withdrawn from parties who are thought to be acting unreasonably, eg, refusing mediation, counselling.



Babies on hold

Given the way that children change your life, it is a wonder anybody chooses to have them. It is certainly a wonder that, in these days of effective and safe contraception and abortion, only one in five women are expected to avoid the pain, suffering and inconvenience of motherhood. If you then consider that a significant proportion of these women will be childless by chance rather than choice—perhaps through infertility or lack of an appropriate partner—the number of women who choose to play mother is quite staggering.

Not that you would have drawn this conclusion from the reactions to a recent Family Policy Studies Centre report, *Choosing not to Have Children*. The report revealed that, while in 1976 just one per cent of married women stated a preference for no children, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys projections suggest that 20 per cent of women born in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s are expected to remain childless. We are effectively twice as likely to remain childless as women of our mothers' generation.

Given the concerns about the rising world population expressed by many governments (including our own) at last year's International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, you might have thought the news of a falling birth rate would be welcome. After all the Department of Health has pledged itself to tackling the British rate of unplanned pregnancies—currently estimated to be responsible for one in three births. But there have been no fanfares about women contracepting more effectively or generally exercising more choice and control in their lives. Just a lot of doom-and-gloom scenarios about population imbalances and concern that there will be insufficient future generations of workers to support us when we are old. 'Who will pay for our pensions?' is the question left hanging in the air.

There is a wonderful irony in this. In Cairo, the British delegation would not give the time of day to those from the third world who argued that population control was impractical because their impoverished societies depend on high numbers of young people to support the old. Now the self-same Western governments are bleating about their own population imbalances. The hypocritical and racist message is clear: black people in the third world should cut population growth regardless of the structural consequences for their societies. We, on the other hand, should create incentives for women to have children so that our elderly can draw their pensions in peace.

The eugenic undertones of the discussion are even clearer when you look at exactly whose fertility is under scrutiny in Britain. The thrust of the Family Policy Studies report is that the reluctance of *professional* women to breed is a cause for concern. Its recommendations to government to reverse this trend centre on the creation of family-centred work policies, such as tax relief on childcare, which are rather more relevant to women with careers than to those who career from giro to giro.

The issue of the fecundity of working class women is tactfully left out of the discussion. Do we hear concern that the birth rate of unemployed women, teenagers or young black women has fallen?

No we don't, because there is scant evidence that it has. While the establishment has a little panic that the middle classes are delaying or deferring childbearing indefinitely, we are still supposed to be concerned about the high number of pregnancies to the 'economically and socially disadvantaged'.

The worries about the falling birth rate are focused on those women who are supposed to make the most fit and appropriate mothers—middle class professional women. It is strikingly reminiscent of the discussions in the 1930s and 1940s, when the political elite was frantic about the falling birth rate among the English middle class while being equally concerned about the rising birth rate among immigrants, in particular the Jews and the Irish, and in those countries seen as rivals to the British Empire.

Traditionally, concerns about population decline and deterioration tend to be associated with a more general loss of national confidence, and there is an element of this now. The economists have little confidence in their ability to plan the economics of the future, so they fret about demographic trends. The message is that if we all suffer

declining living standards in our dotage, it is our own fault for not bearing tomorrow's workers, rather than a failure of economic policy or planning. There is an assumption that times will get harder and those who will be called to account are forced to get their explanations ready in advance. It is rather like the eugenicist author Halliday Sutherland who, in his 1944 book *Control of Life*, blamed the anticipated loss of Britain's colonies on

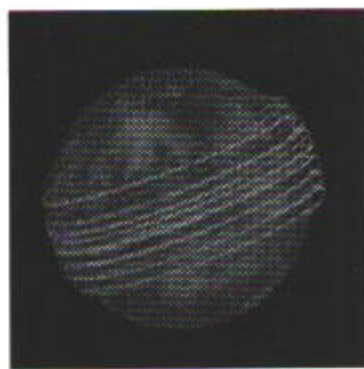
the falling birth rate, 'the law of decline' by which 'the greatest empires of the world have perished'.

At least this time around the authorities do not have to fear that, while the wombs of British women remain barren, those of our neighbours are fertile. Britain's fertility rate is pretty high by European standards. The average British family still includes 1.8 children which is not far off replacement level, while the Italian family is down to 1.3—a fact which demonstrates that even at the heart of Roman Catholicism people are flouting the Pope's latest encyclical, or else Latin men are failing to live up to their reputation.

It seems inevitable that when society offers women opportunities outside the home, some are going to take them. It also seems inevitable that this will have consequences for the traditional family. Women have a relatively short period of their lives during which they can easily produce children. Miss that chance and you have had it. Does it matter? Well, it might to you, but as for it being a matter of national concern, it hardly seems likely.

If the government were seriously interested in encouraging women to have children we could expect to see pro-natalist policies on the agenda: childcare provision, increased maternity provision, decent child benefits, state-funded infertility treatment. Such measures just might encourage a few mothers. But what the pro-family values lobby fails to appreciate is that there are lots of women around who just don't want children in their lives. ●


Exactly whose fertility is under scrutiny?



Globalisation is something of a buzzword in today's debates about economic, political, cultural and technological issues. From the Internet and unemployment to the United Nations and Aids, it seems that everything can now be discussed in terms of new global processes and global risks. What's it all about?

Mike Freeman presents a layman's guide to the most fashionable globalisation theories of today, exposing some of the confusions and dangerous conclusions that lurk behind the global-degook

Global-



'We can therefore define globalisation as a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding.'
Malcolm Waters, *Globalisation*, 1995, p13

The term globalisation has been used primarily to describe some key aspects of the recent transformation of world economic activity. But several other, less benign, activities, including the drug trade, terrorism, and traffic in nuclear materials, have also been globalised. The financial liberalisation that seems to have created a borderless world is also helping international criminals and creating numerous problems for poorer countries. Global cooperation has eradicated smallpox. And it has eliminated tuberculosis and cholera from most places, but the world is now struggling to prevent the resurgence of these traditional diseases and to control the global spread of Aids.'

*Our Global Neighbourhood:
The Report of the Commission on Global
Governance*, 1995, pp10-11

'Globalisation is not only, or even primarily, an economic phenomenon; and it should not be equated with the emergence of a "world system".

Globalisation is really about the transformation of space and time. I define it as *action at a distance*, and relate its intensifying over recent years to the emergence of means of instantaneous global communication and mass transportation.

'Globalisation does not only concern the creation of large-scale systems, but also the transformation of the local, and even personal, context of social experience.'

Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*, 1994, pp4-5

'In short, the century ended in a global disorder whose nature was unclear, and without an obvious mechanism for either ending it or keeping it under control.

'The reason for this impotence lay not only in the profundity and complexity of the world's crisis, but also in the apparent failure of all programmes, old and new, for managing or improving the affairs of the human race.'

Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-91*, 1994, pp562-63



degook

The global extension and consolidation of the networks of capitalism in the 1990s reveal both the system's creative and its destructive character. Today's world order reflects the universalising dynamic of the capitalist system and its divisive consequences.

The deregulation and computerisation of the world's money markets allow the instantaneous transfers of vast sums around the major financial centres. The proliferation of trading networks—at the regional as well as global level—moves in tandem with the emergence of a more complex international division of labour in production. Yet, at the same time, the world's leading economies are haunted by recessionary tendencies, exacerbated by the instability of the global currency markets.

The collapse of the Soviet bloc has ended the East/West polarisation that

dominated the postwar period. The emergence of the East Asian 'tigers' has blurred the distinction between North and South. Yet, though it seems that 'One World' has taken the place of the former 'first, second and third worlds', the New World Order appears, if anything, even less harmonious than the old. The former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, despite pockets of development, are in economic and social turmoil, if not open civil war. While South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore may be thriving sectors of the world economy, most of Africa and substantial parts of Latin America and Asia are increasingly marginalised and impoverished.

The proliferation of satellite TV, the Internet and diverse manifestations of an international popular culture creates the sense that we are now living in a global village, in which every citizen of the world is now our

neighbour. But the global village cannot be described as a happy place. Its inhabitants are racked by fear and insecurity, worried about work, crime, disease and environmental hazards, not to mention terrorism, atavistic nationalism and nuclear war. The world may be more united, but people feel more alone.

Millennium and apocalypse

Globalisation theories are attempts to grasp contemporary social trends at an international level. By bringing together developments in the world economy, politics and cultural life, these theories have become increasingly influential in all the social sciences and are fast gaining wider popularity. In the prevailing climate of *fin de siècle* foreboding, globalisation theories offer a striking combination of millenarian hopes and apocalyptic fears. ►



On one hand, David Held and Anthony Giddens enthuse about the prospects for an extension of 'dialogic democracy' in a globalised world, from the level of 'world governance' to interpersonal relations within the family (see D Held, *Prospects for Democracy: Political Studies Special Issue*, Vol40, 1992; D Held, *Models of Democracy*, 1987; A Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 1994). On the other

forces that threaten a plunge into barbarism.

The instability of globalisation theories results from their failure to trace the superficial features of today's world order to their roots in the contradictory character of capitalist social relations. Capitalism is *both* expansionary *and* barbarous because it is based on exploitation in the name of private profit rather than production according to social need.

Rather than penetrating beyond the surface appearances of world capitalism, globalisation theories present a series of one-sided interpretations. These sometimes offer interesting insights, but inevitably fail to provide a coherent analysis. Far from exposing the underlying conflicts, they efface social antagonisms and obscure the reality of power differentials. Herein lies their essentially *ideological* character: globalisation theories are *apologetic* towards the existing order, *defensive* in outlook and offer only *illusory universalities* as consolations for the reality of our atomised existence in capitalist society. Let's briefly examine these three characteristics in turn.

No entry

The apologetic character of globalisation theories is clear in the way that they serve to *attenuate conflict* and to *eternalise* the prevailing relations of capitalist society.

For example, Anthony Giddens offers a series of 'contexts' in which the extension of 'dialogic democracy' might 'enhance social solidarity' (*Beyond Left and Right*, pp127-28—for a full review see p47). These include 'personal relationships', 'abstract systems', 'the state' and 'global orders'. This list of 'contexts' significantly excludes the workplace, a sphere of great importance in most people's lives, where the absence of the democratic involvement of the workforce reflects the deeper antagonism rooted in the exploitative relationship of capital to wage labour. It is striking that globalisation theorists celebrate the proliferation of 'democracy' in other, often trivial spheres (though, even here, the real content of popular participation remains obscure) while neglecting a crucial area of social life in which authoritarian trends are rampant.

Globalisation theories, in common with their predecessors, the theories of modernisation and modernism that flourished in the postwar years, adopt a timeless attitude towards the future. Like similarly popular contemporary notions of the 'end of ideology' or the 'end of history', they express the conviction that the present marks the culmination of human development. Though there is some disagreement

among globalisation theorists over whether the process is complete, over whether they are describing a journey or a destination, there is a consensus that the emerging global system is some sort of terminus.

A striking feature of globalisation theories, which they share with the parallel 'post-' theories (post-industrial society, post-Fordism, post-modernism, etc), is a tendency to exaggerate the contrast with the recent past. Such theories seek to illuminate the supposedly distinctive character of the new epoch by emphasising its novel features and insisting on the discontinuities with the past. Familiar and persistent features of capitalist society—such as exploitation, domination and oppression—are neglected.

Globalisation theories offer only illusory universalities as consolations for our atomised existence

hand, other authorities (and, indeed, sometimes the same authorities) emphasise the dangers of our global society being engulfed by environmental catastrophe, chaos and anomie.

The incoherent character of globalisation theories reflects the contradictory character of the internationalisation of capitalist social relations. The capitalist system has united the world but cannot integrate it. Indeed the tendency for capitalism to extend its global reach is more an expression of stagnation than a manifestation of dynamism.

At the close of the nineteenth century, tendencies towards stagnation and decay in the advanced capitalist countries—Britain, the USA, Germany, France—resulted in the export of capital (and systems of colonial rule) to the rest of the world. The re-emergence of slump in recent years is producing a further drive to internationalise the capitalist crisis, as the major powers search for solutions in the global economic arena. Just as the old imperialist order was characterised by a division of the world between oppressor and oppressed nations, the New World Order reveals trends towards a new carve up, along lines yet to be clarified.

Global ideology

Globalisation theories are generally too descriptive and impressionistic to get to grips with the underlying dynamic of today's economic trends. Sometimes their authors are captivated by the hectic expansionary aspects of capitalist development and the exciting new technologies that it harnesses to its requirements. More often, they are depressed by the dark side of capitalist development, obsessed with insecurities generated by an economic system that is apparently beyond human control and by political

For instance, current discussions are preoccupied by developments in global information and communications technology and research in genetics and human reproduction, and their supposedly revolutionary consequences for humanity. In fact, compared



with the truly revolutionary advances in relativity theory and quantum mechanics earlier this century, recent scientific advance has been notably slow. In the prevailing climate of pessimism and insecurity, relatively limited projects—such as charting the human genome—now generate inordinate social anxieties. Commuters

throughout the capitalist world may be less impressed than Anthony Giddens by developments in the sphere of mass transportation.

The overall effect of the ahistorical character of globalisation theories is to reduce people's horizons to the limitations of the world as it currently exists—a capitalist world in a state of economic and political malaise.

Such theories cut off the past, and present the future as unimaginable: people are

condemned to live in an interminably recurrent present.

By contrast with theories of modernisation, which projected a positive vision of worldwide progressive development according to the model of Western capitalism and liberal democracy, globalisation theorists, despite occasional moments of optimism, offer a generally sober prognosis. Far from celebrating the transcendence of natural and social constraints on human progress, they are concerned to reconcile people to what they regard as objective limitations to human achievement. The overwhelmingly *defensive* tone of globalisation theories reflects this preoccupation with limits and the dangers of experimentation and change.

The incorporation of the concept of 'manufactured risk', elaborated by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, into contemporary theories of globalisation, well illustrates the prevailing defensiveness (see U Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, 1992—also reviewed on p47; U Beck, *Ecological*

Enlightenment: Essays on the Politics of Risk Society, 1995). Beck argues

that whereas in the past people faced the threat of natural disasters, epidemics and famines, today we all live in the shadow of global risks generated by human intervention in nature and society.

Beck insists that the scope of the danger resulting from modern weapons of mass destruction, nuclear power, global warming and 'techno-epidemics' is much greater than that from traditional risks. ►





He emphasises that the nature and extent of manufactured risk are often invisible, incalculable and indeterminate. It never seems to occur to Beck or other ecologically aware globalisation theorists that one explanation for the invisible, incalculable and indeterminate character of manufactured risks is that they have been grossly exaggerated. Much prophesied

There is no real connection between the bottle bank and global environmental destruction

environmental catastrophes, resulting from global warming, the depletion of the ozone layer, the exhaustion of fossil fuels, the population explosion, have long proved as elusive as the Second Coming.

Furthermore, to the extent that the transformation of nature and society through human agency has given rise to new problems, why should it be beyond the same human agency to devise appropriate solutions? Following generations of vulgar sociologists, today's greens and globalists focus narrowly on the *technical* aspects of modern society and neglect its basic *social* features. Hence they often blame science and technology, rather than locating the problem in the social function of science in a society where everything is subordinate to the demands of the market. This hostility towards science and anxiety about risk reflect a loss of confidence in the capacity of society to control its own activities.

Street-wise, world-foolish

A preoccupation with 'manufactured risk' leads either to fatalism or to the pursuit of illusory solutions, such as the familiar green slogan 'think globally, act locally'. In fact, there is no real connection between individual local initiatives, such as recycling garbage and using the bottle bank, and the global environmental destruction resulting from capitalist industrial development.

Worse, when Giddens argues that we should 'seek to remoralise our lives in the context of a positive acceptance of manufactured uncertainty', he reveals the dangerous consequences of this theory (*Beyond Left and Right*, p227). The notion of risk sanctions the intensive regulation of personal behaviour through approved 'lifestyle changes' (especially in the sphere of health) and codes of conduct (in personal and sexual relations).

In a world that has generally ceased to believe in God, global awareness provides a new source of authority and discipline. This approach favours self-imposed restraint, but offers legitimacy to more coercive methods should a 'positive acceptance' of manufactured risk not be forthcoming. It brings to mind the scene in the recent epidemic movie, *Outbreak*, where the US president tells his aides to 'be compassionate—but be compassionate globally' as a justification for wiping out an infected local community.

Virtually united

At the same time as they abstract from the real divisions in society, globalisation theories offer a series of imaginary universalities. An obvious example, which currently inspires many utopian fantasies, is the Internet. This mechanism for linking up millions of people around the world via their PCs to a global network of communication and information is indeed an exciting development with great creative potential. But it is no more than a communications network: it cannot of itself create any real community or collectivity. Indeed, as people retreat to their bedrooms and plug in their modems, it offers a semblance of a community in cyberspace as a consolation for the absence of collectivity in real space-time.

Notions of 'homogenisation' and 'hybridisation' which flourish under the globalisation umbrella proclaim a universalising tendency, but in effect simply mystify developments in society (see JN Pieterse, 'Globalisation as hybridisation', *International Sociology*, Vol9 No2, June 1994). Concepts such as 'dependency capitalism', 'the informal economy' and the 'semi-periphery' are paraded as 'melange categories' arising from fusions and cross-fertilisations between advanced and backward capitalist sectors. But what is lost in the melange is any sense of where the power in the relationship lies, and any insight into who is exploiting whom. As a more familiar example of a hybrid or a melange, we could cite the East End sweat shop, a colourful fusion of the world of high fashion and the domestic workshop, otherwise instantly recognisable as a grimy place of capitalist super-exploitation.

Coca-Colaisation

In the sphere of culture, globalisation commentators are generally preoccupied with the banal—'all music is world music'—or the trivial—discussions of the global popularity of McDonalds and Coca-Cola, Madonna and Michael Jordan. Mesmerised by the superficial forms of popular culture, such commentators

often fail to identify the specific features which are key to grasping the real dynamic of particular social movements. The fact that young people in Serbia wear blue jeans, baseball hats and trainers does not mean that they identify strongly with US foreign policy in the former Yugoslavia. On the other hand, young people in Montreal in Canada may insist on speaking French and support a separatist political movement, but this does not mean that they embrace Quebec's conservative Catholic traditions.

One expression of the atomisation which prevails in the global village is the politicisation of identity. In place of traditional allegiances—to political parties or movements, trade unions, etc—people are encouraged to rally around some aspect of their social existence or experience. This identity may be objectively conferred—by national, racial or regional origin—or may be chosen—by adopting a particular label (skinhead, punk) or lifestyle (crusty, traveller).

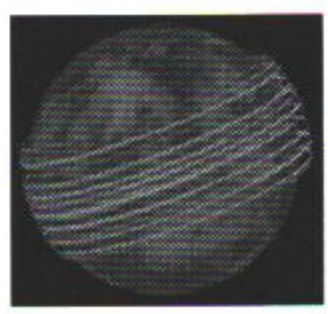
The ultimate site of identity politics is the body itself, which is the focus of a growing body of sociological literature. Giddens points out that in today's 'post-scarcity' society, everybody is on a diet; hence eating disorders are the appropriate form of psychopathology for the 1990s, just as hysteria was prevalent in Freud's Vienna in the 1890s (in both cases predominantly among young women). In fact, from a global perspective, it is still the case that in most of the world to be fat is a symbol of wealth, while to be thin suggests poverty.

Self-abuse

The cult of body-piercing is widely celebrated as revealing a new willingness of people to use their own bodies as sites of experimentation and change. It may also be interpreted, like tattooing and some plastic surgery techniques, as a form of self-hatred. The fact that people abuse their own bodies in an attempt to assert a new identity reflects the limited scope for effecting change through participation in society. The opening up of the body in this way parallels the closure of real democratic opportunities.

Globalisation theories offer a synthesis of current sociological explanations and justifications of the world capitalist order. These theories efface the fundamental conflicts at the root of capitalist social relations and obscure the power relations among different capitalist nations. Challenging the mystifications of the globalisation debate is a first step towards exposing the relations of domination and oppression that remain the mainstay of the international capitalist system. ●

A mad, mad, mad, mad world economy?



The notion that the new global economy is

beyond anybody's understanding or control acts as an apology for the destructive effects of international capitalism, argues Phil Murphy

Globalisation is regarded as the dominant trend in the international economy today. It informs every new economics book, every politician's speech and every report published by the world's leading institutes. But what do the fashionable globalisation theories tell us about the real 'global economy' in the mid-1990s?

The globalisation thesis is an attempt to understand a real process; the internationalisation of economic activity which is the most significant economic trend of the past quarter century. Each country now operates as part of an increasingly interconnected world economy. Flows of goods, services and capital, criss-crossing national borders, provide some of the fastest-moving indicators of economic life.

World trade has grown faster than world production, becoming increasingly important for the Group of Seven leading industrial nations—the USA, Japan, Germany, France, Canada, Italy and Britain. This means that more and more of the goods and services produced in one country are sold in another. World trade is now worth about \$4 trillion a year (a trillion is a million million), equivalent to around one sixth of world output.

The major economies are also increasingly exporting capital, to be invested elsewhere in the world. Since 1987 the world stock of foreign direct investment has expanded from \$1 trillion to almost \$2.5 trillion. This means that more and more companies are producing, as well as selling, outside their home base—like the Japanese car or computer firms which build plants in Britain to supply the European market. The World Bank recently estimated that world sales of the foreign operations of such 'multinational' companies may now exceed the world's total exports (*Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries*, 1995). This foreign direct investment is supplemented by the multi-billion dollar money flows of the international financial system, going into global bond, share and currency markets.

Globalisation theorists have described this process of the increasing integration of the world economy well enough. Their attempts to explain or analyse these trends, however, tend only to mystify what is happening and why. And they do so in such a way as to effectively become apologists for the existing state of the world, providing an alibi for the problems and failures of international capitalism.

For example, globalisation theorists all fetishise the role of technological change, especially in transport, communications and information systems, as the driving force behind international integration. As a result of technical developments, old geographical borders and other physical barriers to international

transactions have certainly been eroded. But this begs the questions: why internationalise? What has been the pressure driving the advances in global communications' science? We all know that many technological breakthroughs sit in the inventor's laboratory or the patents' office unless there is a demand for them.

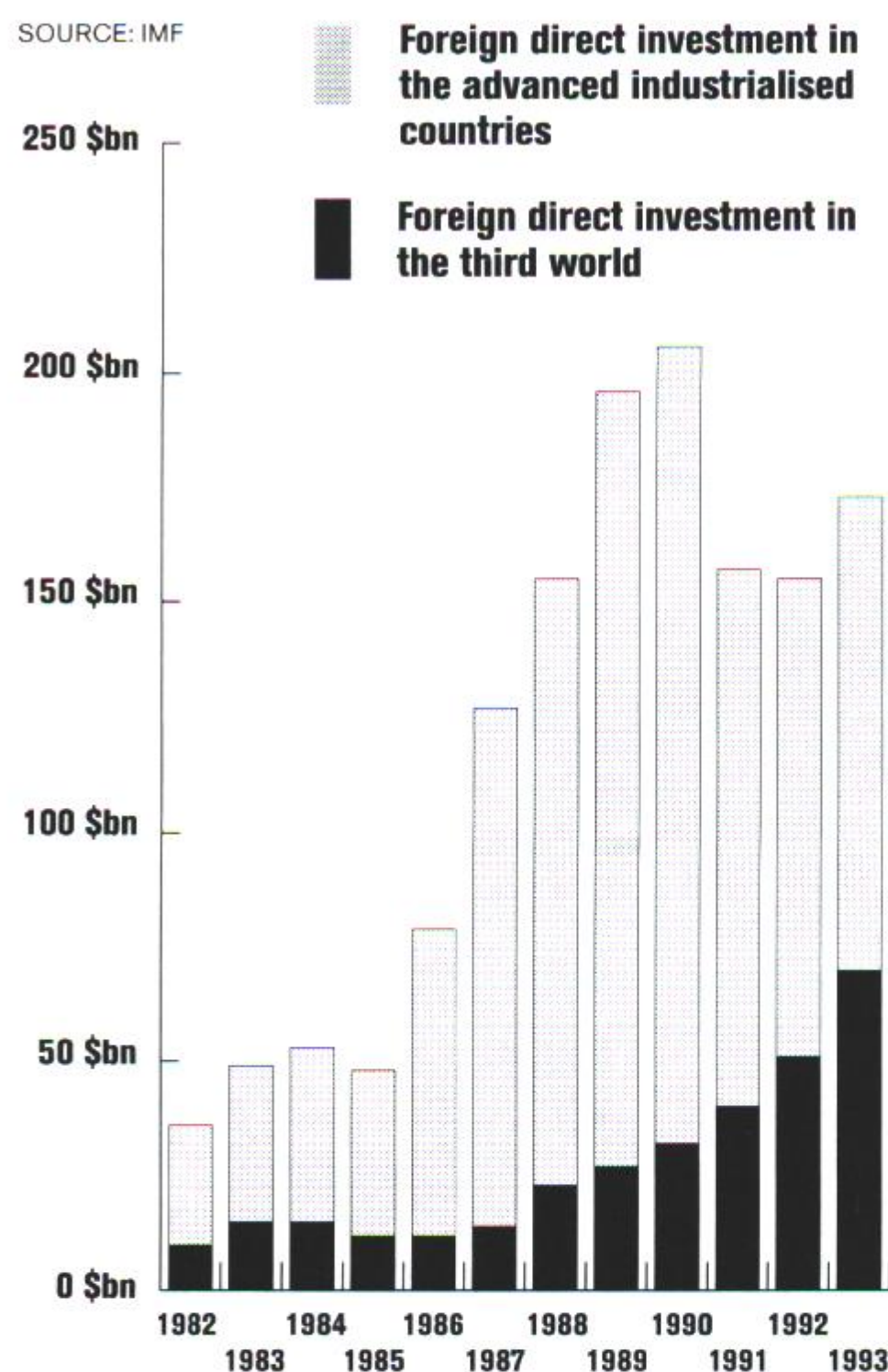
The technical explanations offered by the globalisation theorists divorce today's international economic trends from the true driving force behind them—the stagnation of the international capitalist system. ►



ILLUSTRATION: IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD, UNITED ARTISTS

◀ The trend towards internationalisation is driven by the requirements of the leading industrial economies, all seeking to compensate for their slump at home by finding more profitable outlets around the world. By reorganising the world market, these dominant economic powers seek to offset poor domestic profitability through foreign trade and overseas investment. For them, the internationalisation of economic life is not a matter of choice, but a necessity. It is

SOURCE: IMF



The 1980's take-off in foreign direct investment

the contemporary form of the 'economics of imperialism', through which the advanced capitalist nations are seeking to survive at the expense of the rest of the world—and, if necessary, at the expense of each other.

The language of globalisation serves to obscure and apologise for this process. The apparently neutral and inclusive term 'globalisation', conjuring up images of 'one world' in which money and goods flow outside of national interests, obfuscates the reality of capitalism today. Not least it obscures the uneven and divisive pattern of international economic development, which is reinforcing poverty in large parts of the world and bolstering inequality between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. For every east Asian economic 'tiger' that is integrated into the world market, many more African and Latin American nations are pushed further out to the margins.

One way in which the new theories work their apologetic message is that the supposedly autonomous, technically driven force of globalisation becomes an excuse for the destructive effects of the capitalist system. Mass unemployment in the West is blamed, not on a system which puts private profit before public need, but on the hidden hand of globalisation. The creation of a new global labour market, in which capital can move in mysterious ways, is held

responsible for the loss of jobs in the West, and for the spread of 'flexible', meaning more intensive, work practices.

An even more dangerous aspect of the globalisation thesis, however, is the way in which it reinforces the notion that the world is out of control and that nothing can be done about it. The global economy is presented as simultaneously more powerful, more dangerous and more uncontrollable. It is, we are continually told, a mad, mad, mad, mad world, in which trillions of dollars fly around a computerised financial system which nobody can comprehend, never mind control.

For 20 years, globalisation theorists have emphasised the erosion of the power of the nation state and the inability of governments to control what is happening at home or abroad. In the 1990s the ineffectiveness of state economic policy is most frequently blamed upon the massive growth of the international financial markets:

'Trillions of dollars of portfolio money now coursing through the global economy call the shots....In this new market, money moves faster than ever, raising the possibility that billions can flow in or out of an economy in seconds. So powerful has this force of money become that some observers now see the hot-money set becoming a sort of shadow world government—one that is irretrievably eroding the concept of the sovereign powers of a nation-state.' (*Business Week*, 20 March 1995)

Note how a technical development—the way that enormous speculative funds can now be moved electronically across borders—is here presented as driving a volatile world market outside of state control. Since the state is the primary instrument through which capitalist elites seek to manage their affairs, the notion that global markets are now beyond the state's influence reflects a loss of faith in any human control of economic affairs. As Paul Kennedy wrote in his pessimistic *fin de siècle* text *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*: 'The real "logic" of the borderless world is that nobody is in control.' (p55) In this sense, globalisation has become something of a chaos theory of capitalist economics.

Globalisation has not always been viewed in such negative, nihilistic terms. Not so long ago, it was regarded as a positive process of widening economic development. The fact that the tone of the globalisation debate became more downbeat and fatalistic as the fortunes of world capitalism turned downwards confirms the theory's standing as an apology for the status quo.

After the Cold War ended in 1989, globalisation became an optimistic metaphor for the victory of the free market and the opening up of the world economy. America's leading business weekly, *Business Week*, enthused about globalisation as 'one of the most significant business and economic trends of the late twentieth century' (14 May 1990). Five years on, the impact of

economic and political malaise has exposed the myth of the free market miracle, and encouraged a more sober assessment of globalisation. Today the destructive elements of globalisation take centre stage in the discussion. This shift in the tone of the globalisation debate has been precipitated by actual economic events—in particular the disarray on global financial markets.

The international money markets today symbolise the notion that a process of globalisation is creating a world in chaos and beyond control. In recent months a series of financial crises—the Mexican crash, the plunging value of the US dollar, the collapse of the British merchant bank Barings, new turmoil in the Euro-currency markets—have rocked the world of the money men. All of this financial turmoil has reinforced the identification of globalisation with risk and chaos. Even *Business Week* has had to revise its earlier euphoria. The Mexican financial crisis, it reported, has given many second thoughts about the benefits of going global: 'By exposing the weak underpinnings of global development, the Mexican crisis has given everyone its [sic] first look at how risky the new world really is.' (13 March 1995)

Such disorder epitomises what many theorists now think of as globalisation: a chaotic, fluid process in which time and space have been compressed. For example, foreign exchange dealing of around \$1 trillion a day is now 50 times more than is required to service real international trade and investment. This seems to sum up a world that has gone mad.

Globalisation—in the form of world money flows—is now commonly discussed as an autonomous force beyond human influence, reaping havoc at everyone's expense. 'Dial C for chaos' was the *Economist's* summary headline on this spring's currency market panic (11 March 1995). For David Smith, in the *Sunday Times*, the 'whirlwind raging through the

'Globalisation' has become a chaos theory of capitalist economics

world's currency markets is an international phenomenon in which individual countries are both blameless and powerless' (12 March 1995). Morris Offit, head of a New York bank, said that as cash has flowed around the world, 'control of monetary and fiscal policy has devolved. Countries don't control their own destiny. If they don't discipline themselves, the world market will do it for them' (*Business Week*, 20 March 1995).

A *Financial Times* editorial counselled the April gathering of Group of Seven finance ministers and central bankers to come clean, forget about issuing the usual bland, useless communiqué, and instead accept 'the general expectation that little would be achieved at their meeting since they are [not] in command of events' (22 April 1995). Meanwhile Hamish

McRae has even advised against attempting to see what was happening as rational: 'Rational discussion is not relevant: what we are seeing is speculative excess and at times like this all that matters is market mood.' (*Independent*, 7 March).

Things in the real world are rather different from the mystified, uncertain place occupied by the globalists. Capitalism is out of control, but this is not because of the present scale or extent of international activity. It is because of

its biggest debtor, with its former position taken over by Japan, with Germany as number two. No wonder that the dollar is in the doldrums—not because of mysterious global chaos, but as a perfectly comprehensible consequence of competition between major capitalist nations in the world marketplace.

This brings us to a key mistake of the globalisation thesis. The creation of a more interconnected world economy does not signal the end of the capitalist nation state. On the contrary,

the trends described as globalisation are really survival strategies adopted by the major capitalist nations. Internationalising its operations is the only way nationally based capital can deal with the slump. Coping with the national slump provides the rationale and dynamic for internationalisation.

It is paradoxical that the international aspects of economic activity often come across as the most dynamic trends today. In fact they are expressions of capitalist stagnation. Britain is perhaps the best example of this. As the G7 nation with the weakest domestic economy, parochial old Britain has become probably the most 'globalised' economic player on Earth.

Every little bright spot in Britain's dismal economic outlook is to do with non-national operations. Britain's strongest companies generate most of their profits abroad. For example, the pharmaceutical giant Glaxo Wellcome makes about 90 per cent of its sales and profits outside Britain. On the other hand, Britain's few successful manufacturing export sectors, notably motor cars and colour televisions, rely on the competitiveness of foreign-owned plants such as Nissan, Samsung and Sony. Over a quarter of the very British Queen's Awards for export achievements this year went to foreign-owned companies.

Britain's biggest export earner is financial services, responsible for about a fifth of national output and still based around the City of London. Yet, despite its reputation as a bastion of British values and traditions, the City is very un-British these days. It is the most international of the world's main financial centres, both in ownership and operation. Most private City institutions are now foreign-owned. London is home to over 500 foreign banks, concentrating on foreign exchange dealing and international share trading.

Looking at Britain also throws some light on what's really behind the increased global significance of the export of commodities and capital. Capitalists fight for more overseas markets because they cannot generate enough revenue from sales at home. Britain exports about one quarter of its annual output—a higher proportion than most G7 countries. This 'leadership' is not because of Britain's peculiar competitiveness. Quite the reverse; it trails the rest in the productivity stakes. The relative weakness of their domestic profit-making centres forces British capitalists to try to make up for this shortfall by selling more abroad.

The operations of the world economic system are certainly irrational from the perspective of human need

the workings of the law of value—the basic device which guides economic activity in a market system.

Under the operation of the law of value, goods and many services are produced not for need, but for profitable sale on the market. The criterion of profitability ultimately determines if and where labour and resources are employed. Capitalists can create jobs and produce goods only if it is profitable enough for them to do so; and capital will be moved around the world, speculated in currency markets or invested in industries according to the same diktat of the law of value.

The operations of the world economic system are certainly irrational from the perspective of human need. But they can be well comprehended from the perspective of the underlying dynamics of a market economy. The recent sharp decline of the US dollar and rise of the Japanese yen and German mark is a case in point. These changes are not the outcome of some mysterious, irrational market whim. They reveal how the law of value is forcing the paper values of different currencies into line with the real dynamism (or lack of it) in the national economies concerned.

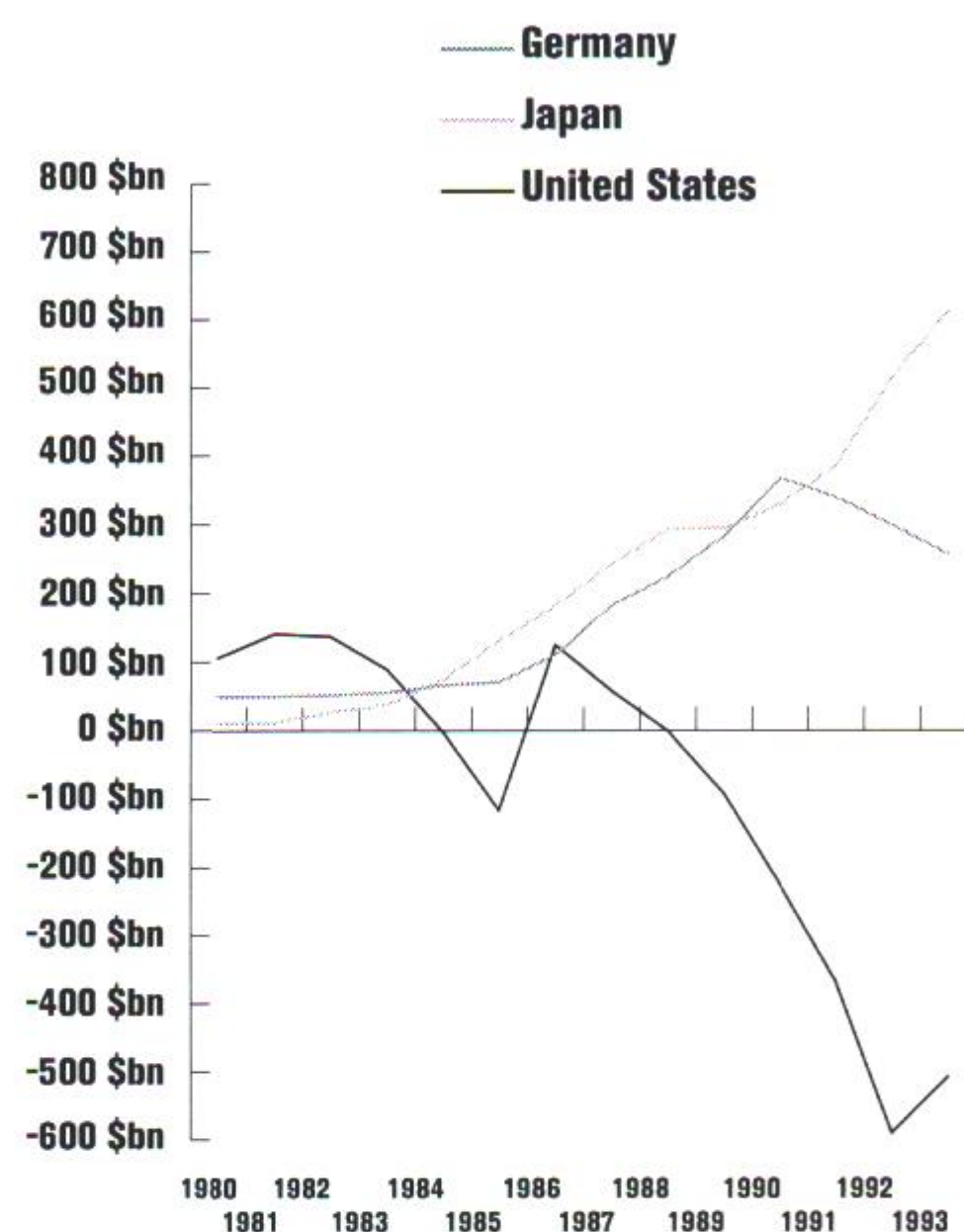
The long-term trend for the value of the dollar to decline relative to the yen and the mark has accelerated this year. In the first four months of 1995, the once-mighty US greenback had fallen more than 10 per cent against the mark and more than 20 per cent against the yen. Why? Ultimately, because the US economy has been less dynamic than those of Japan and Germany in recent times. For example, between 1960 and 1990, productivity, as measured by gross domestic product per person, grew by an annual average of 2.6 per cent in Germany, by a startling 5.3 per cent in Japan, but only 2.0 per cent in the USA.

The consistency of slower productivity growth in the USA has created several interacting problems, from inflation to a burgeoning trade deficit, which work together to push the dollar down on international markets. In less than 15 years, for example, the USA has gone from being the world's leading creditor nation to

The dynamic for capitalists investing and producing abroad, both in other advanced countries and in the rest of the world, also arises because they are unable to find profitable investment opportunities at home. Britain vies with the much bigger nations of the Group of Three (US, Japan and Germany) for its spot as one of the top four capital exporters not because British capitalists are peculiarly unpatriotic or cosmopolitan, but because investment opportunities at home are so much more limited.

SOURCE: IMF

Net asset position with the rest of the world



Japan replaces the USA as the world's largest creditor nation, with Germany not far behind

In sum, British capitalists earn half their profits abroad not because they have forgotten the home arena, but because the half they make at home is all they can make there, and it is not adequate to keep them going. The relative over-maturity and feebleness of the British economy accounts for its relative lead in the internationalisation league table.

As the 'globalisation' of Britain demonstrates, the rapid growth of international economic activity over recent decades is an indication and expression of capitalist stagnation. It represents decay not dynamism. Since the postwar boom ended in the advanced capitalist countries at the start of the 1970s, resources have shifted into non-domestic operations. World market activity is an attempt to compensate for the increased difficulty of making sufficient profits from activity in the national market.

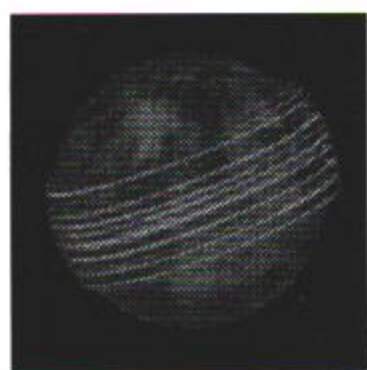
Capitalism is certainly out of control. But the process is neither incomprehensible nor inevitable. The global forces which are usually portrayed as an extra-human power boil down to the attempt of capitalist elites to make enough profit to survive at the expense of the rest of the world. So long as they remain in charge, the benefits of an international world will always be countered by the perpetuation of inequality, backwardness, unevenness and poverty. ●

Supranational illusions

Does the higher profile of international institutions like the UN herald a new age of 'global governance'? Not exactly, says Helen Simons



PHOTO: PARAMOUNT



'We come in peace': Captain Kirk lays down the law at the United Federation of Planets

What the world needs now, according to some influential commentators, is 'global governance'. New supranational bodies are required, the argument goes, because there are now new dangers facing the global community. National governments were deemed appropriate when the main threats facing society were threats to national security. Today, however, the risks we face are increasingly seen as global, beyond the reach of national governments alone.

In a world where peoples and the planet are said to be at risk from international hazards such as environmental degradation, human rights abuses and population explosions, many are looking to international institutions to play a larger role in running the world. Unhindered by national interests, they believe that such bodies can orchestrate a global response to the new global dangers, as one prestigious report explains:

'The breakdown of the bipolar Cold War system means that responses to security crises...have to come from a wider group of nations and organisations than before. The United Nations, particularly the Security Council has the principal responsibility.' (*Our Global Neighbourhood: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance*, 1995)

The United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other institutions are expected to step into this new 'global governance' role. This, argue supporters of global governance, should be straightforward enough, since such organisations already 'constitute a web-like global network through which goal-setting and allocative decisions can flow' (M Waters, *Globalisation*, 1995, p111).

International institutions like the UN, the World Bank and the IAEA have certainly acquired a new status in the post-Cold War world. Not so long ago, it seemed to some that these institutions of the postwar order were more likely to expire. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank seemed to be all but finished in the early seventies, after the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement on the management of the international monetary system. Even the UN appeared increasingly obsolete during the seventies and early eighties, when it was often paralysed by internal strife and the USA withheld part of its financial contributions.

Yet today the IMF and the World Bank are at the centre of international finance and politics, often overruling

sovereign governments to make decisions about how national economies should be run. And the United Nations has never been so busy. UN world summits on issues as diverse as the environment and women's rights have become oversubscribed flamboyant gatherings. At the end of 1994 the UN was actively involved in a record 17 peacekeeping missions around the world, with an estimated 90 000 armed personnel under its flag. In the name of the 'international community', the UN and its affiliated agencies now intervene far more frequently in the internal affairs of member states, whether by sending in IAEA inspectors to search for nuclear weapons or setting up war crimes commissions.

The world order has clearly changed. But it would be wrong to see the new status of the UN and other international institutions as a move towards 'global governance'. To do so is to misinterpret the true character of international organisations.

Bodies like the World Bank or the United Nations may seem devoid of national interests. In reality, however, international institutions are not autonomous from nation states. Most of them are inter-governmental bodies where national governments broker international deals. Far from standing above national interests, they provide international forums for national governments to flex their muscles in the world arena. Inevitably, such institutions come under the sway of the most powerful nations in the world. These powers then use the international institutions to pursue their own foreign policy objectives.

Partisan independents

For all the lofty universal principles espoused in its charter, the UN is not a democratic body that represents the interests of 'We, the people of the United Nations'. The UN is run to represent the interests of the most powerful governments. This is reflected in the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—the USA, France, Britain, Russia and China—all of whom have the unilateral right to veto any decision made by the organisation. The same undemocratic principles are reflected in other international institutions. For example, at the World Bank and in the IMF voting rights are weighted in favour of those nations that make the largest financial contributions.

In fact far from being supra-state bodies that float above nations, most of the existing international institutions are best understood as extensions of the US State Department. They were established at the end of the Second World War, when US hegemony

was unrivalled. The operations of these bodies reflect the fact that they were set up by America, built with American money and designed with American interests firmly in mind.

The IMF and World Bank created by the Bretton Woods agreement oversaw the dollar's replacement of the British pound as the world's leading currency. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) swept aside the old trading arrangements, which had been highly preferential towards imperial Britain before the war, and established a new trading regime which gave US companies free access to global markets. Even a body as apparently innocuous as the World Health Organisation has done much to promote the US pharmaceuticals industry in international markets.

Nuclear monopoly

Even when the postwar world became more multipolar and US power more contested, the international institutions continued primarily to serve the interests of their American masters. The International Atomic Energy Agency is a case in point.

Since the end of the Second World War, Washington advisers have argued that the USA should do everything possible to prevent other nations acquiring nuclear weapons technology. In the name of nuclear non-proliferation, the IAEA has pursued a key US foreign policy objective while appearing to act in the interests of the international community and global peace. This may not look like old-fashioned power politics, where the strong nations push around the rest, but the end result is remarkably similar: the USA and the other four permanent members of the UN Security Council are left with a legal monopoly of nuclear weapons while the rest are threatened with destruction if they try to build them. Some may be fooled by the apparently supra-state character of bodies like the IAEA, but the US administration is under no such illusions. Why else would the US government make its own national army available to the IAEA to police the globe?

The new-found status of bodies like the UN, the IAEA or the World Bank does not signal the advent of a system of supranational 'global governance'. On the contrary, it reveals how comprehensively the few powerful national governments which run these institutions, led by the US administration, are now dominating the world.

Today the UN has a greater status in the world because US power is less contested by its old adversaries. During the Cold War, the USA's capacity to use the international institutions like the UN was ►



undermined. Either the Soviet Union would use its veto on the Security Council to frustrate US intentions, or newly independent third world nations would out-vote the USA in the General Assembly. These actions so frustrated US administrations, that many Americans saw the UN as

institutions have been used to promote an agenda that lends moral authority to Western nations. Bodies like the United Nations, the IAEA, the World Health Organisation and even the World Bank have assumed a new role as the moral guardians of the post-Cold War world. Everything that is undertaken by these international bodies today is done in the name of humanitarian and environmental concerns. Today's UN military missions are ostensibly launched for humanitarian reasons, such as the alleviation of hunger and suffering, rather than old-fashioned military calculations. Issues like human rights, women's rights, children's rights, population concern and environmental protection now take pride of place in the international policy agendas.

This new humanitarian policy agenda has proved to be a great success in recent years. The 1992 Rio Earth Summit on environmental protection had 1400 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) accredited to the official conference. Thousands more participated in the parallel Global Forum that accompanied the summit. Since then the UN has put on a spectacular rolling programme of international conferences which have attracted wider and wider participation. The World Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen this spring was only the most recent in a long line of these events. No fewer than 10 000 observers from 3000 NGOs joined with official delegates from more than 180 countries to make this event one of the largest of its kind.

Double standard

The most unlikely international institutions are adopting the same moralistic language and agenda. For example, the World Bank was never previously renowned for its concern about human suffering. Rather it has been known throughout the third world for tough Structural Adjustment Programmes that heaped hardship and degradation on impoverished peoples. Today, however, even the World Bank has made efforts to present itself as a moral guardian. Increasingly grants made to third world countries are conditional on the degree to which women are involved in projects or family planning is built into schemes. Even GATT, now the World Trade Organisation, uses issues like the abuse of human rights as a bargaining chip in trade negotiations.

The new humanitarian policies seem worthy. Even the UN's critics in NGO circles appear impressed. But look carefully and it becomes clear that there is a more sinister agenda at work.

The problem of environmental degradation is always discussed as

a problem of third world nations causing deforestation and desertification, or third world industries threatening the ozone layer. The population issue is always discussed as a problem of third world peoples breeding like rabbits. It also seems to be that only third world governments violate human rights and only third world soldiers commit war crimes.

Global missionaries

Taken together it is clear that a powerful message is being promoted. The new moral agenda may look like a just and democratic crusade but its real aim is to recast international divisions and inequality. In the post-Cold War world the international institutions have become the self-appointed moral guardians, policing the globe. In today's political climate that can mean only one thing. The West is moral while the third world is immoral and uncivilised. The language may have changed, but it seems that the international institutions can still be relied upon to promote a message that flatters the White House and serves American purposes.

In this context even the UN's apparent failures in Somalia and Bosnia have to be seen in a different light. If these operations are taken at face value, as attempts to help people and keep the peace, they can be considered major failures. If, however, these interventions are seen for what they really are—part of the campaign to assert the moral authority of the USA and the West—then both operations have been successful. Both interventions have been used to show the world that people in Somalia and Serbia are little short of barbarians, and that it is not the fault of the UN if they cannot control their violent urges.

The new moral crusade promoted by the international institutions lends moral authority and legitimacy to Western values at a time when the ruling elites of the West lack much legitimacy or purpose at home. Such an endorsement is welcome to them all. Which is why it seems likely that the international crusade will continue unchallenged for some time to come.

Supporters of 'global government' may see this as a positive step, reflecting the subordination of national interests to humanitarian values. In reality, however, we are still living in an old, unjust capitalist world which has been dressed up in new egalitarian clothes. The inequalities and divisions between North and South have been recast in a new language. All that has really changed is that today, instead of the missionaries, there are globalists and radical NGOs promoting the new elitist crusade. ●

The UN appears to speak with 'one voice' because the USA has little difficulty getting its own way

an increasingly irrelevant body in US strategic thinking.

In the post-Cold War world, however, these difficulties have all but disappeared. The Soviet Union has gone, and Russia, which sits in the Soviet seat on the Security Council, has little reason to frustrate American interests. Coupled with this, third world nationalism has become a far more compliant force in the post-Cold War world.

One world?

Today's tensions within the United Nations reflect the strains within the Western camp itself. Contemporary rows centre on whether the economic giants of Japan and Germany should be given a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. But these tensions do little to hinder the USA's use of the UN to dominate the nations of the third world on behalf of the great powers.

When the UN appears to speak with 'one voice' these days, it is not because the world has become a harmonious global community. It is because the USA has little difficulty getting its own way. This development explains the apparent renaissance of many international institutions in the 1990s. Such has been the success of this renaissance that the UN and other international bodies have begun to play a new role in US foreign policy thinking.

It may appear that the UN has been somewhat less than successful in the post-Cold War world. After the apparent triumph of the Gulf War, subsequent UN military interventions have been little short of military disasters. The tragedies of Somalia and Bosnia have become symbolic of UN indecisiveness and failure. But, while UN peacekeeping has fallen short of the triumphant military engagements many anticipated, it would be wrong to judge the success of the UN's new role in these terms.

The most significant development in world politics has been the way that the UN and other international

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Friday 28 July-Friday 4 August 1995

On the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the conference Hiroshima: The Week will discuss the threat of repression and war.

NO MORE HIROSHIMAS

The Campaign Against Militarism hosts the weekend Friday 28 to Sunday 30 July, dedicated to ensuring that there are no more Hiroshimas.

HIROSHIMA: THE WEEK

Living Marxism hosts a week of discussion on the issues of our time, with in-depth courses on domestic and international themes, from Monday 31 July to Friday 4 August.

Illustrations courtesy of the Maruki Gallery for the Hiroshima Panels

NO MORE HIROSHIMAS



A weekend of debate on repression and war

Friday 28-Sunday 30 July

In August 1995 it will be 50 years since the USA, with British support, dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing more than 200 000 people. The Campaign Against Militarism's No More Hiroshimas weekend marks the anniversary with debates, workshops, exhibitions and films about war.

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- Who's holding the nuclear suitcase?
- Western media images of Japan
- A critique of the Non-Proliferation Treaty
- Why was Hiroshima bombed?
- War at the movies
- 'Yellow Perils' then and now
- Low-intensity conflict
- The origins of the Pacific War
- Hiroshima to the Gulf: the effects of bombing



Specialist speakers include

- Professor Masao Miyoshi, author of *Off-Centre: Power and Culture Relations between Japan and the US*
- Frederik L Schodt, specialist on Japanese manga comics, author of *Inside the Robot Kingdom*
- Professor Frank Barnaby, author of *Role and Control of Weapons in the 1990s*
- Joan Hoey, director of the London International Research Exchange and author of *Images of Japan*



The radical learning experience

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For Hiroshima: The Week courses, read on ►

HIROSHIMA THE WEEK

Introduction to Marxism

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Everyone is looking for 'the big idea' but Marxism is the only theory that aims to change the world. This course is for people who want to know how Marxism works.

Historical materialism • Scientific socialism • Class struggle and revolution
• The role of ideology • The party and the working class

Recommended reading

K Marx and F Engels, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1991

H Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* (Vol II: The politics of social classes, Chs 1-11), Monthly Review Press, 1978.

F Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Fontana, 1969



Understanding Japan

Convenor: Daniel Nassim

Are the Japanese a race apart? This course looks at the formation of Japanese national identity, and explores the relationship between Western images of Japan and the Japanese perception of themselves.



Japan v the West • The Japanese: a race apart? • The cult of uniqueness
• Are the Japanese racist? • The Pacifist superpower

Recommended reading

I Buruma, *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, Jonathan Cape, 1991

I Ozawa, *Blueprint for a New Japan*, Kodansha, 1994

E Wilkinson, *Japan Versus the West*, Penguin, 1990

Capitalism at an impasse

Convenor: Phil Murphy

Does economic growth create more problems than benefits? This advanced economics course challenges the orthodoxies on global economic problems, environmental restraints and ageing populations.

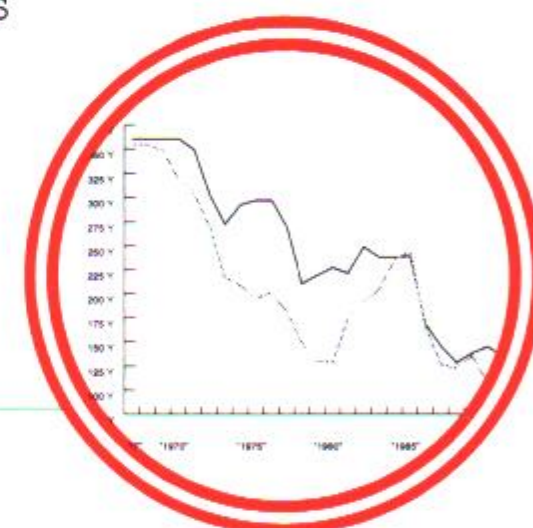
Problems of a global economy • The environmental constraint • Burdens of an ageing population
• What has happened to productive activity? • How capitalism tries to cope

Recommended reading

H Grossmann, *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalist System*, Pluto Press, 1992

P Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, Fontana, 1994.

R Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for Twenty-First Century Capitalism*, Simon & Schuster, 1991.



Genes and behaviour

Convenor: Helene Guldberg

Are we simply a product of our genes? With genetic theories back in vogue, this course aims to demystify the relationship between genetic make up and human behaviour.



Natural born killers? • Is variation all in the genes? • Sex and society • Biology as ideology
• Changing our genes, changing ourselves

Recommended reading

M Gribbin and J Gribbin, *Being Human: Putting People in an Evolutionary Perspective*, JM Dent, 1993

J Harris, *Wonderwoman and Superman*, Oxford University Press, 1992

LS Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*, Harvard University Press, 1978

Evening Courses Evening Courses Evening Courses Evening Courses Evening Courses Evening Courses Evening Courses

Modern militarism

Convenors: Kirsten Cale and James Wood

• War crimes: from Nuremberg to Bosnia • The rise of air power • Spies and superhighways • Narco-terrorists and nuclear suitcases • What is genocide?

Morning Courses

The question of fundamentalism

Convenors: Adam Eastman and Tracey Brown

Many see fundamentalism as the greatest challenge to Western values. Are mad mullahs and Christian evangelists a threat? This course separates the fiction from the facts.

The limits of tolerance • What makes Islam fundamentalist? • Fundamentalism on the home front
• The revenge of history • Cultural wars: reworking the myth

Recommended reading

G Keppel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, Polity Press, 1994

BB Lawrence, *Defenders of God: Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*, IB Taurus, 1990

MC Moen, *The Transformation of the Christian Right*, University of Alabama Press, 1992

The sociology of contemporary capitalism

Convenor: Frank Füredi

This advanced course will examine and question contemporary theories of capitalist society, in order to explore the social dynamics which give rise to them.

Market and society • Conceptualising change • Social structures • Culture and society • The new etiquette of capitalism

Recommended reading

G Mulgan, *Politics in an Anti-Political Age*, Polity, 1994

C Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, WW Norton & Co, 1995

A Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, Blackwell 1994

Myths of Confucian capitalism

Convenors: Sheila Phillips and Lynn Rawley

The Far East economic miracle is supposed to be the product of an Oriental work ethic, free trade and hands-off government. This course looks behind the myths of Confucian capitalism.

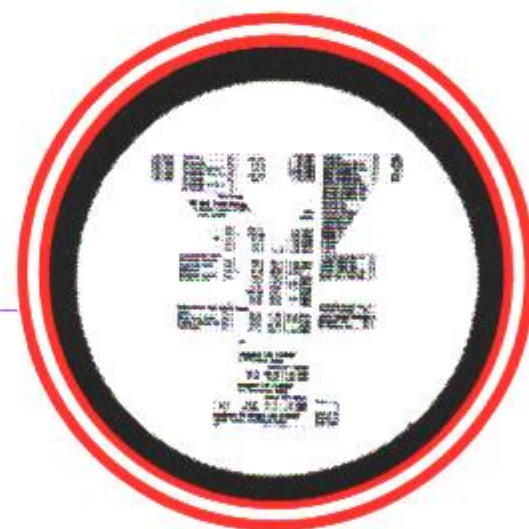
The miracle of the East • Hard work • Free trade • Minimal government • The Confucian model

Recommended reading

JC Abegglen, *Sea Change: Pacific Asia as the New World Industrial Centre*, The Free Press, 1994

B Emmott, *The Sun Also Sets*, Simon & Schuster, 1989.

C Hampden-Turner, and F Trompenaars, *The Seven Cultures of Capitalism*, Piatkus, 1993.



In search of belief

Convenor: Suke Wolton

This course is an investigation of anti-humanism in modern thought. While rejecting religious or natural theories, new postmodernist influenced ideas blame human consciousness for the problems of the age.

Modern morality • Alienation • The new absolutes • Anti-humanism • The secular religion

Recommended reading

K Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', in *Early Writings*, Penguin

F Engels and K Marx, *The End of Classical German Philosophy and Theses on Feuerbach*, Foreign Languages Press, 1975

F Jakubowski, *Ideology and Superstructure in Historical Materialism*, Pluto Press, 1990



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Reinventing humanism

Convenor: Alan Harding

• The measure of man • The great leap forward • The modern man • The sleep of reason • A Brave New World?

HIROSHIMA THE WEEK

The future of international relations

Convenor: Norman Lewis

Are nation states finished? What will be the balance of power in the twenty-first century? The course will focus on globalisation theories and their claim that sovereign statehood will become unviable.

Sovereignty and capitalism • Globalisation and the real world • Legitimacy crises—what's new?
• 'Non-governmental' states • The new balance of power

Recommended reading

F Halliday, *Rethinking International Relations*, Macmillan, 1994

P Dicken, *Global Shift: The Internationalisation of Economic Activity*, 1992

EJ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Cambridge University Press, 1994

The new authoritarianism

Convenor: Rob Knight

Are we all at risk? This course investigates why we live in an anxious age and how the state has responded to the demand for order.

What is the new authoritarianism? • The question of rights • The surveillance society
• A case study in new authoritarianism • An at-risk society?

Recommended reading

U Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage, 1992

S Fish, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech, and It's a Good Thing Too*, Oxford University Press, 1994

M Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage, 1979

The feminisation of society

Convenor: Ellie Lee

Family breakdown is in the news. Is there a new women's agenda? This advanced course considers changing attitudes towards women and the family.

Is the family changing? • State intervention and the family • Women and work • Gender roles
• What happened to 'Victorian Values'?

Recommended reading

M Anderson et al, *The Social and Political Economy of the Household*, OUP, 1994

J Davies et al, *The Family: Is It Just Another Lifestyle Choice?*, IEA, 1993.

L Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, Virago, 1990



Politics and the state

Convenor: James Heartfield

This course examines how the state is being reorganised to overcome disenchantment with politics and the absence of mass consent.

Narrowing the public sphere • Rights and power • Voluntarism and civil society
• The myth of social justice • Risk society and the custodial state

Recommended reading

Social Justice, Report of the Social Justice Commission, Vintage, 1994.

P Whiteley et al, *True Blues: The Politics of Conservative Party Membership*, OUP, 1994

M Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, HarperCollins, 1995.



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The media: who stole the news?

Convenor: Joan Hoey

• Who stole the news? • The laptop bombardiers • Images of Japan • History as news • Who's afraid of TV?

Afternoon Courses

Youth and change

Convenor: Deborah Thompson

Today's youth are called the 'slacker generation'. Is Generation Y conformist? This course asks why the image of teenage apathy is seen as a problem, and assesses the claims of rave and protest movements to represent nineties youth.

Youth at the end of history • Youth and social decay • Education: engineering conformity
• Rave and beyond: anatomy of loss • Causes without rebels

Recommended reading

J Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*, Athlone Press, 1990

K Keniston, *Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth*, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968

S Redhead (ed), *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*, Avebury, 1993



The medicalisation of society

Convenor: Michael Fitzpatrick

The spectre of death haunts society. While effective medical care is rationed, medicine has become a major regulator of behaviour with everybody urged to modify their lifestyle to avoid disease.



Illness as metaphor • Prevention and cure • The cult of health promotion
• Non-alternative medicine • The marketing of healthcare

Recommended reading

M Lockwood, *Moral Dilemmas in Modern Medicine*, Oxford University Press, 1985

P Skrabanek, *The Death of Humane Medicine and the Rise of Coercive Healthism*, Social Affairs Unit, 1994

S Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor/Aids and Its Metaphors*, Penguin, 1991

The politics of limits

Convenor: John Gillott

Are there natural limits to human ambitions, or are we just victims of limited vision? This course will examine the politics of restraint through a critique of concerns about the environment, development, and the effects of globalisation.

An age of limits or abundance? • Environmental problems—real and imagined • Left, right, limited visions
• The 'sustainable development' fraud • Fighting the politics of limits

Recommended reading

T Benton, *Natural Relations*, Verso, 1993.

L Brown and H Kane, *Full House: Reassessing the Earth's Population Carrying Capacity*, Earthscan, 1995.

A Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, Polity Press, 1994.

The new ideology of imperialism

Convenor: Helen Simons

Relations between North and South are supposed to be governed by a new humanitarianism. But is the promotion of empowerment and democracy as imperialist as its precursor? This course will expose the moral premises of the New World Order.

Imperialism today • The international bodies • The NGO explosion • The gender issue • The moral crusade

Recommended reading

Our Global Neighbourhood, The Report of the Commission on Global Governance, Oxford University Press, 1995

F Fűredi, *The New Ideology of Imperialism*, Pluto Press, 1994

I Smillie and H Helmich, *Non-Governmental Organisations and Governments: Stakeholders for Development*, OECD (Paris) 1994.

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Empowering Africa

Convenor: Barry Crawford

• The return of pan-Africanism? • Challenging structural adjustment • Rwanda: a case study of NGOs • Feminisation of African politics • Media images of Africa

Tickets and information

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	School & FE students	Students & unwaged	Waged	Discount for 10 or more
To 30 May	£20	£35	£60	15%
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Students booking in groups of 10 or more get a week of thought-provoking discussion on international relations, cultural studies, sociology and much more at special discount prices. Until the end of May, school and FE students booking in groups will only have to pay £17 each. University students in groups will only have to pay £29.75 each. It's cheaper still if you persuade your school or college to pay!

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

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A free creche will provide a full programme of activities for children of different ages, but places are limited. Book early!

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For tickets or more information about the conference, phone Amanda Macintosh on (+44) 171 278 9908, write to her at Hiroshima: The Week, c/o No More Hiroshimas, BM NMH, London WC1N 3XX, fax (+44) 171 278 9844, or e-mail: hiro@camintl.org

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If you are applying for a group discount for 10 people or more, please also fill in the following:

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Contact name (lecturer/teacher/other) _____
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David Ervine has become something of a celebrity in recent months. As leader of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), it seems that no discussion on Unionism is complete without him. He has been involved in talks with John Major and been touted round as the alternative loyalist viewpoint by the media. Journalist Mary Braid called Ervine 'one of a new generation of loyalist politicians: he's charismatic, he's ambitious, and he's an ex-paramilitary' (*Independent*, 8 March 1995).

The PUP emerged out of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) 10 years ago, but has only come to prominence in the last year of the 'peace process'. Ervine is a former UVF member who served five years for possessing explosives. Were people interested in his party because of its paramilitary links? 'Initially, yes, people took an interest in us because we were seen as the confidants of those who have the weaponry', he told me, 'but it's moved on since that'.

Ervine argues that, unlike traditional Unionists, the PUP is 'trying to move away from tribalism' and 'sectarian politics'. 'Our constitution is solidly based on the constitution of the British Labour Party and our politics are not solely about the maintenance of the Union with Britain.' The PUP wants to forge alliances with working class Catholics as well as Protestants, and claims to put social politics ahead of defending the Union.

So why call themselves Unionists? 'Because we are Unionists, but we want to redefine Unionism. Unionism does not have to be Protestant and anti-Irish. We are saying you can be a citizen of the UK irrespective of your religion, that it is legitimate to be Irish and British just like it is to be Scottish and British or English and British.' Listening to Ervine it is hard to believe he is the spokesman for the political wing of the UVF. Less than a year ago being a Catholic in Northern Ireland was a good enough reason for the UVF to kill you.

Many have been taken aback by the PUP's flexibility. Ervine is open about his talks with Sinn Féin and, unlike traditional Unionist politicians, he is not overly dismissive of the London and Dublin governments' joint Framework Document. If anything he thinks it is a bit conservative: 'There is something like 11 tiers of government control in the Framework Document. I mean, I've heard of checks and balances but that's going a bit too far.' The rise of the revisionist PUP shows that traditional Unionism is collapsing.

Traditional Unionism has been declining since the outbreak of 'the troubles' over 25 years ago. The abolition of Stormont, the Unionist parliament, in 1972, had a devastating effect on the old Unionist ruling class. The signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement in 1985 was further evidence that the British government was prepared to ride roughshod over the Unionists in order to stabilise its rule. As a result, the Unionist alliance fragmented. Since then, the IRA ceasefire has finally robbed Unionism of its defining justification.

There is no longer an Irish nationalist threat to the Union. The IRA has effectively surrendered without any concessions on Britain's part. With the Union no longer under attack, Unionism has lost its relevance. Senior Unionist statesman



The Progressive Unionist Party, political voice of the Ulster Volunteer Force, has surprised many with its pragmatic approach to the 'peace process'. Brendan O'Neill talked to party leader David Ervine

Robert McCartney has noted the 'ongoing deterioration in the quality of ideas, energy and representation within Unionism to the extent that it is now reaching a stage of terminal stagnation with a dying and ageing membership' (*Belfast Newsletter*, 7 March 1995).

To a British audience, the regular TV appearances of Ian Paisley denouncing the peace process as a 'sell-out' might suggest that little has changed in the Unionist camp. But Paisley is a man out of his time. He formed his Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) at the height of the troubles, when the privileges afforded Protestants under British rule were threatened by an IRA offensive. Now that the IRA has laid down its arms, Paisley's fire-and-brimstone cry of 'No surrender!' is out of date. No surrender to whom? Sinn Féin councillor James McCarry once said that Paisley 'invents disaster so that he can oppose it'. Today, in the absence of an Irish nationalist challenge, Paisley is trying to reinvent the IRA. He is only succeeding in showing himself to be out of touch with reality.

This is where the new generation of loyalists like David Ervine come in. Paisley is 69 and the Ulster Unionist Party's James Molyneux is 74. At 41, Ervine's generation of rethinkers is to traditional Unionism what Gerry Adams

and Martin McGuinness are to traditional republicanism. They are prepared to set aside old loyalties and compromise everything for a seat at the negotiating table.

Traditional Unionism is stuck in the past, claiming that the 'peace process' and the Framework Document are a sell-out to Irish nationalism. Captive to his own siege mentality, Paisley sees every cosmetic concession made by the British government to the republican movement as a victory for the IRA. Ervine's party displays a clearer understanding of what is going on.

'The Union is safe', Ervine told me. 'This is obvious from the numerical basis of consent guaranteed in the Anglo-Irish agreement, the Downing Street declaration, and now in the joint Framework Document. I have no problem with the harmonisation of the island of Ireland as long as Northern Ireland is not taken out of harmony with the UK.'

The ideological confusion among traditional loyalists and the rise of a new pragmatic Unionism is an ironic result of the defeat of Irish republicanism. With the IRA ceasefire and the collapse of Irish nationalism, everything has changed in Anglo-Irish politics. Unionism, once so central to the British occupation, is one of the first casualties of the 'peace process'.

USA under foreign occupation

James Heartfield asks why many Americans support the right to take up arms against the government



The bomb blast at the government buildings in Oklahoma that killed 164 people invited an immediate and forthright response from the president: 'Make no mistake, this was an attack on the United States, our way of life, everything we believe in.' Bill Clinton warned that 'nobody can hide any place in the world from the terrible consequences'. The FBI immediately launched an investigation into links between Oklahoma and the Muslims accused of bombing the World Trade Center in February 1993.

Within days, however, the picture had changed dramatically. All the suspects arrested were not foreign agents, but patriotic, white Americans. As attention shifted from Islamic

militants to home-grown far-right groups, like the Michigan Militia, supported by prime suspect Timothy McVeigh, the president's attitude towards the bombing changed.

Breaking with tradition, Clinton chose not to address the nation about the bombing, but to address the nation's children. It is true that 19 children were killed in the blast, but it seemed to be a peculiar affectation nonetheless. After all more than 100 adults were killed too. Still the president pressed on, pleading with the studio audience of nose-picking and yawning children not to be frightened of all adults. A variety of ribbons are available to wear as mourning, and Clinton has chosen the white one, 'for the innocent children'.

Perhaps some sentimentality is understandable. But the striking thing about the president's response was the lack of a confident message for America's adults. In the past attacks on American servicemen abroad have been the occasion for a strident assertion of America's power and mission. After the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, the White House again adopted the self-righteousness of the injured party. But after Oklahoma, once the finger of suspicion was pointed at patriotic Americans, there was no reassertion of the sanctity of the American way of life, only affected innocence. Clinton's broadcast invited adult Americans to imagine that they too were children, innocent of blame for the events in

Oklahoma, and in need of a guiding hand from their president—politics *Oprah*-style.

Behind the president's reaction to the bombing is an understanding that there is little agreement about what America stands for these days, and that large parts of American society are beyond the reach of the policy-making elite. Concentrating on the children killed in the bomb blast is an attempt to find something that everyone can agree on. For, while few people would support the bombing, many Americans now share the hostility to big government that seems to have been behind it. The truth is that it is easier to win a consensus behind the idea that it is bad to kill children than that it is bad to bomb government buildings.

Reagan's militia

The main suspects in the bombing are supporters of America's far-right militia movement. These people support the right to bear arms in 'well-organised militias' enshrined in the Second Amendment to the American constitution. Militia literature is fervently anti-government, some even describing Washington as the 'Zionist Occupation Government'. Less openly anti-Semitic tracts, like Pat Robertson's book *New World Order*, warn that the federal government has been taken over by the United Nations, in a conspiracy against Americans. On the ground, the militias are preparing for an invasion force made up of Los Angeles gangs like the mythical 'Crips' and 'Bloods', as well as Chinese and Russian troops that will join them in occupying America.

The militias are in reality a minority of sad and lonely misfits who play war games in the forests. But unfortunately for the US administration, the hostility to government that they embody stretches far wider. Americans do not have to share the crazy conspiracy theories of the militias to share their hatred of federal government. Throughout the country more and more people are willing to believe that, even if the administration is not literally an occupation force, it behaves like a foreign power. As the police rounded up suspects post-Oklahoma, they were amazed to find the militiamen's neighbours more interested in criticising their 'heavy-handed' arrest tactics than condemning the bombing. In every US election the candidate that makes the most aggressive attack on government is the most likely victor.

Supporters of the militias point out that their right to bear arms is enshrined in the US constitution, and protest that the president's recent restrictions on firearms are an attack on their ancient liberties. It is true that America's constitution enshrines the

right of the citizen to take up arms against oppressive government. However, the current anti-government mood is of a more recent origin.

All of the revolutionary rhetoric of the far-right militias has an eerily familiar ring. Policies that today mark out the far-right militias as beyond the pale were only a few years ago part of the American mainstream. The opinions that seem outlandish today were core beliefs of the Cold War politics which, for half a century, the American authorities used against 'Soviet-inspired' subversion abroad and un-American activities at home.

Denouncing big government has been the stock-in-trade of America's mainstream Republican Party since the seventies, and the sentiment has often been echoed by spokesmen for Clinton's Democratic Party. California's anti-tax revolt in the late seventies—Proposition 13—was the model for the right's campaign against 'big government'. Ever since, the right has been campaigning for and often winning government office on an anti-government platform.

In the 1980s, president Ronald Reagan was a staunch supporter of the National Rifle Association, the gun lobby that defends the right to bear arms, as well as a believer in the literal interpretation of Armageddon—never something that was seen to stand in the way of his control of America's nuclear firepower.

Pat Robertson's book *New World Order* might look extreme today, but Robertson is still a powerful figure in the Republican Party who, as leader of the moral majority, was a central figure in Ronald Reagan's power base. The denunciations of the United Nations as a foreign power on American soil were also commonplace among mainstream Congressmen in the eighties, when the UN was a whipping boy for American Cold Warriors. Only four years ago, bomb-suspect and Michigan Militia supporter Timothy McVeigh was a hero, a sergeant in the US forces that undertook Operation Desert Storm against Iraq—where children's lives were not considered sufficient reason to hold back American firepower.

Indeed the new leader of the US Congress, Newt Gingrich, while being a long way from the rednecks in the Michigan Militia, was elected on a platform of anti-big government, including opposition to gun control. His Democrat critics have accused Gingrich of flirting with the violent rhetoric of the 'shock-jocks', radio hosts who have given support to the militias.

Today, however, all of the policies that used to indicate patriotism and loyalty are seen as dangerous and extreme. The thing that has changed

is not the policies themselves, so much as the context in which they are put forward. The old Republican programme no longer fits the times. The Republican majority was organised around the clear project of the Cold War: free market at home and militarism abroad. Loyalty to the state was consolidated through hostility to foreigners and to supposedly foreign elements at home, like communists and America's blacks.

Five years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, American patriotism no longer has a clear focus. For Timothy McVeigh the Gulf War was nothing to be proud of. Instead of pressing on towards Baghdad, the US had stopped short, under pressure, it seemed to McVeigh, from the United Nations. Americans were willing to support the government when it meant America walking tall in the world. But increasingly it is government itself that looks like the enemy. And despite electing politicians who promise to cut taxes, taxes just keep on rising.

'I'm the bad guy?'

Gun control, as well as the high-profile assaults on far-right and religious sects like the Branch Davidians at Waco, only confirm the sense that loyal America is under siege. Like the Michael Douglas character in *Falling Down*, America's right-wing patriots are now being told that they are the bad guys, and they do not like it.

To supporters of the Clinton administration, it seems that whole tracts of America are under the sway of a burgeoning army of extremists. In fact these are people whose ideas have not changed much at all. Instead they have been left behind by the collapse of the Cold War politics of the Reagan and Bush administrations. The old Moral Majority contained all the anti-government rhetoric within a package of anti-communist patriotism. Now that patriotism has been undermined only the hostility to government remains.

Over the years Republican and Democrat administrations have dismantled the traditional mechanisms through which the American people were integrated into society and government. Various politicians from Reagan, through Ross Perot to Newt Gingrich have tried to ride the anti-political mood, only further reinforcing it. The decline in America's world standing has also helped break the ties between the electorate and the government.

No wonder then that the US president feels happiest talking to children. At least their hopes have not been dashed yet. If only, he wishes, all Americans were like this: innocent, undemanding—and willing to be cared for by Uncle Bill.

Is the public really at risk from psychiatric patients 'released into the community'? Juliet Connor thinks that the government's community care and compulsory supervision policies pose far more of a problem for the patients and their families

Surveillance in the community

'**S**he's out too early', said the *Sun*'s doctor. Referring to Julie Kelley, the kidnapper of baby Abbie Humphries who was released from psychiatric hospital after six weeks, Dr Rosemary Leonard helped stir up yet another panic about community care patients. 'It is now essential that she has very close supervision. Some psychiatric patients are tragedies waiting to happen.' (April 3 1995)

It seems that the most insignificant of events can provoke fears about a threat to public safety from community care patients today. And calls for more controls and legislation are never far behind. In January a report compiled by Sir Louis Blom-Cooper demanded legislation for the compulsory care of psychiatric patients who are 'released into the community'—that is, put out of hospitals. Although the Department of Health had issued proposals to introduce supervision registers for psychiatric patients in the community, the report criticised these for not going far enough. Blom-Cooper's recommendations were widely welcomed, the *Guardian* arguing that 'when community care is properly applied...the patient can be controlled and the public protected' (17 January 1995).

But does the public really need protection? Anybody who lives in a large city cannot have failed to notice that, since the introduction of care in the community policies, there are more disturbed people on the streets. Indeed a quick walk through London's Kings Cross district might be enough

to convince you that everybody has gone mad. But should we really feel more at risk as a consequence?

Last October the Royal College of Psychiatrists published figures showing that, over the previous three years, 34 people had killed someone within one year of their being in contact with psychiatric services. Those figures have been widely used by commentators to bolster the idea that society has become swamped with psychotic individuals who are likely to attack an innocent passer-by without provocation.

One in 20 000

Even before the Royal College of Psychiatrists produced its findings, the fear of psychiatric patients 'released into the community' was becoming deeply rooted. When Care in the Community patient Christopher Clunis killed Jonathan Zito on the platform of Finsbury Park tube station in north London in 1992, the panic started to gain momentum. The image of Clunis as a menacing black man, caught on closed circuit television in the station, reinforced the idea that you are just not safe anywhere these days.

However, a closer look at the statistics, and a degree of perspective, gives a different picture. There are 750 000 people receiving medical care under Care in the Community. The 34 patients represent less than 0.005 per cent of that total. But even those 34 people may not have been psychiatric patients in the community. The college only has detailed information on 22 of those cases,

and it does not specify whether they were still 'at large' at the time of the killing or, like the killer of psychiatric nurse Georgina Robinson, they had been readmitted to institutional care.

Even taking the figures at face value, 10 people died at the hands of community care patients in 1993. This is the same number of people who were murdered by being burned to death by people of an unspecified state of mind (*Social Trends*, 1995). Nobody is particularly afraid of being killed by an unknown arsonist. And, unlike the extensive controls deemed necessary for protection against mental health patients, nobody is advocating supervision registers for people carrying matches.

The risk to the public might be negligible, but there is still a consensus that the patients, nonetheless, need to be controlled. Following an inquiry into the care provided for Christopher Clunis, the Department of Health issued a directive that, by October 1994, each local health authority should have introduced a supervision register. The aim was to guard against a repeat of Jonathan Zito's death by closely monitoring the movements of community care patients.

Under the government directive, the social worker put in charge of somebody on the supervision register is authorised to keep him under surveillance. The social worker can force contact on him—regardless of whether he wants it or not—asking his friends and neighbours about his behaviour and monitoring his every move. One careworker described their work:



'I go around and try and find out what the person's routine is. If the person has a circle of friends I will contact them. If they don't want to see me that's fine, but I will try to keep an eye on the client to try to monitor him or her by seeking other people's opinions.' ('Taking responsibility for care', *Nursing Times*, 3 August 1994)

The assumption is that those people on the register need to be controlled. But is this really true? A closer look at the criteria for placing a patient on the register reveals that you do not need to be an out-of-control 'loony' in order to be put under surveillance.

The patients who qualify for placement on the register are on level three care, which is the most intensive. They are considered to be 'at significant or potentially significant risk of committing serious violence or suicide or of serious self-neglect'. But what does it mean to be at 'significant or potentially significant risk'? According to the Department of Health, there are four main behavioural states that patients on the register share:

- A history of serious violent and assaultative behaviour associated with mental illness;
- A history of severe self-neglect;
- Evidence from past or current behaviour that the individual will be at risk of suicide or self-injury while living in the community;
- A high level of drug and alcohol abuse.

These categories might sound well-defined enough. But in practice they are interpreted much more broadly. 'History', for example, has a decidedly flexible meaning. A patient's history can stretch over any number of years, going back as far as late childhood. This inevitably means that violent behaviour which occurred many years previously can guarantee that a person remains on level three care and is placed on the supervision register.

The definition of self-abuse is similarly ambiguous. This can mean anything from self-injury to finding it difficult to look after yourself. It can even mean refusing to engage with or accept community support. In reality, refusing the prolonged and frequent attention of your keyworker could be a sign that someone is on the road to recovery rather than in need of close supervision. According to the Department of Health, however, not wanting to be supervised by a social worker is more likely to be a sign of lunacy.

The term 'risk' is also open to the widest of interpretations. There is no real way of assessing how much a patient is 'at risk' of self-injury ►



or suicide. The only option is to plunge into the patient's history to look for patterns of behaviour which may repeat themselves. As one consultant forensic psychiatrist, Dr Nigel Eastman, says in the Clunis report, 'the only decent predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour'. In other words, anybody with a past blot on their records should be considered as a permanent risk to themselves and others.

Care in the Community was always meant to be a cost-cutting exercise

It is clear from the guidelines that all kinds of mental health patients with a huge variety of illnesses are being placed under surveillance. The result is that a patient suffering from a mild form of depression can be subjected to the same kind of treatment as the minority of patients whose behaviour is unpredictable. In this set-up, neither patient receives the care that they really need. In many cases, it is only making the situation worse. If patients are going to lash out, they are far more likely to do so when subjected to the kind of policing that would drive even a sane man into a state of paranoia.

Care as spying

The backdrop to all of this is the crisis afflicting mental healthcare. The policy of closing the Victorian asylums, first mooted as long ago as 1960, has not been met with any provision for the patients formerly inside them. Since the 1983 Mental Health Act, when the government accelerated the closure of such institutions, Mencap, with the help of government grants, has opened 250 small houses in the community. Many more patients are forced back into families unqualified to deal with the mentally ill, or into sub-standard housing, scraping by on sickness benefit. According to Rescare (the National Society for Mentally Handicapped People in Residential Care), 'they are living lonely neglected lives in the community, often against the wishes of their families' (*Independent*, 4 April 1995).

An added strain is placed on community health services by GPs referring more people for psychiatric treatment who are not clinically ill, but are known as the 'worried well'. For their part, social workers are increasingly playing the role of policemen. To compensate for the lack

of resources to provide patient support services, they are encouraged to use close surveillance and intimidation. With the latest moves to introduce a supervision register, psychiatric services are placing more people under surveillance for fear of facing litigation in the unlikely event of a suicide or murder. What follows is a downward spiral of care where patients, because it is feared that they will lose control, are placed under the kind of supervision that can only exacerbate their problems.

Frying pan or fire

Criticising Care in the Community is nothing new. Everyone from mental health charities to the British Medical Association is only too quick to highlight the woeful lack of funding, the increased workload for psychiatric services, and even the dangerous implications of the supervision register for civil liberties. But they all agree on one thing. The idea of community care is considered a sound one—it's just that the government won't implement it properly. The Labour Party-backed Commission for Social Justice is particularly keen to emphasise the responsibility of families to provide community care. It even argues for breaks in people's careers so they can care for elderly and mentally ill relatives. (*Social Justice: Strategies for National Renewal*, 1994, pp297-98)

The reality is that the Tory policy of Care in the Community was never meant to be anything other than a cost-cutting exercise which places the responsibility for care back on to the family (and largely on to women), conveniently taking it out of the hands of the state. This year's annual Laing and Bulsson report on long-term care showed that between 1993 and 1994 the number of residential care beds fell for the first time. The government managed to cut costs because many of the patients released went straight back to their families. The failure of the critics to recognise this as a success for the government's policy makes them unable to argue for what patients really need. Caught between the unhappy choice of the compulsory supervision advocated by Blom-Cooper's report and 'old-fashioned' institutional care, many end up arguing for no alternative at all.

It is worth remembering that community care itself, more than anything else, is responsible for the very few violent incidents which occur 'in the community'. Under community care, families, ill-equipped to deal with mentally ill relations, are forced to take responsibility for care, sometimes with terrible consequences. A cursory look at those patients who have killed is

testimony to this. In July 1993, Dennis Archer, a patient being treated for severe depression, axed his wife to death and then killed himself. Rodney Rollins killed his father in November of the same year. And Andrew Robinson, the man who killed Georgina Robinson (no relation) after being taken in and out of community care, had a long history of violent and unpredictable behaviour at home. His parents constantly tried to impress upon the mental health services that his condition required institutional treatment, but their pleas went unheeded.

Behind the fashionable language of community support, the Care in the Community policies are placing impossible strain on hard-pressed families. Meanwhile, the patients are not getting any better. Those who need to lead as normal a life as possible are being hounded by social services and forced into the kind of contact they can best do without. Those who really do need close care and attention are being forced back into their families, who are expected to ensure that drugs are taken and therapy is given.

If all this is not enough to make life worse for the mentally ill, the rest of society seems to be suffering from paranoia as well. There is now a sense of panic that the community is no longer a safe place to let your kids play. The streets are not safe, public transport is positively hazardous. A recent survey showed that the public is more afraid of the mentally ill since the government's policy of closing psychiatric hospitals. Yet the frightening characteristics now associated with mental illness—aggression and violence—exist in very few patients. Most are withdrawn, paranoid and themselves very frightened.

Caged animal

Worse still are the new laws being cooked up in response to the panic. The distorted view of the mentally ill and the exaggerated fear of the danger such people could pose has led to calls for yet more surveillance and more regulations. On the back of recent discussions, for example, the Metropolitan Police, ostensibly out to understand the plight of the mentally ill, has organised bands of officers to deal with the homeless. In plain English, it's a campaign to clean up the streets.

It is no wonder that the odd patient flips every once in a while. Ben Silcock, the man who famously entered the lion's enclosure at London Zoo, seemed to speak for every community care patient when he tried to explain his actions. He felt that he could identify with a lion because he too felt like a caged animal whose every move was watched.

All right, Jacques?



Louis Ryan doubts that the French presidency has swung to the right

Jacques Chirac's electoral victory brings the French right back to the presidential palace after François Mitterrand's 14-year reign. But, despite the celebrations in the Champs Élysées, the 1995 election result is not a simple swing of the pendulum back from left to right; instead the whole campaign highlighted the increasing irrelevance of the traditional left-right divide.

When Mitterrand first came to power in 1981, thousands celebrated on the streets, and the country was gripped by anticipation, hopeful on the left, fearful on the right. In the event it took Mitterrand just 18 months to jettison his radical policies, which were followed by several years of economic austerity. Even so, the next presidential election in 1988 still produced a clear left-right contest. While at a policy level there was no longer a great deal to choose between Mitterrand and Chirac (then making his second run for president), the election was still dominated by the contest of socialists and Gaullists. Traditional party loyalties were reinforced by the international contest of left and right in a world playing out the final act of the Cold War.

In the 1995 campaign, the left and right existed only as vestiges of two exhausted traditions, having neither distinctive policies nor a global context that could lend them a *raison d'être*. In the first round of the elections, the three main candidates—Chirac and Edouard Balladur on the right and Lionel Jospin on the left—could only garner 60 per cent of the vote between them. By contrast the fringe candidates generally did well: the racist National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen gained over 15 per cent, his strongest showing so far, while even the Communist Party and Trotskyist candidates polled eight and five per cent respectively. Chirac's first-round score, at just over 20 per cent, was the lowest ever starting point for a successful presidential candidate. But even more

striking than the electoral fragmentation was the fact that nearly a third of the voters did not make up their minds until just before polling day.

Given the decline of traditional left and right loyalties, mainstream politicians have found it necessary to forge new images for themselves. Chirac's first round campaign was a striking illustration of this tendency. The man who in the eighties was France's hard man of the right now cast himself as a populist, even as the 'anti-bourgeois' candidate—at least for as long as the stuffy conservative Balladur was his main rival. Though the transformation lacked credibility, it did raise a laugh—the French equivalent of *Spitting Images* dubbed Chirac 'Chi' as in 'Che' Guevara. This Jacques Chirac fulminated against poverty and homelessness—obviously no relation to the Mayor of Paris, also named Jacques Chirac, who presided over a ruthless evictions policy in the 18 years he ran the capital city.

While 'Chi' was adopting traditional left-wing rhetoric about unemployment, social justice, state schooling, equality of opportunities and so on, the 'left-wing' candidate Lionel Jospin was carefully avoiding the word socialism. In fact it was difficult to see what Jospin did stand for since his image was made up of so many negatives—he was not clearly associated with Mitterrand; he was not corrupt (remarkable in itself for a Socialist politician); when elected as Socialist Party candidate he was not even a professional politician, having lost his seat in the previous parliamentary elections.

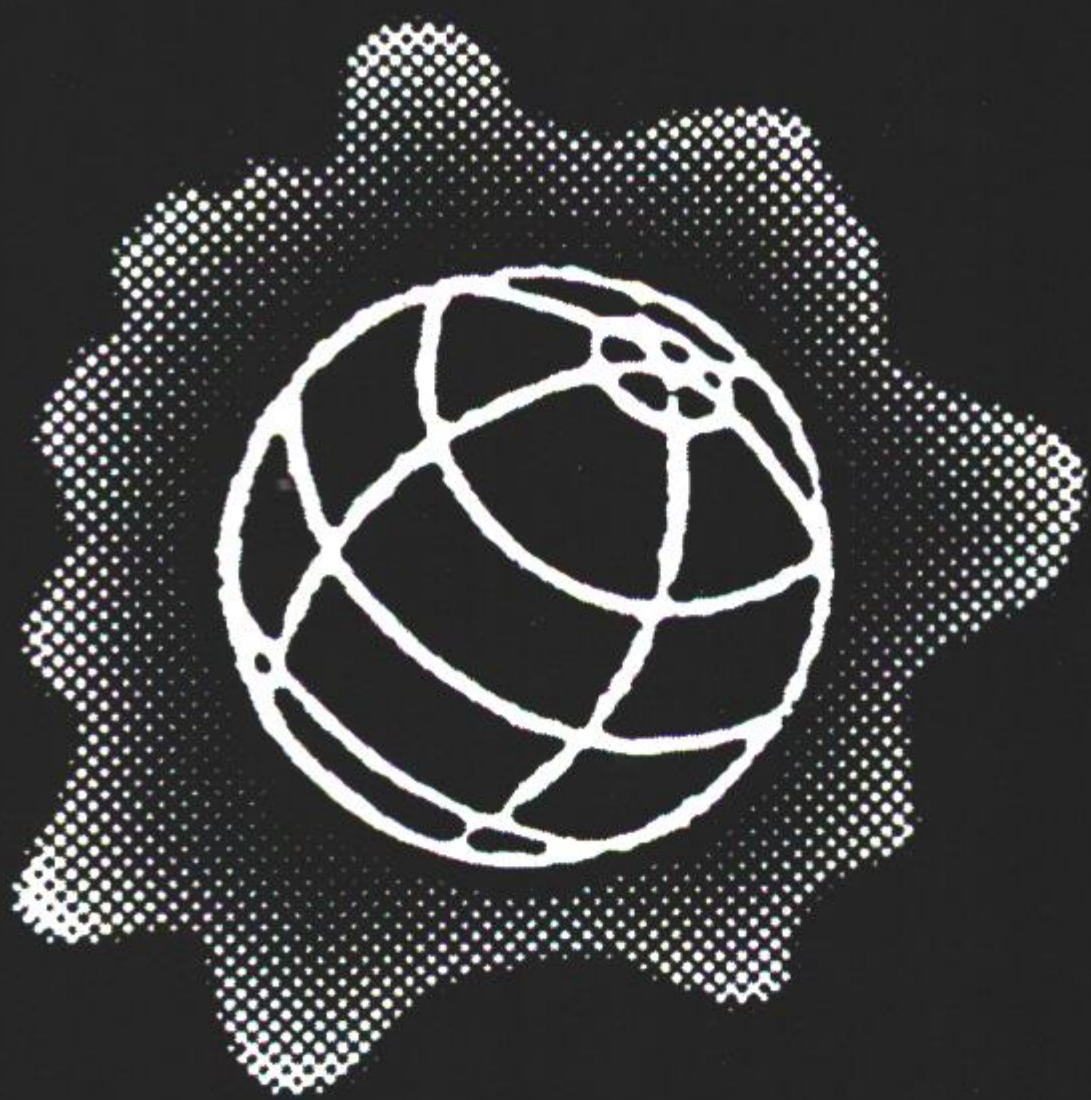
Chirac, by contrast, could not pretend to be anything but a politician—after all he was leader of the Gaullist RPR party, twice prime minister, and presidential candidate on two previous occasions. Even so he sought to reinvent himself to catch the anti-politician mood among voters: as against the hardnosed right winger of the eighties, the electioneering Chirac of 1995 is a simple kind of guy, more at ease among the throngs of ordinary people than in the artificial

environment of a television studio. Even his image of perpetual loser was astutely turned round with the implicit message: 'But we have to keep on trying. Here I am trying for the presidency for the third time, so come on, give me a break.' It was almost as though a vote for Chirac was supposed to be an act of kindness instead of a statement of political allegiance.

Chirac's new personal approach met with some success at first, but it also left the feeling that his political identity was determined by the last person he had shaken hands with. Jospin, by contrast, played it safe going for a low-key image and a minimalistic programme. In fact modesty was Jospin's principle asset in a climate of lowered national aspirations. He told the French electorate that it would be wrong to give the right control over the prime ministership and the presidency too. Indeed Jospin's most popular policy proposal was to curtail the power of the presidency.

The issue of constitutional reform—whether the president's mandate should be reduced from seven to five years, or his powers scaled down as against those of parliament—has agitated the political class for a long time, while inspiring the utmost indifference in everyone else. But the issue tended to come into focus as the general sense of France's reduced international role relative to a stronger Germany became more tangible. After all, if it is no longer plausible for the president of the republic to embody a coherent sense of French unity and a vision of France's role in the world, why invest the presidency with quasi-monarchical powers and prestige? Jospin might not have understood the policy's appeal, but as the campaign progressed it blended with his personal image, suggesting a modest, citizen president if he were to get elected.

In the event Chirac scraped home unconvincingly. But the real contest of the election was a clash of pygmies, whose past programmes, whether of left or right, are long forgotten. ●



No Natural Born Killers

The argument that your genes can help make you violent is now accepted by many former critics of the idea. Helene Guldberg and Stuart Derbyshire are unmoved by the new consensus

Stephen Mobley, a murderer sitting on death row in the USA, is arguing for his sentence to be commuted to life imprisonment. He claims to be a 'natural-born killer', who is not fully responsible for his own actions. The case for the defence is that an inherited condition limits Mobley's ability to control outbursts of violence. So far the only evidence his lawyers have presented is a family tree of 'crooks, thieves, adulterers, rapists and murderers'. But now they want to go further. Mobley's lawyers claim that a study of several generations of one Dutch family has established a link between violent behaviours—such as 'aggressive outbursts, arson, attempted rape and exhibitionism'—and a rare genetic mutation which reduces the level of the neurotransmitters in the brain. The lawyers are now awaiting a ruling by Georgia's Supreme Court on their request that Mobley be tested for the same genetic defect.

Mobley's case was raised earlier this year at a London conference hosted by the Ciba foundation to study genetic influences on anti-social, aggressive, and criminal behaviour. That event helped provoke what the *Guardian* called a 'liberal backlash at "genes fallacy"' by leading American biologists. Britain's Steven Rose, co-author of the benchmark critique

Not in Our Genes (1984), also condemned what he calls 'the rise of neurogenetic determinism'. Liberal scientists believe genetic explanations of violence and crime represent an attempt to 'blame urban crisis on supposedly defective inner-city residents, especially young black men, rather than on the chronic mass unemployment structurally embedded' in Western societies (in the words of Michael Lyon of San Francisco General Hospital).

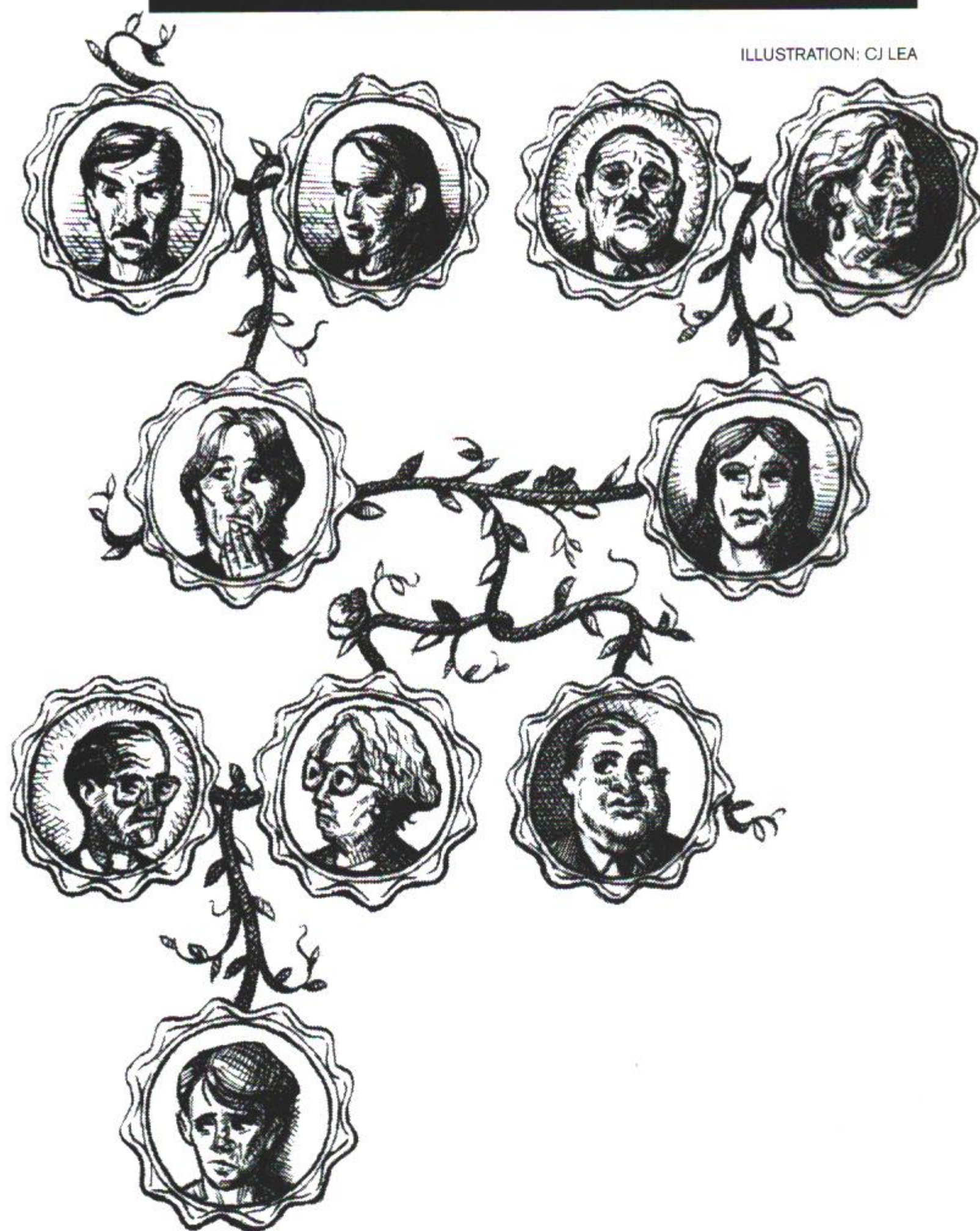
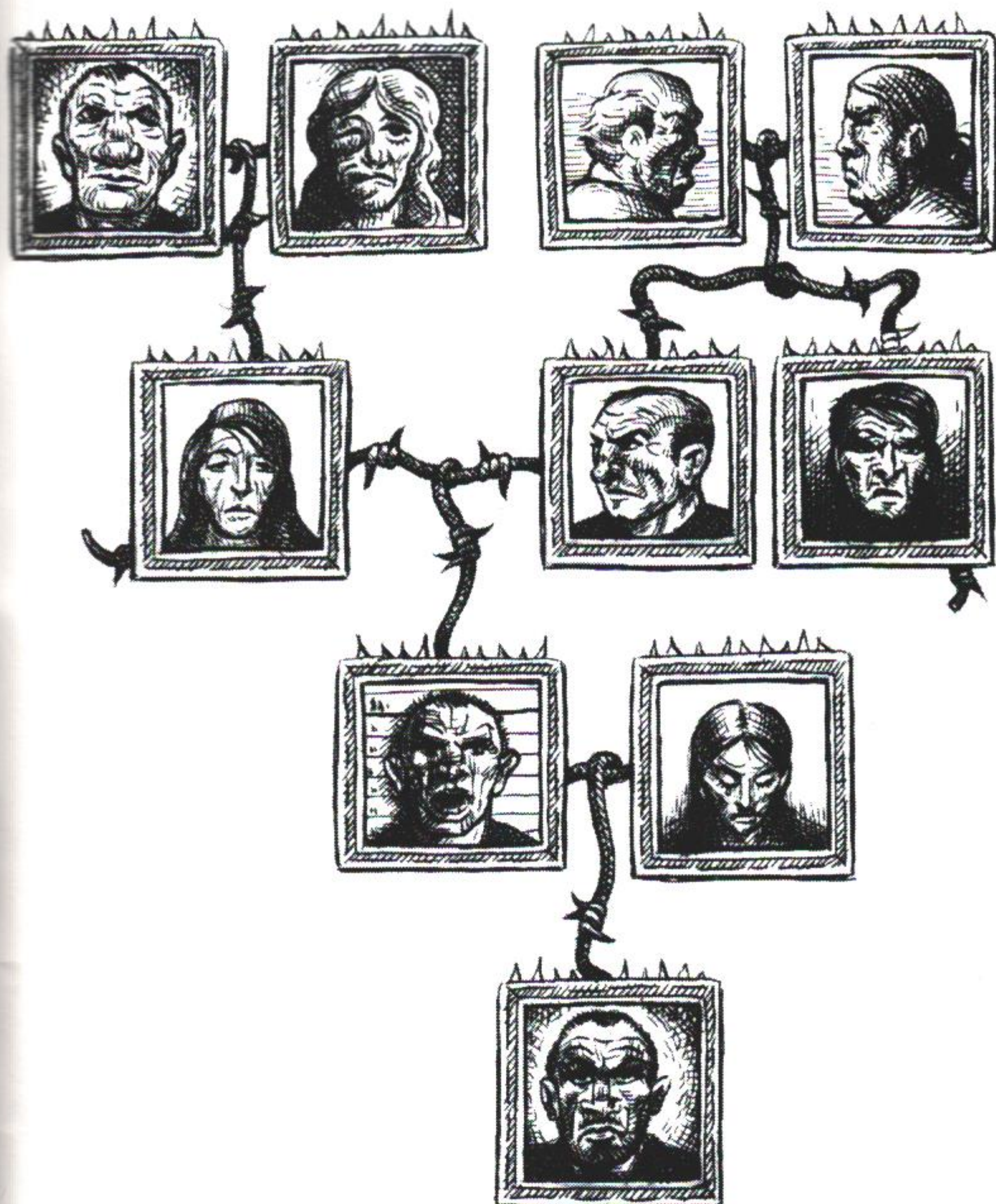
Out of all the arguments, two points emerge. First, support for the idea that genes play a role in determining criminal behaviour is growing. Statements such as 'science must tell us which individuals will and will not become criminals' (*Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*) are routine, and serious money is now being spent on research in Britain and America.

Second, the indignant 'liberal backlash' against the uses made of genetic theories cannot hide the fact that leading critics of the genes-influence-behaviour thesis increasingly tend to accept some of the underlying assumptions of those they condemn.

The argument presented at the Ciba Foundation conference was that a person's genes and the environment in which they live interact to produce behaviour. Conference chairman

A challenge to prejudice and mysticism on matters scientific, technological and environmental.

FUTURES



Professor Michael Rutter made clear that they were *not* claiming a rigidly deterministic relationship between genes and behaviour: 'rather they [genes] affect how people behave and how they respond to stress. Whether or not this results in crime will depend to a large extent on circumstances.'

In substance, the argument put forward by the 'liberal backlash' is little different to this. Liberals argue that it is not possible to 'make a separation' between genetic influences and environmental ones. They accept that genes play a role, but insist that it is not possible to tease out the specific contribution of genes. Steven Rose also concedes that genes play a role in shaping behaviour. He simply puts forward a plea for the new findings to be 'broken out of their reductionist mould and relocated within a more integrated understanding of the relationship between the biological, personal and social'. He calls his own model 'interactionist'. Like the 'liberal backlash' scientists, Rose makes concessions to the new sociobiologists, **only** to cover his tracks by saying the various influences on behaviour must be considered as a whole.

Variations of language and emphasis aside, there is a growing consensus, which *Scientific American* summed

up in March: 'few researchers believe genetics alone will yield reliable predictions of behaviour as complex and multifarious as harmful aggression. Still, the notion that biologists and sociologists might together be able to assemble a complicated model that can scientifically pick out those who pose the greatest threat of vicious attack seems to be gaining currency.'

'Gaining currency' it might be, but it is false. Genes have no causal role in shaping human behaviour. There is no good evidence linking differences in behaviour to different genes. All that has been demonstrated is that people with different genetic make-ups can have different behaviour patterns. But there is nothing to suggest that the genetic differences caused the specific behavioural differences. The crucial issue is *causation*.

If human behaviour worked in the same way as human health, which is partly influenced by genes, it would be reasonable to assume that research could match differences in behaviour to genetic differences between groups of people. The striking fact is that this has not been done in any generally accepted way, despite many years of research. This is clear from the paucity of hard evidence presented to the Ciba Foundation conference.

Adrian Raine, professor of psychology at the University of Southern California, has spent 17 years researching the biological basis of crime. His work featured prominently at the conference. He claims to have found what he calls 'biological correlates' for criminal activity. Raine has carried out a form of brain imaging, positron emission tomography (PET), on 44 people incarcerated in US jails, half of them murderers on death row. He found reduced activity in the prefrontal region of the cortex of these killers relative to the 22 matched non-violent subjects. One scan in particular was found to stand out from all of the rest—the brain image of the only serial killer in the group.

PET scanning is a relatively new technology, in which the parameters have not yet been properly assessed. It has not yet even been demonstrated that the same result can be obtained from the same person on a different day. The small sample size Raine used further weakens his case. And the fact that a PET scan of Raine's own cortex showed similar levels of activity in the same area of the brain as the serial killer has made Raine himself cautious about the meaning of the study!

But even if the results are correct, the point is that no association between ►

a genetic defect, a brain difference and criminal activity has been established. No specific genetic variety has been discovered, no mutant chemicals have been suggested to result from such variety, and no plausible hypothesis formulated about how behaviour might actually be influenced by the biological variety detected by the PET scans. Even Raine does not believe in a model which says 'genetic difference influences different brain activity which predisposes people to violent behaviour'. And yet his was one of only two empirical studies presented at the Ciba Foundation conference said to demonstrate a link between genes and behaviour.



Any attempt to link genetic difference in a causal way to behavioural difference is bound to fail

that a *causal* link between genetic variety and variety in behaviour does not exist. If there was such a causal relationship, then the army of researchers should by now have established good correlations between genes and behaviour. In other words, if there was an underlying biological component to violence, then genetic correlates should

have been established in much the same way as has been done for diseases. Yet nobody has achieved any such thing.

Even if future research was to find correlations between certain genetic markers and violence, this would not necessarily indicate causation. Care is needed when studying associations between different phenomena, especially complex ones linked to human activity. It is all too easy to see two phenomena side by side and assume that one must cause the other, when in fact they could both be caused by something else, or the association might just be a chance occurrence.

For example, there might well be an association between being overweight and watching more than average amounts of TV. What conclusions follow from this? That watching TV a lot leads to an idle lifestyle and obesity? Or that being overweight cuts out recreational activities which involve aerobic exercise, so raising the portion of time spent watching TV? Or that certain people are idle/watch TV to stay informed, and accordingly can't be bothered to keep in shape/indulge in the modern fad of healthy food and keep-fit? (delete according to your prejudice).

Any attempt to link genetic difference in a causal way to behavioural difference is bound to fail. Human behaviour does not have the same biological element as human health. A key difference is that human behaviour, at root, contains the element of motivation. This motivation is both common to all humans, and yet different to each and every individual. Individual aspirations are shaped by historical context, and by personal experience. It follows that genetic variety, or even genetic defect, cannot in any way *cause* something that is of a non-biological character. To claim otherwise would be like comparing a feature of nature to a work of art.

This is not to say that genetic differences, especially significant genetic defects, do not have an *impact* on human behaviour. They clearly can, as the Dutch family shows. But even in the case of the Dutch family, the specific genetic defect does not *cause* their specific behaviours. In a different set of circumstances, these individuals would behave in a different way. They might even manage to control their aggressive behaviour.

The males in the Dutch family who exhibit a high proportion of anti-social behaviours all carry a defective gene on their X chromosome. This is a gene encoding monoamine oxidase A, an enzyme central to controlling the levels of serotonin, noradrenaline and dopamine—chemicals which play a role in the transmission of information in the brain. Not surprisingly, the abnormally low neural activity of these individuals has an impact on their behaviour. However, this does not mean that the particular behavioural characteristics they exhibit are caused by their neurochemistry. For example, arson, a popular activity in the family, is something that can only be understood in the context of an individual's overwhelming feeling of powerlessness in society. Research suggests that people who get a kick out of setting things alight seem to be driven by the momentary feeling of power and control that the act may provide them with. Remove the feeling of powerlessness, and you would most likely remove the motivation to commit arson—even though the genetic defect would remain.

To return to our starting point: the debate about the Mobley case. Even if we studied the life-history and personality of Stephen Mobley, a middle class son of a successful businessman, with an above average IQ (quite unlike the Dutch family), we still might never fully understand what made him murder the 21-year old manager of a pizza parlour. However, we can be certain that no amount of information about his genetic make-up will give us any insight into what went on in Mobley's head.

The 'liberal backlash' is right when it points out that there is a strong element of victimising those at the bottom of society involved in genetic theories of violence and crime. However, the liberal critics and their 'interactionist' models make too many concessions to the proponents of genetic theories of behaviour to provide an adequate opposition. Indeed those concessions mean that in an important way they are now a part of the emerging and dangerous consensus.

Helene Guldberg is convenor of the course on Genes and Behaviour at Hiroshima: The Week (see page 26)

The other much-quoted study at the London conference was one reporting a link between a variety of anti-social behaviours and the level of neurotransmitters in the brains of a group of males within several generations of one Dutch family. At least in this case a specific genetic defect is known. However, Han Brunner, a researcher involved in the study, stresses that he does not believe his research can be generalised to explain violence in wider society. The research applies only to the family where the genetic disorder has been identified, and, as he says, is highly unlikely to be anything but an extreme rarity since the family are clearly ill and dysfunctional in their behaviour.

On closer inspection, then, the 'evidence' presented by the Ciba Foundation in support of a relationship between genes and violence turns out to be non-existent. Indeed, it is important to emphasise that scientists have yet to show an *association*, never mind a *causal link*, between genetic variety and specific violent behaviour.

A comparison of the state of the 'science' of genetics and behaviour with the science of genetics and health should shame those who claim genes influence violence and crime. Science now has a clear understanding of how genes and environment can interact to cause a range of medical conditions. One example is the effect of the gene which produces the molecule alpha-1 antitrypsin. People who have a mutated form of this gene do not produce correct forms of crucial proteins and, as a result, are found to be prone to lung disease. The extent to which they actually suffer from lung disease depends on 'environmental factors'—essentially, the conditions in which they live and work. Here we have a genuine interaction of different causal factors, and clear empirical evidence to demonstrate the role played by the different factors.

The absence of similar evidence in the case of violence and other human behaviours strongly suggests



Striking children

Predictable outrage greeted the publication of *Strike!*, a book for four to eight-year olds that tells the story of Molly, whose mum strikes for higher pay at the fish cannery. Molly goes on the picket line in solidarity (or is it a bring-your-daughter-to-work scheme?). Labour spokesman David Blunkett thinks this sort of thing should not be shoved down children's throats. 'Children should be children', he said, cryptically.

Strike! is on sale in left-wing bookshops and has received 'enthusiastic endorsement in the far-left press'. *Militant* urged readers to introduce as many children as possible to the book. Despite Mr Blunkett's fears, however, children *do* tend to be children, and not frequenters of dingy bookshops. The chances of brainwashing seem happily remote. Then again, you never know. The *Sunday Times* recently reported that the Save the Children Fund was funding Underground Power, whose conference told children how to organise school strikes. Underground Power 'claims to have members as young as six-years old and is suspected of links with the radical left'.

If this is true, it seems to have had a taming influence on the common room Dave Sparts. When the same newspaper reported on the NUT conference in April, it told how extremists plotted to depose Tony Brockman, Haringey secretary of the National Union of Teachers. 'People would be hissed if they voted against strikes. Such tactics can be very frightening', explained a 'senior NUT official'. So that's how they do it, then: hissing. I had no idea it was so easy; teachers must have got a lot softer since we were beaten to a pulp and hung out of the window for smoking. This would also explain the new 24-hour helpline for teachers under stress. Just as well kids can't read these days: if school-kids were to learn about hissing, the counselling services would be plunged into crisis.

I blame the parents. Five out of 29 parents sampled agreed with the statement 'I can't stand kids who keep running to the teacher'. Seven did not agree that 'A bully is really a coward'. These responses worry Mike Eslea, who is researching attitudes to help schools implement anti-bullying programmes. It seems some parents even urge their children to 'hit back' if they are attacked. These results apparently show that a significant proportion of 'macho' parents may be encouraging their children to be bullies, Mr Eslea warned the annual meeting of the British Psychological Society.

At last someone has come up with a set of no-nonsense guidelines for sex education in schools. Hillingdon Council's brief includes the following advice on the spiritual side of love: 'It is a recognition of the transcendence and it can be found in quiet as in noise, in self as in others, in order as in chaos, in community as in solitude. It is a sense of self as part of a greater whole. The ability to respond with others, to reflect, to interpret and evaluate experience and to cope with paradox and difference and difficulty are all important skills related to a developing spirituality.'

I am the first to admit that when dealing with emotive issues, a crass didactic approach can be counter-productive. So, in the interests of open discussion, I offer some recent developments, without prejudice:

- Low pay, redundancies, hard-nosed management...London Underground staff have had it rough. So I'm sure they will welcome LU's new morale initiative: a special 'Thank you' badge for all workers.

- At the press conference following the murder of nine-year old Daniel Hendley, a senior detective appealed to the 'paedophile community' for assistance.

- Social workers helping Bosnian refugees in Essex have had to take sick leave to get counselling themselves.

- Beefeaters at the Tower of London are to be taught 'dealing with people skills'. So what are those pikes for, then?

- Lola Rose Miller, an American palm reader, is being sued for £2m by an unsuccessful lottery entrant. In boring Britain lottery losers are calling the Samaritans on Saturday nights.

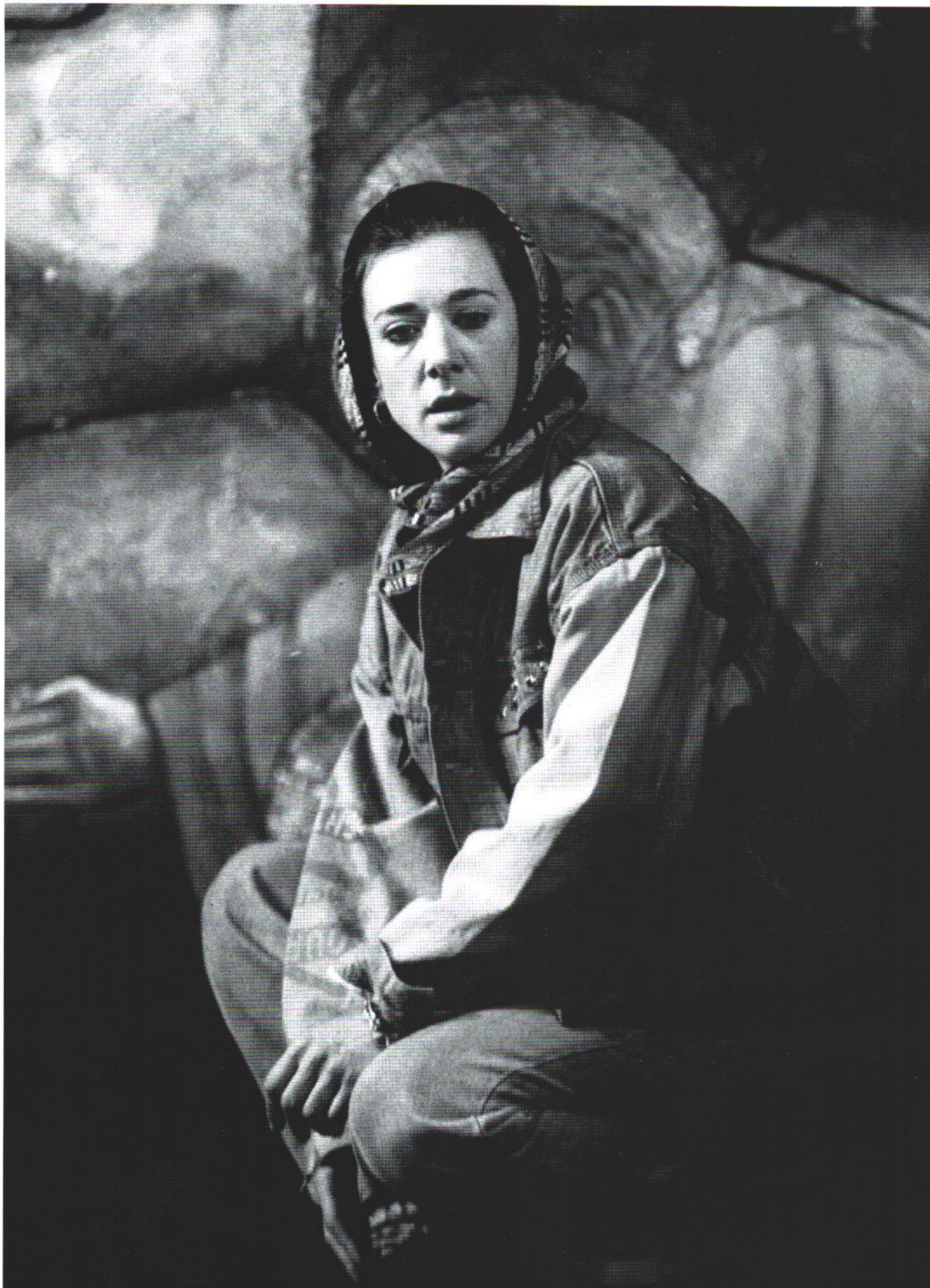
- A US TV station has set up a phonenumber for parents whose children are suffering 'OJ trauma'.

- Death row is now a smoke-free zone. Those awaiting their final unhealthy fry-up are no longer allowed a last cigarette, as American prisons now have stringent health regulations.

- Quantock Staghounds huntsmen are pressing Somerset County Council to cough up £4000 for stress counselling received during their successful legal battle to protect the hunt.

- Lucky the guide dog has been given to a fourth owner. Lucky led one previous owner in front of a bus, another over a cliff and the last one under a train. David Blunkett, I gather, is perfectly happy with his current dog.

And finally....Spare a thought for Mr Whippy driver Hugh Goodland, arrested in February for over-zealous entrepreneurial endeavours. Mr Goodland was nicked for offering 69s as well as the usual 99s, when he was reported for flogging porn videos from the back of his van. 'Have you any idea what it's like trying to make a living on an ice cream van at this time of year?', he asked magistrates, but they took an unsympathetic view. His prison sentence should be finished in time to capitalise on the summer weather with his more legal lines. One thing troubles me, though. When police raided his van, he told them: 'It's pornographic—the normal stuff—you'll enjoy watching that!' Whatever can he mean?



A dramatic loss of faith

David Edgar's latest play, *Pentecost*, opens in London in June. He explained to Richard Woolfenden how changing political realities have transformed his artistic vision

David Edgar is one of Britain's foremost left-wing playwrights. Through works like the anti-fascist *Destiny* (1976), his first major success, and *Maydays*, his 1983 exploration of Thatcherism, Edgar has earned a reputation for trenchant, highly political drama. Together with Howard Brenton and David Hare, he has helped to shape the nature of post-1968 radical British theatre.

Edgar's latest play, *Pentecost*, is set in a ruined Byzantine church somewhere in Eastern Europe. The building has been a torture chamber, a Muslim mosque, a Catholic church and an Orthodox church. A local museum curator, Gabriella Pecs, has discovered a medieval fresco behind a Stalinist mural. As the action of the play proceeds, the peeling of the layers continues until we see Giotto's famous 'Lamentation'—but not by Giotto! The implication is that the origins of Western art and culture do not necessarily lie in the West itself.

The fresco becomes the shadow of history in which all the characters are caught. Every character arrives on stage with their historical and ideological baggage and makes a claim to having the fresco's best interests at heart. Pecs wants to preserve it, believing that it will help launch her country into the new world. The British art historian wants to put it into a museum. Both the Orthodox and Catholic churches claim it for themselves. Then a disparate group of asylum-seekers, from all parts of the globe, invade the church and decide to use the fresco as a bargaining chip to buy their freedom. Edgar's cultural dialogue explodes.

Pentecost is a delight to watch, an intellectual challenge full of wit, intrigue, innuendo, debate and tension. Edgar's characters, like those in most of his plays, may seem too emblematic, too much like mouthpieces for ideas. Yet the debate is so engaging that the play's dramatic weaknesses rarely interfere with your enjoyment. At the same time, *Pentecost's* cultural, as opposed to political, themes represent a major departure from much of Edgar's previous work. What made him write it?

'When the great crisis of 1989 occurred I thought it was a very important subject to address, "Actually Existing Socialism" and its fate. I felt that socialists had to face up to the fall of the Berlin Wall—revolutionary socialists and social democrats alike. Socialists couldn't get out of addressing this change. They couldn't say, as a lot of Trotskyists do, "Oh great, the Soviet Union has collapsed, wonderful, now the decks are clear of this great deviation".'

Unfortunately, addressing the failures of 'Actually Existing Socialism' is what *Pentecost* singularly fails to do. At the heart of the play is a complex debate

about cultural ownership and language. But the play's complexity often masks its regurgitation of common Western prejudices about Eastern Europe—in particular the idea that Eastern Europe is a prisoner of its past. Edgar seems to believe that the problem with the old Stalinist regimes was that they underestimated people's attachment to older, more parochial loyalties of race, religion and nation.

Pentecost sets up a tension between universal values and particularist identities—between the idea that 'Western' art is not the possession of the West and the belief that the rag-taggle of characters can only relate to the fresco, and hence the world, through their own particular identities and histories. And the play resolves this tension in favour of the latter. Edgar seems to challenge the limitations of nationalism only to replace it by a communion of difference. As he puts it 'What *Pentecost* is trying very hard not to say is that we all share a common culture'. But is there anything in common that we share?

'I still believe in emancipation, by which I mean there are a number of circumstances—political, economic and cultural—which stop people living lives they are capable of living. In other words, people's potential is greater than their achievement. I believe that society should be about realising that potential.'

Yet *Pentecost* seems to question the possibility of that potential ever being realised. One of the play's main themes is that of the difficulties of establishing a common language. The contrast between the English art historian's cool command of the language, the American professor's brash and direct words, Gabriella Pecs' misuse of English idioms ('hunkily dory') and the many tongues of the refugees suggest a world where communication between people is increasingly frustrated. While Edgar's discussion about the nature of language is fascinating, it also appears to be a metaphor for his current pessimistic political outlook. Edgar seems to agree:

'*Pentecost* is attempting to say that both extremes—the modernist dream that there is a solution to everything and the postmodernist idea that there is a solution to nothing—are wrong. I think it is very difficult not to see that we are living in a backlash period, in a period where the gains of the modernist period are being unwrapped. There is no bit of the world where you can look to and say, "Here are progressive ideas".'

Perhaps that is because of what Edgar sees as 'progressive' and from whom he seeks political leadership. He talks about Francois Mitterrand as 'the last bastion of socialism in Europe' and bemoans the

failure of Bill Clinton to introduce radical policies. Edgar seems to be as much a prisoner of his past as *Pentecost* seeks to make East Europeans prisoners of their history. He was a fellow traveller of the British Trotskyist movement in the late sixties and seventies, and has been a member of the Labour Party since 1981. Even now he retains a romantic attachment to Eastern European countries that he once saw as 'economically and culturally workers' states'. It is not hard to see why Edgar might be disillusioned. Edgar himself admits that the political changes of the past 20 years have disoriented his dramatic vision:

'In the seventies, myself, David Hare, Barry Kief, Howard Brenton, Howard Barker, Trevor Griffiths and other playwrights wrote a series of plays about the state of the postwar world. Those plays had a common model which was, very crudely, that Britain fought on the right side in the war and that moral capital was squandered afterwards with the failure to build a genuine socialist society by the postwar Labour government. Then, Britain had a party in the fifties and sixties with its post-imperial riches and in the seventies it went into freefall decline. The idea we held to was that at the end of the seventies collapse would occur and true socialism would emerge. As this didn't happen, it became quite confusing. By the end of the eighties I didn't quite know which direction I was going.'

Edgar insists that he was 'determined to carry on and not fall by the wayside in the way many of the generation before me—Osborne, Wesker, Bond, Arden—had done'. So he made a 'conscious decision to write about the failure and collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe', beginning with *The Shape of the Table* in 1990. Yet Edgar's move to explore cultural rather than political issues, most noticeably in *Pentecost*, seems to suggest that he too is flying the white flag that many former radicals have waved vigorously since 1989. He may not have 'fallen by the wayside', but he certainly seems to have given up on the possibility of political drama and embraced instead the cultural. This might explain why *Pentecost* has been fêted by reviewers as representing Edgar's entry into what the *Observer's* Michael Convey calls 'a new phase of post-ideological creativity'.

Ironically *Pentecost* is probably Edgar's best work to date, and is certainly superior to works such as *Destiny* or *Maydays*. But where the earlier works were infused with a sense of political possibilities, *Pentecost* is deeply pessimistic. It is a play that above all seems to symbolise Edgar's dramatic loss of faith. ●

Pentecost opens at the Young Vic in London on 3 June



PHOTOS: JOHN HAYNES

If you thought that recent Benetton adverts provoked a lot of fuss, imagine the outcry if the ad in the bottom right hand of this page appeared on the nation's billboards. The white child is holding a packet of soap towards the black child and saying: 'If only you too had washed with Dobbelman's Buttermilk Soap'.

This is in fact a real ad, for a Dutch soap company, which appeared in the early years of this century. It provides a salutary reminder of how deep-seated—and until recently how open—are racial themes in Western culture.

The Dobbelman's Soap ad is one of the displays in 'White on Black', an exhibition of images of Africa and blacks in Western popular culture. The exhibition is drawn from the ironically named 'Negrophilia' collection of prints, drawings, illustrated magazines, books, comics, posters, advertising material, decorative objects, toys—in fact every form of popular cultural artefact from

both sides of the Atlantic. Originally exhibited in Amsterdam in 1989, 'White on Black' now appears in Britain for the first time.

What makes 'White on Black' different from previous attempts to portray popular racism is the sheer scope of the exhaustive, detailed exhibition. It is also distinguished by the accompanying book, written by Dutch scholar Jan Nederveen Pieterse. Rather than simply catalogue the material in the collection, Pieterse has placed the images in the context of the changing face of racism in the West.

Pieterse shows how racist images have little to do with black people but reflect internal Western concerns. What underlies racism, Pieterse argues is not simply a denigration of black people, but what he calls a 'pathos of inequality', a defence of hierarchy: 'The concept of race grew up as an extension of thinking in terms of class and status,

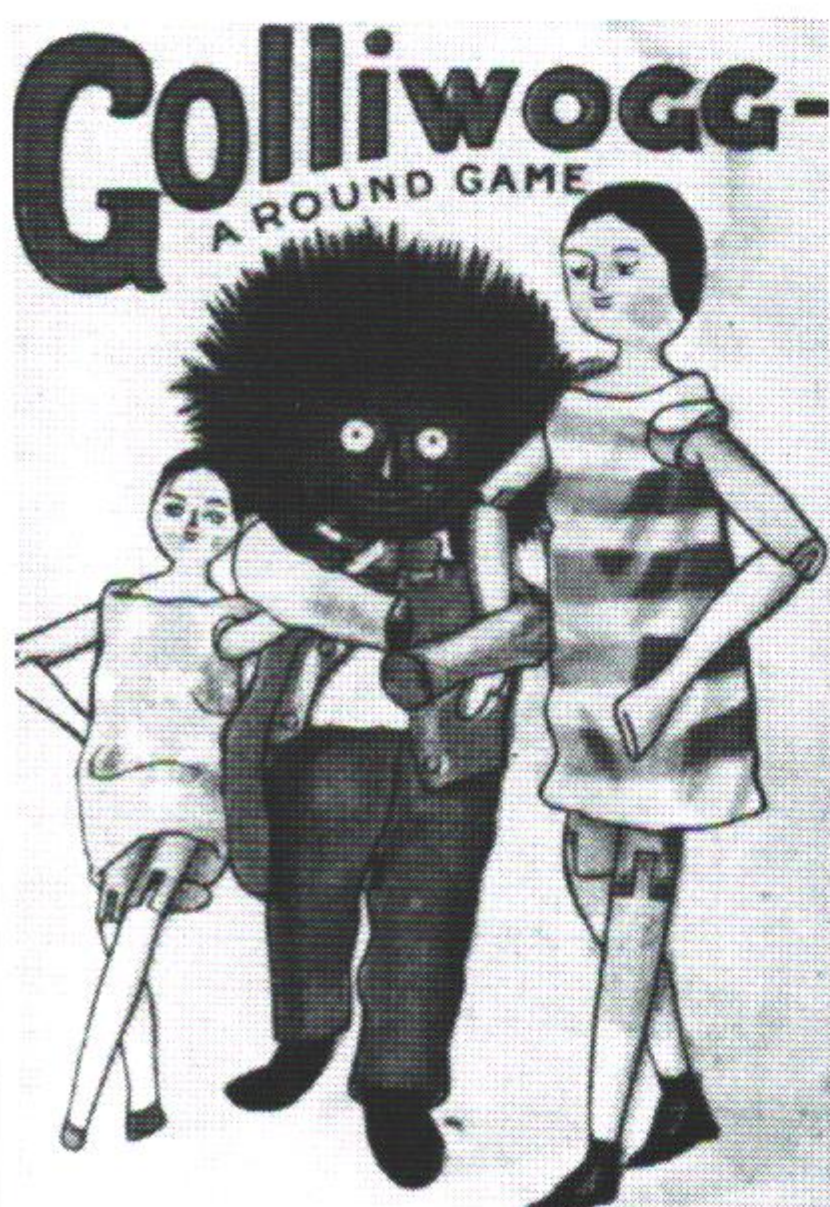
as an alternative and additional mode of hierarchical ordering applied, initially, outside the social boundaries of region and country.' What gives rise to racial thinking is the 'anxiety that comes with power and privilege': 'Existing differences and inequalities are magnified for fear they will diminish. Stereotypes are reconstructed and reasserted precisely when existing hierarchies are being challenged.' Viewed in this fashion, 'White on Black' can provide insights not simply into the racism of the past, but also the racism of the present.

Kenan Malik

'White on Black' is showing at Birmingham's Angle Gallery until 31 May; it will then be touring the country.

White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture by Jan Nederveen Pieterse is published by Yale University Press, £12.95 pbk.

White on black

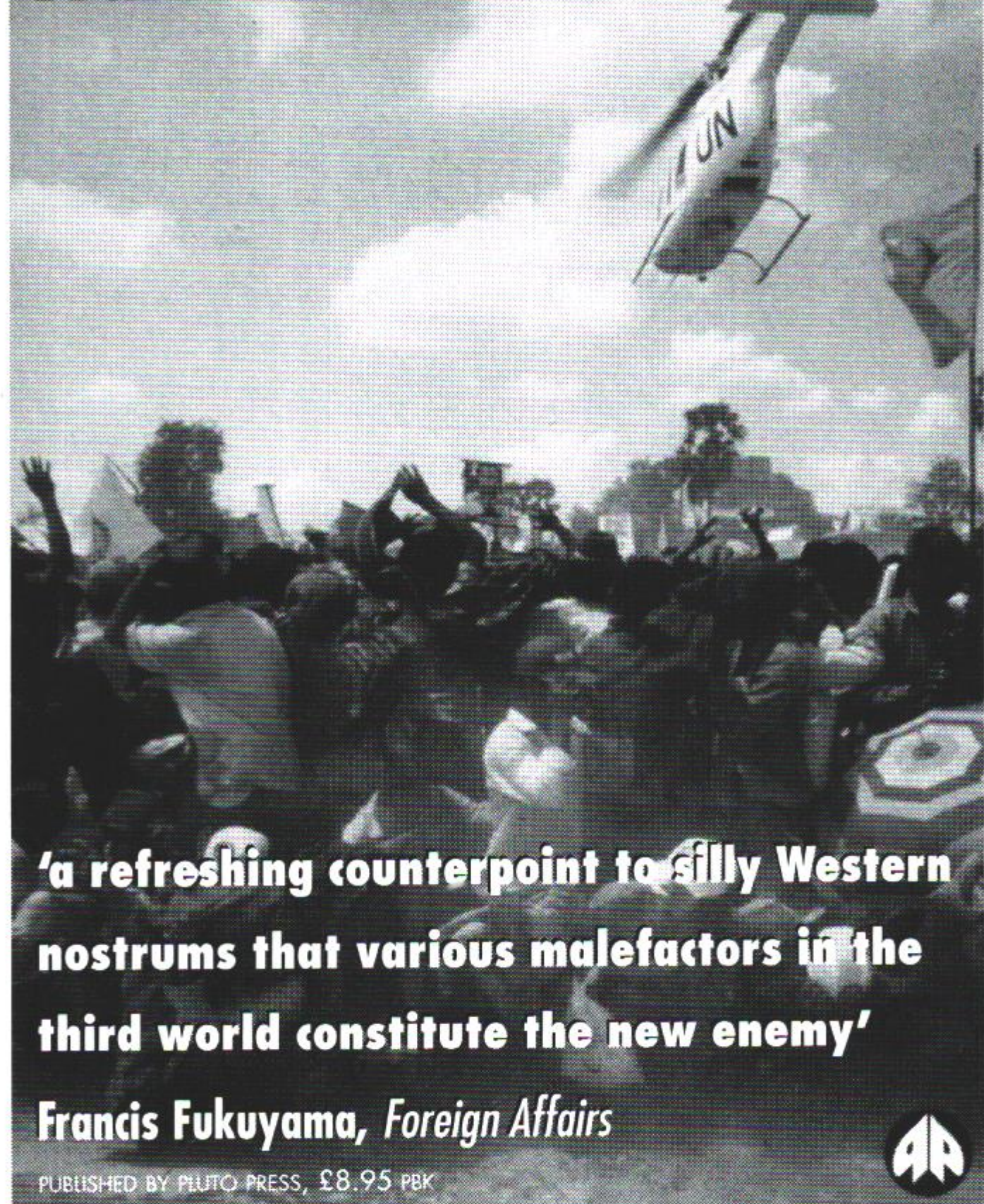


(top) In *Gone with the Wind* Vivien Leigh and Hattie McDaniel played out a stereotype that was years in the making



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Frank Furedi



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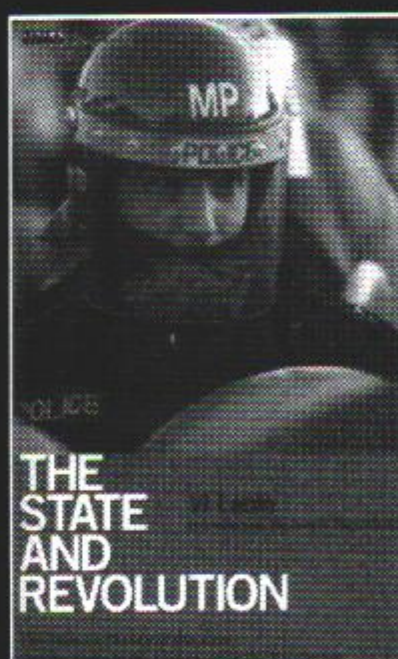
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VI Lenin

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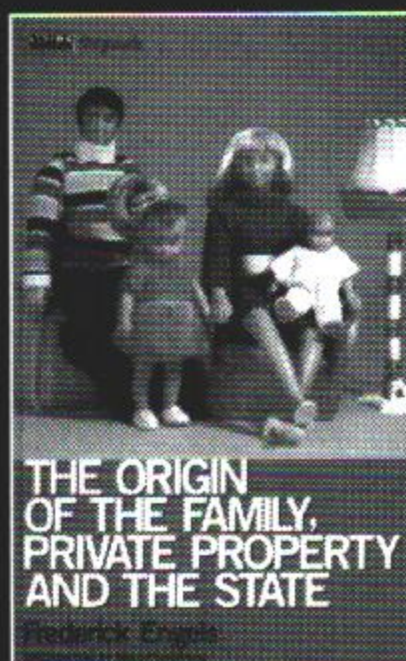


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PHOTO: PETER SOREL

Breaking out in clichés

Michael Fitzpatrick on *Outbreak*, a film that reflects the mood of the times

In one of the few memorable scenes in *Outbreak*, we suddenly see microscopic particles being exhaled from the lungs of an infected hospital worker into the confined atmosphere of a small town cinema whose unsuspecting audience briskly inhales the deadly contagion. In a parallel scene, we tumble through the ducts of a hospital air conditioning system, evoking both the internal human airways and the external networks on which modern society depends, and share in the recognition that the viral menace threatening America is airborne.

'Everyone is at risk' is a familiar theme of the Aids era. *Outbreak* features a virus that is much more infectious than HIV, with an incubation period of less than 24 hours, leading to a fulminating illness which results in death in 100 per cent of cases within two to three days. The *Outbreak* virus originates in Zaire and is carried to America by a monkey transported on a Korean ship. This lethal virus provides a convenient symbolic enemy for a society deprived of the 'evil empire' of the Soviet Union since the end of the Cold War, and the perfect vehicle for the anxieties of a society obsessed by disease and gloomily anticipating the end of a millennium.

Within hours of the epidemic exploding in the movie theatre of Cedar Creek, California, the small town which has become the apparently random target of the killer virus becomes a war zone. Troops quarantine the town, impose

Dustin Hoffman and crew, sombre in rubberwear

martial law, commandeer the high school for a field hospital and erect tents on the baseball diamond. While transports round up the infected, a convenient barn is used to incinerate corpses. For the town's '2618 souls', the situation is, according to an overheard radio broadcast, 'in a word, frightening'.

What is even more frightening is Operation Clean Sweep. The plan, drawn up by top level military and security officials and approved by the White House, is to bomb the town with fuel-air explosives in the hope of eradicating the virus and its carriers. 'We are at war' insists the sinister military supremo (Donald Sutherland), repudiating liberal criticisms of US intervention in Vietnam and its atom-bombing of Japan. Although they have developed an anti-serum, as a result of an earlier encounter with the virus, the authorities would rather not use this and hold on to the virus as a potential biological weapon. In this game plan, the decent citizens of Cedar Creek are expendable.

But, enter Dustin Hoffman in a space suit and it's apocalypse not quite yet. Hoffman is a military medic, awkward but brilliant, insubordinate but indefatigable in the pursuit of righteousness. As the film opens he breaks up with his wife (Rene Russo), though she immediately assumes the leading public health role at Cedar Creek. Will their heroic struggle against the virus bring them back together? Despite early hiccups,

Hoffman's rookie deputy becomes a regular buddy. His line manager is caught in a conflict of loyalties between Hoffman (shaggy hair, space suit) and Sutherland (crew cut, military uniform). Will virtue triumph?

Before too long people in Cedar Creek are dying like flies, all the doctors, soldiers and politicians are shouting hysterically at one another and the monkey is roaming the woods. As Operation Clean Sweep goes into effect, Hoffman gets airborne in a helicopter...

Ever since *The Invasion of the Body-snatchers* the invasion of the body has always acted as a metaphor for an external menace, classically, of course, the 'evil empire'. What is different about today's body-invasion films is that they relate not so much to the fear of a social threat as to the sense of personal insecurity and paranoia that is so prevalent in society, and so clearly seen in the panics which have followed the gas attacks on the Tokyo underground and the Oklahoma bombing.

Outbreak, however, is simply too bad a film to make you paranoid about anything. The menace of the killer virus is crushed by the sheer weight of Hollywood clichés. In the end the disease looks like severe cases of chicken-pox and the helicopter action sequences recall the *Whirlybirds*. The fact that this film has created quite a stir in America suggests that *fin de siècle* anxieties are eroding people's critical faculties as well as their morale. ●

MARXIST

REVIEW OF BOOKS

James Heartfield asks why today's sociologists are scared of society

The risk zone

Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics, Anthony Giddens, Polity Press, £11.95 pbk

Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity, Ulrich Beck, Sage, £37.50 hbk, £13.95 pbk

In *Living Marxism* over the past few years, Frank Furedi, Michael Fitzpatrick, John Gillott and others have exposed the culture of fear of the future. They have challenged the basis of contemporary moral panics about strange and unseen dangers, whether of infection from Aids, overpopulation or pollution.

More recently some others have begun to question the sheer weight of contemporary anxieties. In the *New York Times* Tim Weiner reflected on the recent popularity of virus-shockers like the film *Outbreak* and the novel *The Hot Zone*: 'in our heads, viruses become confused with foreigners, who become confused with terrorists. The diseased monkey becomes the illegal immigrant becomes the turbaned bomb-maker.' Weiner quotes psychologist Rona M Fields saying 'we combine things like the World Trade Center bombing with bacteria that we cannot see, and think that both are foreign forces on our continent. The same anxiety we have about disease in the personal arena produces xenophobia in the social arena' (26 March 1995).

Now, in the two books reviewed here, Cambridge sociologist Anthony Giddens (one of Britain's leading popularisers of the discipline), and German industrial sociologist Ulrich Beck are trying to theorise what Beck calls the 'risk society'. Both offer their own explanations of the climate of fear described by Weiner and analysed in *Living Marxism*. Much of what they have to say is compelling. In particular both Beck and Giddens reject the green idea behind many recent panics; the notion that we are at the mercy of natural forces like global warming or population growth.

Giddens especially polemicises against the anti-technology prejudices of green activists. Green political theory falls prey to what he calls the 'naturalistic fallacy' after the philosopher GE Moore: 'it depends for its proposals on calling for a reversion to "nature". Yet nature no longer exists!' (p11) Giddens is making a point that Marxists understand. There can be no return to nature because nature has been irrevocably changed by human intervention (though strictly speaking nature is never

abolished completely). In terms that Giddens takes from Ulrich Beck, nature has become socialised.

Giddens illustrates the point again and again. Everything that is assumed to be natural, he shows, is actually social. The onset of old age at 65 is, as he points out, not a natural fact, but a social convention, 'a creation, pure and simple, of the welfare state' (p170). Hunger, too, is not simply a natural thing, but determined by social conditions: 'today, in the Western societies, we are all on a diet, not in the sense that everyone tries to get slim, but in the sense that we have to choose how and what to eat' (p224). Even something that seems to be beyond all question, the natural foundation of life, your body, 'has never been purely a given', but has always been 'adorned and cosseted' and 'sometimes even mutilated' (pp223-24).

Giddens and Beck see green politics not as a rational programme, but as a romantic dream. 'The paradox', writes Giddens, 'is that nature has been embraced only at the point of its disappearance', adding that today we live in a 'remoulded nature devoid of nature'. He explains the romanticisation of nature by quoting Ulrich Beck:

"Nature is not nature, but rather a concept, norm, memory, utopia, counter-image. Today more than ever, now that it no longer exists, nature is being rediscovered, pampered.... 'Nature' is a kind of anchor by whose means the ship of civilisation, sailing over the open seas, conjures up, cultivates, its contrary: dry land, the harbour, the approaching reef." (p206)

But the desire for the certainty of a return to nature is misplaced, according to Giddens. 'As collective humanity, we may feel, we have seriously interfered with the regenerative properties of the natural environment, which should be allowed to recover their natural form.' But, he adds, 'as elsewhere...there are few natural solutions and a pronounced tendency to naturalise social problems', meaning, one presumes, that those problems that seem to be natural, more often than not, turn out to be social in their origins (p220). ▶

Beck and Giddens' theory of the socialisation of nature ought to provide them with a firm foundation from which to reject the climate of fear that surrounds such problems as global warming or disease. To see these things as social rather than natural in origin ought to mean that they are more susceptible to rational solutions and human intervention. After all, when Birmingham's city fathers worked out the relationship between disease and sanitation, it meant that they could deal with the problem by building sewers. In fact, Giddens even goes so far as to talk of 'manufactured risk', seemingly grasping the way that many panics are artificially stoked up by the media and the authorities. Sadly, no such insight is intended.

Beck and Giddens do not intend to debunk modern anxieties, but to endorse them

In fact Beck and Giddens' explication of the 'social' character of risk, indeed of the 'risk society', is not intended to debunk modern anxieties, but to endorse them. Indeed Giddens argues that anxiety can be a force for the good: 'creating anxiety in the minds of the powers that be' may be 'the condition of getting something done' (p222). Giddens goes further. Discussing Aids awareness education, he says that 'to make such programmes successful, it may be necessary to emphasise in the strongest possible terms that Aids will spread rapidly if the appropriate behavioural changes are not made' (p222). And of course that is just what has happened. The danger of Aids has been greatly exaggerated by health agencies, Aids charities and governments, so much so that the projected figure of Aids sufferers has consistently and exponentially outstripped the actual incidence of the disease.

Giddens is aware of the disparity, and adds defensively that 'a justified warning may also retrospectively become a scare simply because it works' (p223). (He means that people will change their behaviour because of fear of the disease, so reducing its incidence.) There used to be a joke about the man who, when asked why he was swinging a piece of string around his head on the London Underground, said he was keeping elephants off the track. 'But there are no elephants on the Underground', came the reply. 'See? It works!' Like the piece-of-string man, Giddens' position is unassailable.

The intent of Giddens' argument over Aids is to justify scaremongering. From his perspective, what seems like a panic is actually an astute adjustment of personal behaviour to anticipate future hazards. But any kind of policy can be justified if an indeterminate 'risk' is allowed. Giddens says of the Cold War that 'the theory of deterrence could have been proved wrong only in circumstances when no one would have been around to tell the tale anyway' (p220). But that is not true. Today it is more than apparent that US intelligence consistently exaggerated Soviet fire power, to justify its own military programme. The true danger did not lie in a possible nuclear holocaust, but the all too real US military presence in Vietnam, El Salvador and the Lebanon.

Giddens' preoccupation with risk is not a deviation from his argument, but its substance. His rejection of the green arguments about impending natural disasters is

astute. But unfortunately the interpretation of society that he puts in its place is even more problematic. Anxieties about natural dangers always carry pessimistic conclusions in their wake. Greens say that men should restrain their industry and consumption to adjust to nature; and that human agency itself is quixotic and arrogant in the face of nature's enormity. But Beck and Giddens' risk society is just as pessimistic as the green viewpoint, except that for the sociologists it is society itself that is out of control and therefore beyond our understanding. The only sensible course is to try to anticipate the dangers by taking precautions. Indeed 'caution' is Anthony Giddens' watchword.

Giddens' theorisation of manufactured risk has not come out of the blue. His previous works, *The Consequences of Modernity* and *The Transformation of Intimacy*, anticipate some of the arguments in *Beyond Left and Right*. In particular Giddens' argument is contained in the idea of what he calls 'reflexive modernity'.

Any discussion featuring the words modernity or modernisation is guaranteed to make anyone's head spin, especially if it introduces prefixes like *postmodernity* or *reflexive* modernisation. That is not because we are all thick, but because the idea of 'modernity' itself is hopelessly imprecise. After all which modernity are you talking about? The one with the bakelite fixtures and the telegraph wires, or the one with the formica and the main-frame? Modernity was always a useless category because it fixed not on social determinants, like the free market, but on technical features, like 'heavy industry'.

We do not necessarily agree on what modernity is, let alone what comes after

Being itself an imprecise category, qualifications like postmodernity are even less satisfactory, since we do not necessarily agree on what modernity is, let alone what comes after. So it is not that useful to be told by Ulrich Beck that the risk society is a 'new modernity', or by Giddens that we do not live in postmodernity, but 'reflexive modernisation' (see *The Consequences of Modernity*, p149). To understand what they are driving at you have to get beneath the terminology.

What Giddens means by 'reflexive modernity' is that the kind of society we have is changing because it is having to deal with its own consequences for the first time. The idea is that the advanced industrial societies of the nineteenth and early twentieth century were all going in one direction: higher productivity, greater scientific understanding and better standards of living. By contrast modernisation becomes reflexive when the productive and social processes (which are generally confused in the theory) begin to react back upon modernisation itself.

This is what Beck means when he talks about 'risk society'. The 'risks' proliferate the more society develops. In large part Beck draws upon his knowledge of industrial pollution to illustrate his point. Industrial processes create unforeseen circumstances, like poisonous waste, that undermine our capacity to anticipate the future. Giddens goes further. 'Our daily actions', he writes, 'are...thoroughly infected by manufactured

uncertainties' continuing to describe 'open and problematic futures which we have, as it were, to work on as we go along in the present'. 'We influence processes of change', he adds, 'but full control of them chronically eludes our grasp' (p79).

Here Giddens' sociology meets his political project. *Beyond Left and Right* is not just an analysis of society, but also a political, or perhaps an anti-political, tract. His argument is that because those 'processes' 'chronically elude our grasp' politics must abandon its goal of planning the future. Giddens' earlier works were intended to be an alternative to 'historical materialism', (ie, Marxism). *Beyond Left and Right* resumes that task: according to Giddens, the most deluded of all political programmes is Marx's, because it presumes the greatest degree of human control over society. 'The Promethean outlook which so influenced Marx should be more or less abandoned in the face of the insuperable complexity of society and nature.' (p79)

Instead of the 'laws of nature', Giddens talks about 'chronically elusive processes', but the consequences are the same: social change is impossible

Notwithstanding Giddens' talk of socialising nature, the basic structure of his argument is the same as those who insist that you cannot overturn the natural order of the free market. Instead of the 'laws of nature', Giddens talks—less elegantly—about 'chronically elusive processes', but the consequences are the same: at the level of society it is not possible to effect rational change.

This is a deeply conservative and apologetic aspect of Giddens' argument. The risk society cannot be overcome, only anticipated and prepared for. It is also a mystification. Risk, or manufactured uncertainty, is a characterisation that removes all culpability. But the risks faced by building workers or tube drivers are not in any way 'chronically elusive' in their origins, but due principally to the cost-cutting and over-long hours pursued by their employers.

Giddens writes as if society had only recently run out of control. But capitalist society, ordered around the allocation of labour through the market has always been a spontaneous social order. Far from being an inevitability, though, 'manufactured uncertainty' and the misery it brings in its wake is a compelling reason to replace the market with a rationally planned society. Instead, Beck and Giddens continue to conflate the real problems of unemployment and exploitation with the bogus fears of unfathomable dangers ahead. Like small children, we are all to be frightened into obedience with tales of the bogeyman.

However, there is another side to Giddens' argument that is less obviously pessimistic. For while he rules change at the level of society out of court, Giddens does endorse change at the level of the individual. Indeed Giddens protests that he is no traditional conservative. Rather he says individuals not only can, but must take control of their own lives to deal with manufactured uncertainty. This is a return to the ideas of *The Transformation of Intimacy*. There Giddens wrote about how people can reinvent themselves to accommodate new and unfamiliar circumstances.

In *Beyond Left and Right* the project begins to sound like one of Christian Science or dianetics, as Giddens invites us to foster the 'autotelic self'. Striking a Thatcherite note he explains, 'the autotelic self does not seek to neutralise risk or to suppose that "someone else will take care of the problem"', before descending into full guru-talk, 'risk is confronted as the active challenge which generates self-actualisation' (p192). Underneath all the jargon, Giddens is saying that you can make it, though he is careful to talk about psychic happiness, instead of material success. And, in case you thought that you had heard the last of the cliché that money doesn't bring you happiness, Giddens does not disappoint: 'happiness and its opposite bear no particular relation to either wealth or the possession of power.' (p181)

Of course there is nothing inherently wrong with taking responsibility for changing your circumstances. But Giddens' argument, like that of every apologist for capitalism for 200 years, restricts the arena of change to that of the individual and his or her immediate connections with wider society. It is change at the level of society itself that is beyond our grasp. Sad to say, though, all those different lifestyle projects are depressingly similar. There are, after all, only so many places on your body that you can pierce, and only so many times that you can say to yourself that every day and in every way I am getting better and better. Real change comes at the level of wider society.

Beck and Giddens' embrace of the feelgood language of California's New Age does not mean that they are prepared to live and let live. Much of the terminology of *Risk Society* and *Beyond Left and Right* sounds studiously non-judgemental, still less coercive. But stray beyond the acceptable boundaries of the risk society and you will soon find the limits of its tolerance. For Beck, there are citizens, and there are 'ugly citizens'—polluters and the like. For Giddens, anyone who holds to what they think is right instead of embracing the fact that they are at risk is a 'fundamentalist', a catch-all phrase that lumps together wife-beaters, Muslims and, no doubt, Marxists too.

Giddens' argument, like that of every apologist for capitalism for 200 years, restricts the arena of change to that of the individual

Intrinsic to the idea that we live in a risk society is the imperative that behaviour which gives rise to 'risks' must be curbed. That might mean the kind of sexual conservatism that Giddens anticipates will limit Aids, or it might mean that the violence that he supposes to be inherent in so-called fundamentalism must be squashed. It might look more cloying than outright repressive, but in the real world restraining 'fundamentalism' translates into Bill Clinton's demand for hundreds more federal agents, or backing for Algeria's military dictatorship against Islamic militants.

Instead of acting to accommodate the 'risk society', we ought to be exposing the scarifying that is used to justify increased social control. That might mean taking a risk, but it must be better to take a risk than to live one.

The De-moralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Institute of Economic Affairs, £12.50 pbk

'It was not until the present century that morality became so thoroughly relativised and subjectified.' After her monumental trilogy on poverty in nineteenth-century England, right-wing American critic Gertrude Himmelfarb has composed a polemical essay against the present-day substitution of values (plural, relative, provisional) for Victorian virtue (singular, absolute, non-negotiable). This is not just a historical excursion; it is a well-aimed attack on the compromised position of twentieth-century intellectuals and their late nineteenth-century mentor, Friedrich Nietzsche. 'The "death of God"', Himmelfarb writes, 'would mean the death of morality and the death of truth—above all, the truth of any morality. There would be no good and evil, no virtue and vice. There would be only "values".'

There is more at stake here than the campus pecking order. Himmelfarb regards trendy, liberal Neitzscheans as the midwives who delivered the 'underclass' into the world and constructed a nanny state to look after the monster which they had created. This is the reactionary haze which descends on the many moments of insight in her work.

The contrast between Victorian clarity and contemporary confusion is valid. But what accounts for it? For Himmelfarb, locating the death of virtue in changing economic and social conditions necessarily smacks of the relativism which she so despises. But she has nothing to put in its place, reducing herself to the level of tautology: nineteenth-century virtue gave rise to nineteenth-century virtue; competing, twentieth century values proliferate into competing, twentieth-century values. As to what has effected this change, she has no answer.

When Joe Rogaly reviewed *The De-moralization of Society* in the *Financial Times*, he was prompted to remark that 'the world needs virtues, but whose?'. He recognised that Himmelfarb has failed to extricate herself from the relativist spiral which she set out to extinguish. *Andrew Calcutt*

Vinnie Got Blown Away, Jeremy Cameron, Touchstone, £9.99 hbk

Geezer right name of Cameron. Probation officer drives a Skoda probably got beard like they do. Lives Walthamstow works round the estate reckons knows the manor. Writes story. All selling drugs shooting merchants nicking cars robbing shops fiddling Giros getting pregnant. Sawn-off shotguns sawing-off feet. Was Vinnie and two more got blown away. Fuckin' talk like this the lot do.

Vinnie Got Blown Away is yet another 'underclass' novel for the nineties, praised in the quality press for its depiction of London youth as dirt. It is a probation officer's view of the world, where everybody you meet is a lowlife. Jeremy Cameron, the blurb says, 'lives in Walthamstow, though he walks in Switzerland and plays

cricket in Norfolk'—so it's all right, he is not E17-positive like the infected locals he has to deal with. The book even includes the standard fantasy of a middle class social explorer in the urban jungle; the good teacher who turns illiterate urchins on to the wonders of French literature (and, in this case, oral sex).

In fiction these days it seems that working class people only appear as scum. Sometimes victims, sometimes villains, often both, but always scum. In Martin Amis' prized novels, the plot is hidden behind the clouds of steaming bile he spits at the great unwashed. And sympathetic authors are not much better. James Kelman's Booker-winning *How Late It Was, How Late* (Minerva, £6.99 pbk) is the tale of a Glaswegian jakey who wakes up drunk to find that his wallet, shoes and girlfriend have gone, is then blinded by a police beating, and spends the rest of the book staggering into brick walls and walls of state bureaucracy while declaring himself to be 'fuckt'—perhaps the ultimate image of an atomised, disenfranchised, wasted working class.

It's not all the authors' fault. In one way, their portrayal of ordinary people as powerless losers reflects what has happened in the real world. These days the working class simply does not count as a collective player in society, and novelists treat it accordingly. By way of contrast, I recently re-read Alan Sillitoe's novel of working class life in the 1950s, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Flamingo, £5.99 pbk). That too is a book about a young bloke who spends his time drinking, fighting and screwing around. But it is set at a time when the working class had a collective identity complete with permanent jobs, rising wages and clout. Where Kelman's anti-hero, Sammy, accepts that he is a loser who can only 'batter on' towards inevitable defeat at the hands of the police and the social security people, Sillitoe's character, Arthur, remains 'always a rebel' who believes himself to be 'as good as anybody else in the world' and wants to blow up the bosses' factory and the income tax office. They are both fictional men for their times.

But it is the fault of authors like Cameron as well. Their patronising and contemptuous images of the 'underclass' often say more about their own paranoid fears and insecurities than they do about the reality of life in our cities today. *Vinnie Got Blown Away* is a prime example of an inflated, petit-bourgeois panic about crime dressed up as reportage. It particularly got on my wick because I live round the corner from the Priory Court estate and the Walthamstow pubs where most of the book's blood-curdling action takes place.

Compared to the estates in Moss Side, Mile End and Hackney where I have lived, Priory Court is almost a peaceful, leafy suburb. True, I was recently woken by police helicopter spotlights and dog teams. But the fact that a uniformed army occupied the area in pursuit of a failed car thief suggests that the north-east London law did not have much else to do in our supposedly drug-and-crime-infested streets. There is one example of 'gangland' graffiti on the estate. It says, in fading spidery green paint, 'June is a grass'. But she never got blown away with her feet sawn off, like Vinnie done on page one.

Eddie Veale

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