

LIVING MARXISM

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baby did not make
me anti-abortion

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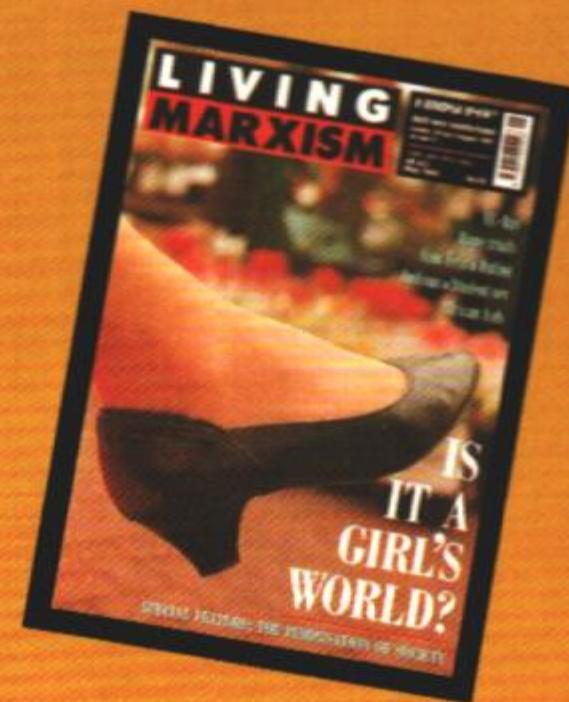
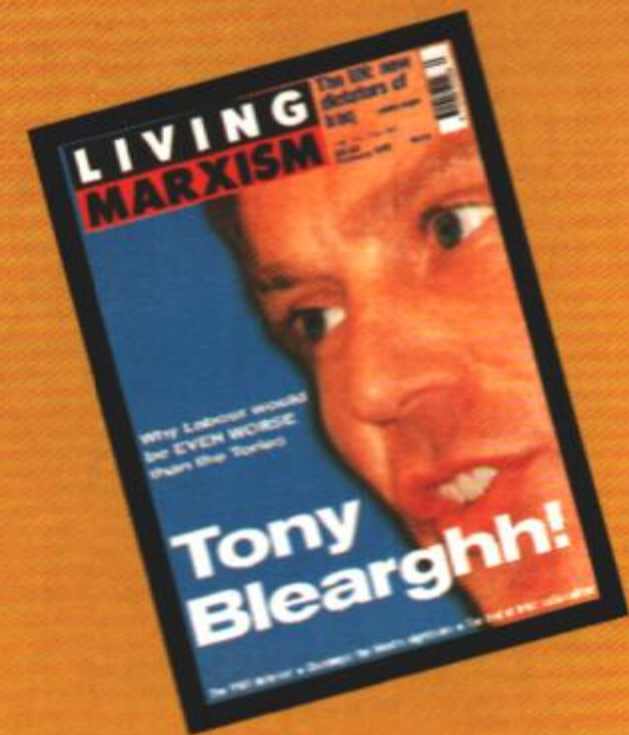
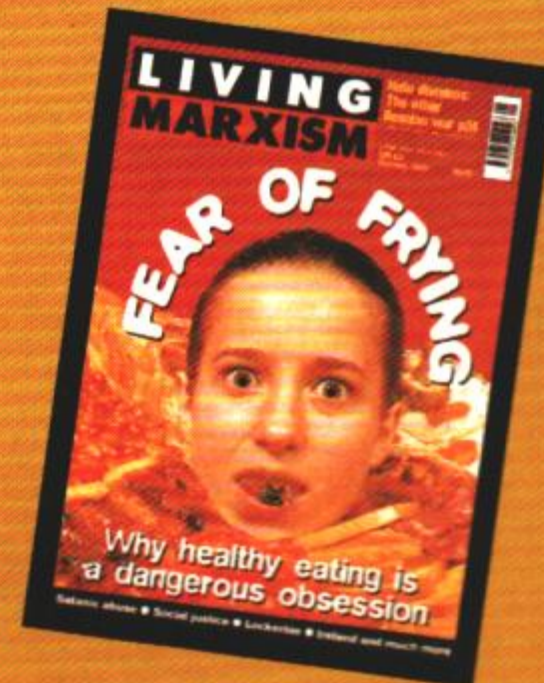
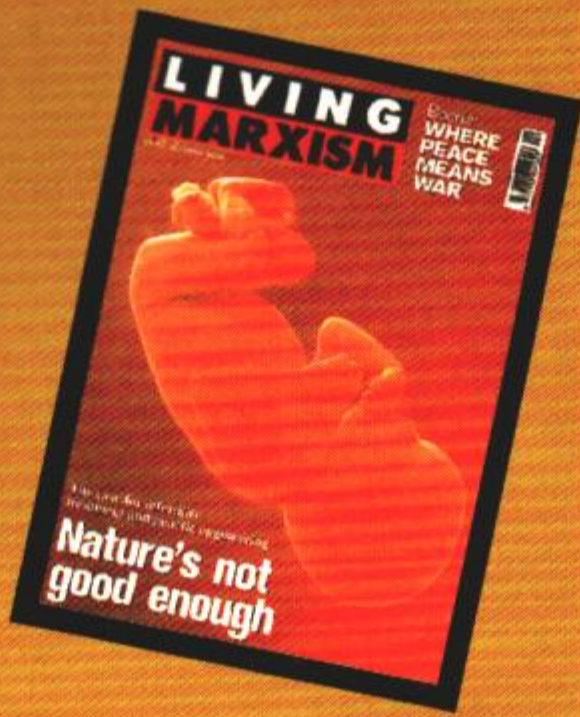
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COVER PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

Massacring the truth in Rwanda

centre pages



PHOTO: SEAMUS MURPHY

The Rwandan civil war ended almost 18 months ago, yet the country remains obsessed with what is known as 'the genocide'—an obsession shared by human rights and relief agencies, and a United Nations war crimes tribunal.

Just back from a visit to Rwanda and the refugee camps in neighbouring Zaire, Fiona Foster argues that the obsession with 'the genocide' has criminalised an entire community and obscured the real causes of the Rwandan tragedy.

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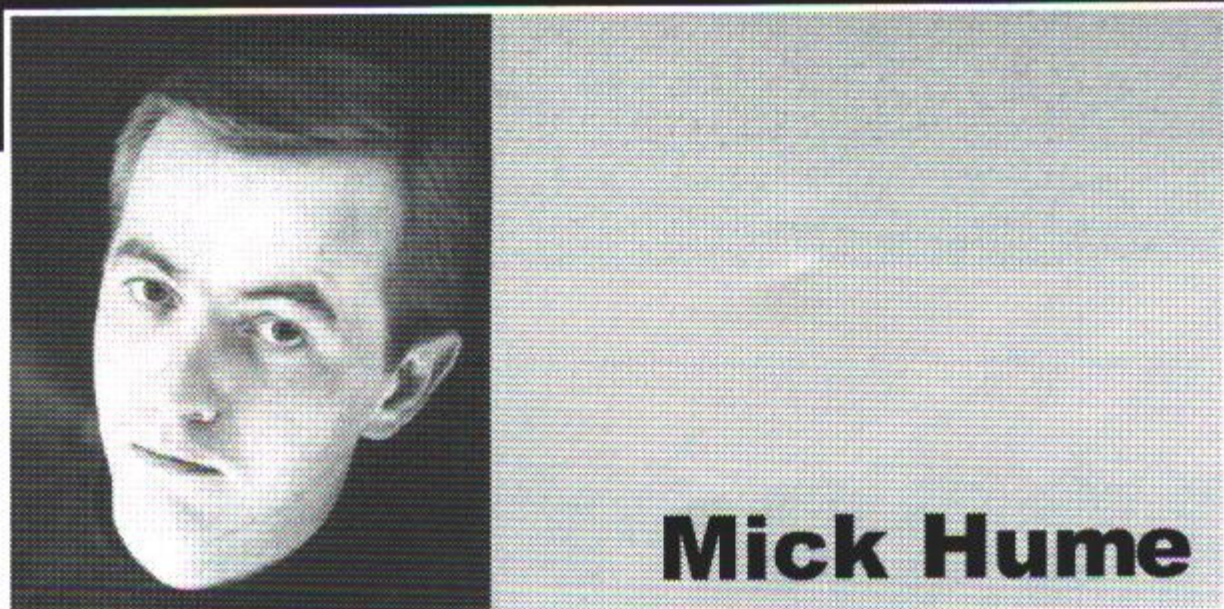
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Mick Hume

Left in the lurch

As the government makes increasingly desperate efforts to win back disaffected voters, its opponents warn that the Tories are 'lurching to the right'. This misses the point about where the new political danger is really coming from today.

Home Secretary Michael Howard's plans to tighten the screws further still on immigrants and refugees (reported in November's *Living Marxism*) have provoked accusations that he is 'playing the race card' to attract the bigot vote. Other policies have fuelled the panic about the Tory government moving rightwards: policies like chancellor Kenneth Clarke's attempts to slash public spending in order to finance tax cuts; the more stridently Euro-sceptical tone of ministerial statements; and the government's decision to reconsider its proposed laws on domestic violence and divorce in the face of criticism from the family values lobby among right-wing MPs.

These developments in Conservative policy have excited New Labour and the left, and agitated Tory 'wets'. One Tory MP, Alan Howarth, has already defected to Labour in protest at what he calls John Major's abandonment of 'One Nation' politics and embrace of right-wing 'harshness'. Another, Julian Critchley, has said not only that he will refuse to stand for the Conservatives in the next election, but that he will not vote for them either, because the party has been converted into a Thatcherite 'ideological crusade'.

It would be more accurate, however, to say that some Tory policies have lurched into the past rather than towards a 'new right'. Incapable of coming to terms with

how far the political climate has changed, Major's team clings to the hope that if they bash out the old favourite Tory tunes loudly enough, the electorate will eventually listen and sing along again. Scaremongering about crime and race and cutting taxes worked at past elections they reason, so why shouldn't it do the trick once more?

Just because some Tories cannot tell the difference between 1987 and 1995, that is no reason for us to make the same mistake. It should be clear that they cannot simply rerun the successful strategies of the past. The eighties' boom is long gone, and the confident right-wing agenda that accompanied it is exhausted. The current insubstantial, desperate attempts to win back Tory support in the face of impending electoral defeat are far removed from the dynamic and heavyweight crusades of Thatcher's heyday.

Kicking a few more asylum-seekers out of the country, locking up a few more petty criminals and shaving another tuppence off income tax is not going to galvanise enough support to reverse the government's decline. Trailing by around 30 percentage points in most opinion polls, the only way the Tories look likely to win the next election is if they deport one third of the electorate, imprison another third, and abolish taxes altogether for the rest.

Of course, those whom the government's tired and dirty little re-election campaign tries to scapegoat for the country's problems should be defended, be they immigrants or single mothers. But we should not get carried away with the notion that the important battles of today

will be fought against the right-wing politics of the past. There are newer threats to be dealt with—less obvious, less familiar, but no less dangerous for that. Those who are becoming preoccupied with a 'lurch to the right' by the fading Tories, and waiting to hear the ring of jackboots in Whitehall, are ignoring the most important developments.

There is certainly an authoritarian dynamic gathering pace at the centre of politics today; a trend towards imposing more legal controls and wider censorship, towards greater intrusion into people's affairs by official and semi-official bodies. But it is not normally framed in the crude, old-fashioned language of a right-wing law-and-order campaign. Indeed when the authorities do slip back into the old ways they tend to get their fingers burned, as Metropolitan Police chief Paul Condon did with his 'most muggers are black' statement earlier this year.

The new authoritarianism, by contrast, is justified using the nineties vocabulary of moderation, tolerance and the protection of society's victims against all things extreme or offensive.

These days intrusive regulations and surveillance systems are most likely to be introduced on the pretext of protecting children from abuse, whether that means arresting people for taking bathtime snaps of their children or imposing the tightest codes of video censorship in the Western world. Local councils, the police and courts now seek extra powers to monitor, evict, arrest and imprison people in order, they say, to help protect women against domestic violence and black people against racial assault. Presented in this way, the advance of state intervention and control into every corner of society arouses far less concern than old-fashioned Tory scapegoating. Which is precisely what makes it more dangerous.

While the rump of the Tory right dreams of reviving the policies of the past, New Labour is the leading party of the new authoritarianism. As Andrew Calcutt examines in detail elsewhere in this issue, Tony Blair's law'n'order proposals are more in tune with the trepidatious times, with the

emphasis upon protecting all of the victims of today's 'at-risk' society. In their more far-sighted moments, the Tory leadership too glimpses which way the wind is blowing and tries to update its law'n'order policies accordingly. That is why, for instance, the government introduced the anti-domestic violence legislation which so outraged the old, right-wing back benchers.

Far from either major party 'lurching' off to the right or the left, the underlying trend is for them to converge around an increasingly narrow political agenda. The central policies of both are characterised by the economics of austerity and the authoritarian politics of social control. Indeed the left/right divide only really exists today as a rhetorical device, which both Labour and the Tories will use to try to paint their opponents into a corner. So while Labour accuses the Tories of leaping to the right, the Conservatives try to argue that Labour's 'instincts' remain on the left. In different ways, the message from each is that 'extremism' must be driven out of the political arena.

The irony is that the new all-party consensus against 'extremism' potentially has more far-reaching implications than any right-wing policy announced by the Tory government.

It seems that to be an 'extremist' today simply means to have ideas and principles which you will stick to and stand up for—a quality which, despite the mutual accusations of extremism, is noticeably lacking on both the Tory and Labour front benches. In their contest to win over Middle England and the Confederation of British Industry, the Tories will drop plans to privatise the Post Office just as quickly as Labour will fudge its commitment to Europe's Social Chapter. And each will condemn as extreme anything their opponents do which appears to step outside of the ever-more narrow mainstream of political life.

To be an 'extremist' today simply means to have principles which you will stand up for

One consequence of the new cult of moderation is that politics becomes an increasingly technical affair, in which insults are exchanged but there are no major controversies, no clash between opposing visions of society. Like just about every other restrictive trend in life, the narrowing of debate is now legitimised in the politically correct language of the nineties, with New Labour calling for an end to the old 'macho' culture of heated argument in the commons.

Yet at a time when capitalist society is in a state of economic, intellectual and cultural stagnation, there can rarely have been a greater need for the open clash of opposing ideas and consideration of fresh alternatives.

The problem today is that the only people who seem prepared to pursue a principled line of argument are the old-timers on the Tory right and the veterans of the Labour left like Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn. And one thing which all of these 'extremists' have in common is that sticking to their principles simply means being stuck in the past. Even though Scargill is said to be setting up a new Socialist Labour Party, its programme is set to be a stale rehash of traditional Labourism.

If we are to break through the ideological log-jam and project an alternative agenda

for debate, it will not be enough to rehearse the anti-capitalist arguments of yesterday—such as opposition to the policies of the Tory right. Instead, we will need to express our principles in such a way as to engage with the more important trends in contemporary politics.

The principle which we should seek to put back on the political map today is the forgotten idea of fighting for human emancipation by trying to change the way that society is organised. But to make that general principle mean something real in the here and now, it will need to be expressed through a challenge to the influence of what we have described as the new authoritarianism.

The pervasive assumption behind the new authoritarianism is that we are all vulnerable, potential victims constantly in need of guidance and protection from above. That, far more than the remnants of Thatcherism, is perhaps the most powerful ideological barrier to advancing the cause of human liberation through challenging capitalism today. Discussing how we can mount an imaginative counter to the paralysing notion that people are impotent would be far more constructive than worrying about which direction the dead men of politics are lurching.

If you would like more information about *Living Marxism* readers' groups in your area, write to Helen Simons, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, phone (0171) 278 9908 fax (0171) 278 9844 e-mail lm@junius.co.uk

Abortion and the disabled

Ann Bradley's articles ('Why shouldn't women abort disabled fetuses?', September and 'In a perfect world', October) make alarming and depressing reading for those with disabilities. In both, she seemed to be suggesting that disability is acceptably 'eradicated' by killing those affected before birth, and that it is 'political correctness' which blames society for the handicapping effects of disabling conditions.

She dismisses the 'slippery slope' theory by saying 'this inexorable logic rests on the assumption that we are incapable of differentiating between our actions in respect of fetuses...and people themselves', and suggests that people who favour eugenic abortion do not accept infanticide. Sadly this is untrue.

Recent surveys show that newborn disabled children are 'allowed to die' (a comfortable euphemism for sedation and starvation to death) hundreds of times a year in our hospitals, and debate is currently raging about whether two boys around the age of two should be similarly 'allowed to die' because they are disabled. The argument has already been decided as far as adults are concerned, with the legal death by starvation and dehydration of Tony Bland, a young man who was not dying but was in the inappropriately named persistent vegetative state.

Some disabilities, notably spina bifida, can now largely be prevented from occurring, while others, like Down's syndrome, cannot. In Ann Bradley's world, however, there is no such thing as acceptance of disability as an inevitable fact of human existence. In her view there is cure or death with nothing in between. This view is sadly typical of able-bodied people who think that having a disability is a fate worse than death and that in the absence of cure, death must be preferable.

I write as one who has a severe congenital disability—spina bifida. Babies with my degree of disability are generally aborted now or 'allowed to die' after birth because society has decreed that one person's 'right to choose' negates another's very right to exist. I take issue with Ann Bradley not for dismissing the extreme view that disability is a good thing in itself (a kind of madness which would end in suggesting that everyone ought to be disabled), but for the equally extreme view that 'eradication' of disability by killing the disabled is an acceptable way forward for a civilised society. While it is unfashionable to point to Nazi-like similarities, it is impossible in this context not to remember the Nazi euthanasia programme which started by killing 100 000 disabled people ostensibly to save families, and actually to save the state, the burden of caring for them. Our methods are sometimes different, but the philosophy is the same.

Ann Bradley urges us to 'celebrate' access to late abortion for disability. She surely cannot believe that her disabled readers will join in this horrific human equivalent of 'expecting turkeys to vote for Christmas'.

Alison Davis Dorset

We live in a society where anyone opposed to abortion is labelled right-wing, religious bigots and woman-haters even if we are atheists, socialists and feminists.

Would Ann Bradley approve of abortion based on sex selection? Eugenic and gender abortions (like most abortions) are resorted to because societies give women such little support and practical help. Then there are issues like poverty and prejudice and the fact that society demands perfection or in some countries a male child. It is thus not surprising that many women carrying a disabled child or child of the wrong gender resort to abortion or killing the child at birth.

I am someone who works with people who have multiple disabilities, has a cousin with learning disabilities and a grandmother with Alzheimer's. I am far from perfect myself. I am not what a Western woman is expected to be. I am far from beautiful, clumsy (probably as a result of damage to my brain when I was born), and have mental health problems. As an imperfect person I resent Ann Bradley's eugenic attitudes.

People who support eugenic abortion should ask disabled people *their* views. How do disabled people feel about being disabled? How do they feel about eugenics and screening? I would like to know why no one ever consults disabled people. We are talking about issues that affect their lives after all.

Ali Browning Hebden Bridge

What's in a name?

I listened to Professor Steve Jones, the geneticist, on Radio 5 Live last week speaking about the ways in which science is reported in the media. He made the observation that the most popular science programme is *How Do They Do That?*. His point was that not a lot of people realise this is a science programme, and that if it was renamed *Science: How Do They Do That?*, he suggested about 50 per cent of viewers would not watch it!

This led me to reflect upon your own magazine and its consistently excellent contributions to political and social comment. If you deleted all reference to 'Marxism', 'revolutionary' and 'communist' from the title page, and called it *Have You Ever Thought About Things Like This?*, do you think your circulation would escalate dramatically and your analysis would be more widely embraced?

This is not meant to trivialise the important debate you have launched to define a new kind

of critique for the nineties. I am very confident that your analysis strikes a sympathetic chord with many people who are dissatisfied with so many aspects of the social system within which they live. As soon as they realise they are being exposed to revolutionary Marxist thought, though, they switch off and stop responding positively. Have you ever thought about it like that?

Michael Jennings Otley

The manipulation of Saro-Wiwa

Joseph Smith (letters, November) asks *Living Marxism* to join the international campaign against Shell because of its persecution of the Ogoni people, whose leader Ken Saro-Wiwa was subsequently executed by the Nigerian government on 10 November. Saro-Wiwa's execution was deplorable. Yet it is striking that, where his death was met with howls of outrage, countless other activists from every quarter of the globe have died at the hands of governments without being noticed. So why have environmental groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Western governments all suddenly decided to take a keen interest in Saro-Wiwa and the Ogonis?

Since 1990, the Ogonis have been asking for their land to be cleaned up after 30 years of oil spills. They want Western standards of environmental protection to be applied locally. They also want a share in the oil wealth, of which they have seen next to nothing. They are not asking for socialism or an independent Ogoni state. They are not even asking for Shell to be removed from the country. Given such modest demands, other interests have moved in to reshape the Ogoni campaign to suit their own agendas.

In suspending Nigeria from the Commonwealth and invoking economic sanctions, the British establishment and its media have downplayed criticism of Shell and emphasised the bloody role of the Nigerian military regime in oppressing the Ogoni people. Yet Whitehall has never had a problem with sponsoring repressive regimes in Africa. The campaign against Nigeria is a cynical attempt to exploit the Ogoni's plight in order to highlight the barbarism of black Africa. According to author Fay Weldon, Nigeria is '*Heart of Darkness* country'. At a time when the establishment is unable to generate any enthusiasm at home about British 'civilisation', sounding off about 'African dictators' helps make them look good.

According to the environmental groups and NGOs, however, the real villain of the piece is the 'multinational' Shell oil company. In their campaign against development, they also see the Ogoni as victims who are pleading to be rescued from the evil effects of industrial development and progress. The fact that the

Ogoni want more development, not less, has been overlooked by green campaigners. The role of the Western states in promoting their interventionist agenda is also ignored.

When different Western interests try to manipulate Africans to further their own agendas in this way, the results can be deadly—as the recent Western interventions in Somalia and Rwanda have demonstrated.

In Nigeria, between 1966 and 1970, six million died when the Biafrans were encouraged by various Western interests to set up a secessionist state based on the oil of the Niger delta—and other Western powers like Britain sponsored the Nigerian war to stop them. The Ogonis would do well to ask themselves what are the motives behind all the help they are getting from the West. As others have found out to their cost, being selected for 'aid' by the West always turns out to be a poisoned chalice. Western calls for the Ogonis to secede are not being made for altruistic reasons, but to foment a bloody disintegration of Nigeria, thereby consolidating the West's grip over the region. Nine have died so far; let it not be nine million.

Andy Clarkson Africa Direct London

Snobs, yobs and the mob

Much of the evidence uncovered by Andrew Calcutt ('The case of the feuding novelists', November) points to the perennial struggle of snobs versus yobs. The mystery becomes even easier to solve once you add the mob to the formula. Hatred of pulp fiction invariably led to a coded vilification of its urban readership.

When Dashiell Hammett set the enduring tone of the hard-boiled city, he was also rehabilitating it. Prior to his tales appearing in *Black Mask* magazine, the working class featured in American fiction largely as a sideshow exhibit; colloquial phrases even appeared in extra sets of quotation marks, signalling their alien nature. Like Hemingway's short stories, Hammett helped to break the condescending norms of American letters by writing in a stylised street language. In Raymond Chandler's words, Hammett took murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it into the alley. Implicitly, he was siding with those who lived in and around the alley itself.

The links between hard-boiled fiction and urban readerships account for Mickey

Spillane's failure to appeal to literary traditionalists who nevertheless shared his Cold War values. When sociologist Daniel Bell described the McCarthyite John Birch Society as 'Mickey Spillane men', he expressed his own fear of the mob through a vilification of its readings habits. More recently, the late Julian Symons updated his crime fiction reference book *Bloody Murder* to attack James Ellroy and his fans as sub-literate, in exactly the terms reserved for Spillane in earlier editions. Time and time again, genteel crime writers will gladly foresake the conservative certainties of a Mike Hammer adventure out of disdain for its allegedly vulgar readership.

Graham Barnfield Leeds

Free speech on campus

Jennie Bristow's article ('Free speech on campus', October) on the lack of free speech in colleges puts into perspective my experiences at the University of Greenwich in 1993 when on a teacher training course. I recall one stormy seminar when the issue of racism came up. My opinions did not coincide with the rest of the class, so rather than argue it out, the politically correct brigade, represented by two students, got the lecturer to compile a 'code of conduct' in order that such a situation should not arise in future. This set of rules laid down topics which were not to be discussed in class. I suppose this was preferable to being patronised by those who felt that I 'as a gay man' would have something worthwhile to say—yuk!

Gareth King Slough

No-smoking sickness

Doug Small (letters, November) stated 'no employer in the land could routinely expose employees to a chemical as hazardous'. Believe it or not he was referring to 'passive smoking'. The dubious 'evidence' linking 'passive smoking' to cancer and other chronic illnesses is nothing to evidence confirming debilitating lung conditions such as mesothelioma and asbestosis with exposure to asbestos. The former has been found in ex-shipbuilders and builders, and many were exposed to the chemical after evidence emerged of its dangers.

Factory workers are exposed to dangerous chemicals with minimal or non-existent safety policies. So why are employers so keen to implement anti-smoking policies? I suggest that

Mr Small read Andrew Calcutt's article again, and stop hiding behind his smokescreen.

Linda Hollings New Ash Green, Kent

Policing asylum-seekers

I am one of the 'public servants' who are increasingly expected to act as immigration officers as outlined in Suke Wolton and Sarah Woodhouse's article ('No refuge', November), carrying out extensive checks and interviewing housing benefit claimants who have lived in the UK for less than five years.

From January 1996, the vast majority of asylum-seekers who apply on entry to the UK will cease to be entitled to benefits as soon as they receive a negative decision from the Home Office. They will no longer receive benefit during the appeals process. Those applying for asylum after entering the UK will no longer be entitled to benefits at all, unless and until their application is accepted.

Increasing instability in Eastern Europe and the Third World has led to growing numbers of refugees, whilst the British government has tightened up the rules to make it almost impossible to get into and stay in the UK. The government's explanation is that word has got around that Britain is a good place to go and rip off the welfare system. It is no doubt a matter of time before the British government proves there are no genuine refugees at all.

The number of asylum-seekers within the welfare system is very small. But the message that scant resources are being drained by mobile foreigners on the make is an effective one, and makes the new legislation well worth it from the government's point of view.

Stuart London

Every home should have one

It seems to me to be very hit and miss to rely on Boots in the high street to regulate the personal affairs of Ms Julia Somerville. After all, she might never shop there again. To overcome this problem I suggest that Boots allocate photo-lab technicians to be permanently stationed at the Somerville home. That way not only could they comment on the subject matter of family photographs before they are taken, thus avoiding any further embarrassment, but they could also check to see if Ms Somerville's daughter has washed behind her ears.

Ian Yates Bristol

We welcome readers' views and criticisms

Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor,

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When feminist author Naomi Wolf became pregnant, she caused a transatlantic storm by announcing that it had changed her view of abortion. By contrast, Ann Furedi found that pregnancy confirmed her commitment to a woman's right to abort an unwanted fetus

Perhaps it is because I was 38 weeks pregnant that, when I read Naomi Wolf's account of how pregnancy changed her attitude to abortion, my blood pressure went off the monitor. But I don't think so. I think I would have been similarly outraged at her equivocal, guilt-ridden attempt to rethink 'pro-choice rhetoric' if I had read her recent *New Republic* article in my previous never-been-pregnant state.

Naomi Wolf thinks pregnancy taught her a thing or two about abortion. She now feels herself at odds with the pro-choice movement which, she feels, has refused to 'look at abortion within a moral framework' or to 'condemn it as a moral iniquity'. She says that those of us who believe that women should have the right to end unwanted pregnancies, 'risk being precisely what our critics charge us with being: callous, selfish and casually destructive men and women who share a cheapened view of human life'.

The problem with those who wish to impose a 'moral framework' on abortion is that the framework is usually based on their own personal code of right and wrong. Naomi Wolf has decided that abortion is 'an evil', 'a moral iniquity', and she feels that it is her duty to impose this view on women who neither accept her premises nor her conclusions.

Damascene conversion

Through her past books *The Beauty Myth* and *Fire With Fire*, Naomi Wolf established herself as a leading voice of American feminism and supporter of the 'pro-choice' lobby on abortion. During pregnancy, however, Wolf came to think of the fetus in her womb as a baby. It then occurred to her that the death of a fetus was indeed a 'real death' and that the lurid images of fetuses dismembered after abortion—paraded outside US abortion clinics by anti-choice activists—were, indeed, real photographs and not just inventions.

Why having a baby did not make me anti-abortion

Well done Ms Wolf for joining the real world. It may only just have occurred to *you* that fetuses at 10 weeks really do have recognisable tiny feet and that 'the pro-life slogan "abortion stops a beating heart" is incontrovertibly true'. But most of us knew this already. Our commitment to 'abortion on request' is not based on sanitised ignorance, but on a clear understanding of what abortion is and what happens during it. We accept that an abortion ends a potential human life. We know that sometimes it involves the dismemberment of a fetus. We too have gazed in wonder at Lennart Nilsson's photographs of thumb-sucking fetuses which look so much like new-born babies. But we continue to support women's right to abortion because we feel that it is barbaric and unacceptable to force a woman to continue with an unwanted pregnancy—more barbaric and unacceptable than the destruction of a fetus.

It is Naomi Wolf's prerogative to regard her own pregnancy in any way she likes. But it is illegitimate for her to use her own experience as a soap box from which to broadcast sweeping

allegations about the deficiencies of pro-choice arguments. Her experience of pregnancy, her sight of the fetal heart beating on a scan leads her to conclude that the death of a fetus is a 'real death'. But what does this mean? What is the moral consequence?

Child or fetus?

Of course an abortion involves a death insofar as it involves the stopping of a beating heart, the destruction of something that was alive. Only a fool would deny that. But is the ending of that life—a life that does not know it is alive, that has no sense of its beginning or its end, no awareness of its existence, its potential future or its past—morally equivalent to killing a child? Does the life in the womb possess the qualities that cause us to accord so much value to human life outside of it? Naomi Wolf may think it does. I cannot agree.

For many of us, a commitment to women's right to abortion is based on a belief that, although it may be biologically alive and genetically distinct, a fetus does not possess the qualities that make people people.

PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER



A wanted child: Ann's baby, Jake, was born on 15 October

It is not that those of us who are pro-choice have failed to address the 'moral issues' that Wolf has just become aware of. We have addressed them, and resolved them and still find abortion a legitimate choice.

Wolf finds a 'bizarre bifurcation in the way we who are pro-choice tend to think of wanted as opposed to unwanted fetuses; the unwanted ones are still seen in schematic black-and-white-drawings while the wanted ones

have metamorphosed into vivid and moving colour'. But bizarre as it may seem to her, this is an accurate analogy of the way women in different circumstances view their pregnancies.

A woman with a wanted pregnancy is carrying a potential child. She looks forward to its birth, perhaps names it, talks to it and anticipates the role it will play in her life. A woman with an unwanted pregnancy has a problem which she wants to resolve. The same biological mechanisms are in action but the experience of them could hardly be more different. She finds the idea of continuing her pregnancy as horrific as a woman with a wanted pregnancy would find the idea of ending hers. Decisions are made (and rightly so) according to the actual circumstances of people's lives, not by abstract ethical frameworks based on the morality of Naomi Wolf.

A little bit free

Wolf's moral framework accepts that abortion should be legal—for the needy, the impoverished, the dispossessed—but not for 'the affluent teenage couples who conceive because they can, and then erase the consequences—and the affluent men and women who choose abortion because they were careless or in a hurry or didn't like the feel of latex'. These, she explains, 'are not the moral equivalent of the impoverished mother who responsibly even selflessly acknowledges that she already has too many mouths to feed'.

We might ask what gives Ms Wolf the right to act as moral arbiter and to force a woman through pregnancy and labour because she does not agree with her reasons for choosing abortion. And, in striking this stance, Wolf might also want to ask herself what makes her new-found moral framework different to that of the doctors who refuse women abortions because their reasons are 'not good enough'. The Wolf moral framework on abortion is already in place—in the health system here and in the USA. It is called the denial of choice and the stigmatisation of women who seek to exercise it.

Wolf believes that the pro-choice movement's arguments are presented too vociferously and too starkly to mobilise support from the equivocal. Paradoxically, many in the pro-choice movement tie themselves in intellectual knots trying to do precisely what she advocates—find an inoffensive compromise which can win over ►



conservative opinion. There are those who argue that they are pro-choice but only in early pregnancy, those who claim to be pro-choice but think that abortion on grounds of disability is unacceptable, those who claim to be pro-choice but refuse to condone abortion for 'trivial' reasons. What they, like Wolf, fail to appreciate is that being in support of a woman's right to abortion is a lot like being pregnant—you either are or you aren't. There is no compromise that can be made. You can no more partially support women's rights than you can be partially pregnant. You either support a woman's right to decide on the future of her pregnancy (whether you approve of her decision or not) or you do not. When the right to choose abortion becomes conditional, it is no longer 'a right'.

Personal and political

Perhaps I am being too harsh on Wolf. I work in the field of reproductive healthcare. The most frustrating aspect of my own pregnancy has been the genuine and compassionate concern from my colleagues that being pregnant might make me feel less comfortable dealing with the issues of fetal destruction that are a routine part of my work. I felt insulted by the assumption that my intellectual commitment to women's choice was so shallow as to be undermined by my physical condition.

But, if I am honest, I must admit that my pregnancy *has* shaped my views—it has reinforced them. The changes in my body have been intriguing and exciting. Feeling fetal movement is a delightful reassurance that this potential child—of me and yet distinct from me—is growing. I anticipate labour with excitement not dread. But I know I feel this way because I *want* this child. Had it not been wanted, everything that is now wonderful would be an equivalent nightmare. Pregnancy, even when it is wanted, changes your life utterly. When it is not wanted—when pregnancy is resented and detested—it must seem to a woman as though the birth of a new life is the end of hers.

The personal is political only in that each of us interprets our personal experience in the light of our own political beliefs. My experience of pregnancy causes me to wonder how any woman who has had a child can force another to continue a pregnancy against her will. Naomi Wolf's experience reinforces her own ambiguities about the morality of abortion. If we are honest we admit that—and accept that there are, and always have been, limits to the politics of personal experience. ●

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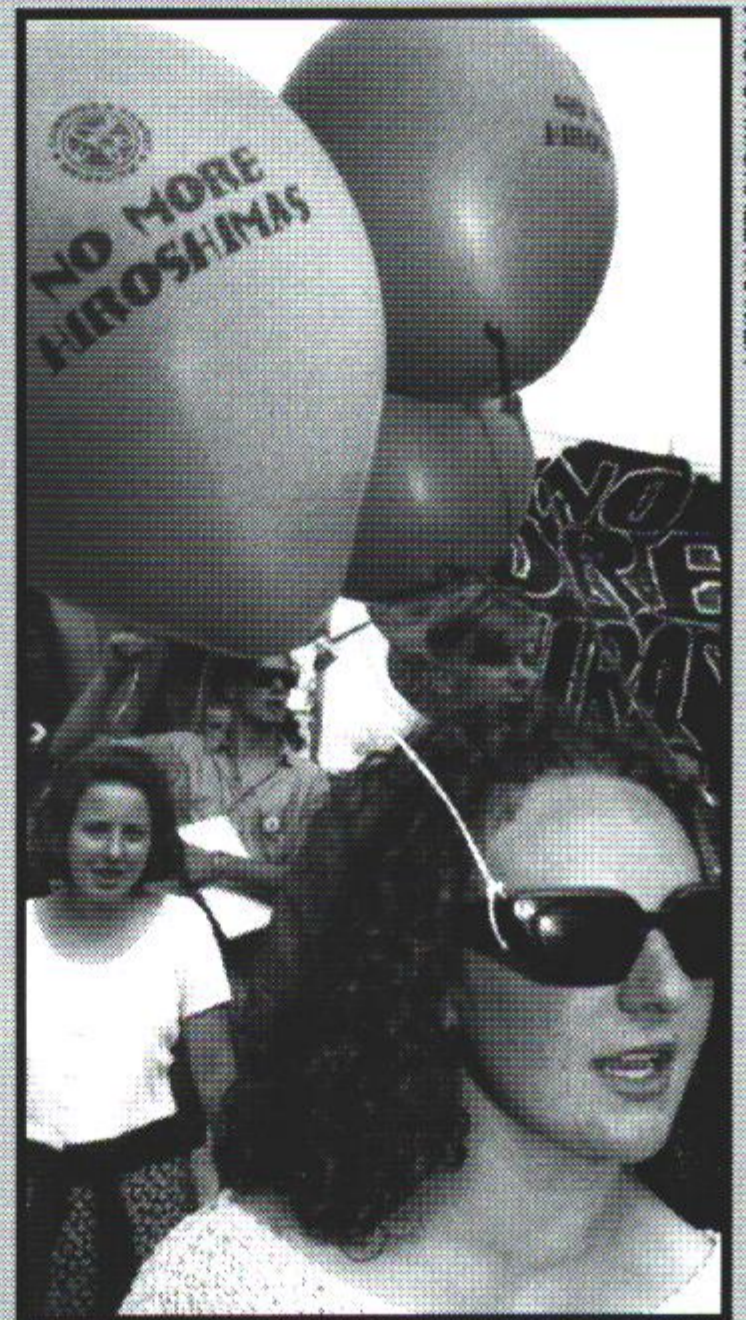


PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

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After a series of French nuclear tests on atolls in the south Pacific, the boycott of all things French has developed into the most popular campaign around. A recent Mori poll found that 85 per cent of the population oppose the tests. From the first explosion on 5 September, every campaigning group has picketed French government buildings, and leafleted the public to persuade them to boycott French wine, food and other goods.

But how is the boycott supposed to work? Are the boycotters waiting for the French wine-makers, farmers and hotel owners to feel the pinch and storm the Elysée Palace? Or do they assume that the opprobrium heaped on the French military will make them turn on their generals and stop the tests? Nothing of the sort will happen. The campaign is unlikely to achieve anything except to ensure that the campaigners will have to forego French cuisine for New Zealand lamb and Norfolk chicken.

Consumer boycotts rarely succeed. A 30-odd year boycott of South African goods made a lot of people feel like they were doing something, but it was the active resistance of South Africa's black majority which frustrated the apartheid regime. South Africa developed into the biggest African economy during the boycott, managing to circumvent pretty much every barrier put in its way, and enjoyed a balance of payments surplus in the last four years of the 1980s, when the sanctions campaign was at its height.

The anti-French boycott allows everybody to feel that they are part of a global campaign to stop the nuclear tests—but the tests carry on as if nothing was happening. So far there has only been a token reduction of the number of tests, from eight to six.

The reason the worldwide campaign has not made a difference is not just because the wrong tactics are being used, but also because they are directed at the wrong target. One reason why the boycott has proved popular over here is because it is anti-French, and there is nothing the British like better than bashing 'the frogs'. But the nuclear tests are not a peculiarity of the French national character, nor a sign of France's particular disdain for the global environment. They are an exercise in demonstrating the military power of a Western state to the rest of the world. And France is just one member of the nuclear club that holds the world to ransom.

The anti-French flavour of the boycott campaign can only make the other Nuclear Weapon States like Britain look good by comparison. It is extraordinary that while defence secretary Michael Portillo is boasting of the role of the SAS from Bosnia to Iraq, the only protests the British government faces are over its unwillingness to condemn French nuclear tests.

In fact John Major's ostentatious support for French leader Jacques Chirac, meeting the protests with the announcement of a joint French/British military alliance, only indicates that there is nothing exceptional about French militarism. As one of the world's five Nuclear Weapon States, along with the USA, Britain, Russia and China, the French occupy a prime place in the global hierarchy. And the response from the other four nuclear powers to the tests

Boycotts? Non merci



David Nolan
takes issue with the
campaign to boycott
French goods

has been muted, out of a joint interest in maintaining that hierarchy.

The French government's certainty that nobody can or will stop them testing is informed by their ranking among the leading military powers. The five nuclear powers have held the rest of the world to ransom since, one by one, they each acquired the bomb. They have also selectively expanded the atomic club—the most exclusive in the world—as and when it has suited their strategic and military needs.

The basis for this authority is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which guarantees the five permanent members of the UN Security Council a legal monopoly on nuclear weapons and gives them the right to punish anybody else who tries to acquire the Bomb. Yet none of the outrage that greeted French nuclear testing was evident when the Non-Proliferation Treaty—enshrining the five powers' monopoly on the Bomb in international law—was ratified in May. Both Greenpeace and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament insisted on the need to renew the NPT.

A real challenge to the nuclear tests would need to start from the understanding that they are a symbolic show of Western strength, made as a threat to the rest of the world, not an end in themselves that might cause a pollution problem. While the campaigners warn of the (unproven) threat of nuclear fall-out in the south Pacific in the future, today French, British and American aircraft can bomb the Bosnian Serbs or control northern Iraq unchallenged.

It is telling that the decision to explode bombs under a rocky atoll 600 miles from the nearest inhabited land excites more public outrage than any of the recent military adventures directed against people in other parts of the world. The Iraqi civilians dying through lack of basic healthcare and nutrition under the United Nations sanctions, or the thousands driven out of their homes by the US-sponsored Croatian campaign against the Bosnian Serbs do not enjoy a fraction of the support given to the meagre wildlife clinging to a piece of volcanic basalt.

The real danger with the French tests is the enduring military power that they symbolise. Challenging that requires something more than a boycott of French wine and cheese. While Jacques Chirac is likely to outstrip Guy Fawkes as the most burned effigy this year, the campaign is unlikely to result in any significant changes in how the French or the other nuclear powers treat the rest of the world. By concentrating on France and tests alone, the campaigners are whitewashing the military might the major powers exercise every day. It is not as if France is the only nuclear power, or indeed the only military power which throws its weight around.

I for one am not going to stop drinking French wine, or Russian vodka, or eating Chinese food or watching American movies. Instead, the first step in opposing the tests must be to challenge a world order which guarantees the rights of the minority of states to hold the rest in permanent subjugation. That also means breaking from the double standards which suggest that nuking a barren rock in the Pacific is a bigger crime than bombing a crowded city in the Third World.

What they said in

compiled by
Andrew Calcutt

1995

PHOTO: SIMON R. FULFORD

PHOTOS: MICHAEL KRAMER

I...express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology.

Prime minister *Tomiichi Murayama* infuriates the British media by 'refusing to apologise' for Japan's war record

I think that the atomic bombings were one of the two greatest crimes against humanity in the twentieth century, along with the Holocaust.

Hitoshi Motoshima, mayor of Nagasaki

President Clinton said today that the United States owed Japan no apology for dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War Two, and that President Harry S Truman had made the right decision to use the bombs.

Reuters

I will go to a war crimes tribunal when Americans are tried for Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Vietnam, Cambodia, Panama.

Arkan, the Serbian militiaman accused of war crimes by the International Tribunal

We were wrong.

Former US defence secretary *Robert McNamara* on Vietnam

If the B-2 is invisible, just announce you've built 100 of them and don't build them.

Cash-strapped US budget committee chairman *John Kasich* suggests building the Stealth bomber on the cheap

I have to be acutely aware that I grew up as a peacemaker, always trying to minimise disruption. When you are president and go the extra mile, others will interpret it as weakness.

Bill Clinton suggests that a disturbed childhood may explain why he looks like an ineffectual loser

The President is relevant here.

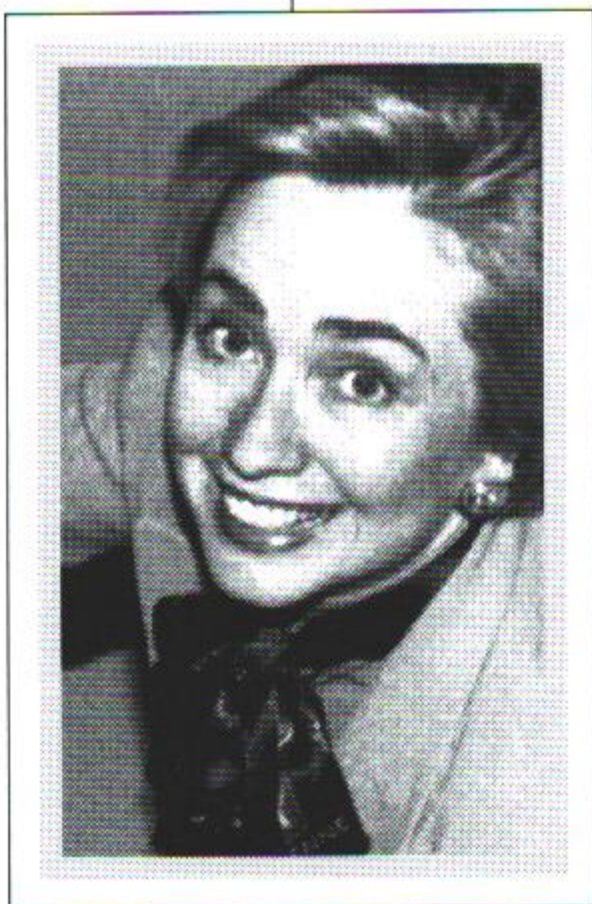
Bill Clinton berates the media for showing insufficient interest in his statements

My theory is don't do it before you're 21, and then don't tell me about it.

Hillary Clinton on **TEENAGE SEX**

I am neither.

Possible presidential candidate *General Colin Powell* on being asked whether he was a Republican or Democrat



I was never a very threatening kind of black man...I was a good negro to have around.

General Colin Powell

At our last meeting, we talked about first aid and camping.

The *Michigan Militia* tries to disassociate itself from the Oklahoma bombers

Anything out of a nigger's mouth...is a fucking lie.

The LAPD's *Mark Fuhrman* destroys the prosecution case against OJ Simpson

Each country gets the currency it deserves.

Hans Tilmeyer, president of the Bundesbank

We now see ourselves as the enterprise centre of Europe.

Delusions of grandeur from deputy prime minister *Michael Heseltine*

Today's Russia is socialism for the elite and capitalism for the people. The political elite gets economic privileges, and ordinary people are free to sell goods in kiosks.

Olga Kryshnanovskaya, director of the Moscow Institute of Sociology

We don't know where we're going, we don't know who we are, we don't have a country or state.

Mirka Coko, a Serbian refugee fleeing from Croatia

We do a lot of training with live weapons but it's not the same as dropping them on a live target. We will have a beer tonight.

British pilots celebrate bombing the Bosnian Serbs

British soldiers fight for **BRITAIN but not for Brussels.**

Defence secretary *Michael Portillo* shows off his British Government and Geography O-levels

I don't want my future to be tangled up in John Major's campaign.

Douglas Hurd announces his resignation as foreign secretary

You can't trust your own party. I know that.

Michael Heseltine

It makes me laugh now when I hear him called a grey man. That's just a cover. It's a mask.

Jean Kierans, the older woman in John Major's life

When I was a small boy, my bread and butter was paid for by my father's small business. He made garden ornaments 40 years ago and some fashionable people find that very funny. I don't.

John Major says its gnome laughing matter

Only under him have motorway cones and hedges become a national concern

Lord McAlpine, ex-treasurer of the Tory Party, on Major's 'big ideas'

I voted for John Major because he reminded me of Harry Palmer.

Michael Caine

We all treat the public like morons.

Retiring Tory MP *George Walden*

We are now the party of law and order.

New Labour

Get tough with winos, addicts and squeegee merchants.

Shadow home secretary *Jack Straw*

There is no excuse for begging in Britain.

Home secretary *Michael Howard* shadows his shadow

If Michael Howard cracks down on immigration, he will also deny us some of the best meals in town.

Restaurant critic *Fay Maschler*

Very many of the perpetrators of mugging are very young black people.

Sir Paul Condon fails to live up to his 'PC' image

Nearly all muggers, vandals, football hooligans, rapists and late-night brawlers are straight males.

Outrage! spokesman *Peter Tatchell*

We don't want employers trampling on people but nor do we want employers feeling insecure or vulnerable.

Labour frontbencher *Harriet Harman* counsels concerned bosses

Every party in Ireland was founded on the gun.

Co-author of the 'peace process' *John Hume*

Private Clegg's case will be treated...solely on its merits. There is no question of one law for the security forces and another for the rest.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland *Sir Patrick Mayhew* shortly before Clegg's release

Managers who take too large pay rises endanger the capitalist system.

Tim Melville Ross of the Institute of Directors

It is always said that the central lobby of the House of Commons has to be the third easiest place in Europe to get picked up.

Alan Clark rates the House of Commons just below Leicester Square and Rome airport in a list of pick-up joints

He has given us promiscuous genes.

The *Bishop of Edinburgh* blames God for adultery

It was like going to a club but it had a better sound system.

Participant at the *rave vicar's* Easter Sunday service

Public interest must mean public interest as we define it.

Lord Wakeham, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission

I consider what I'm doing now to be more important.

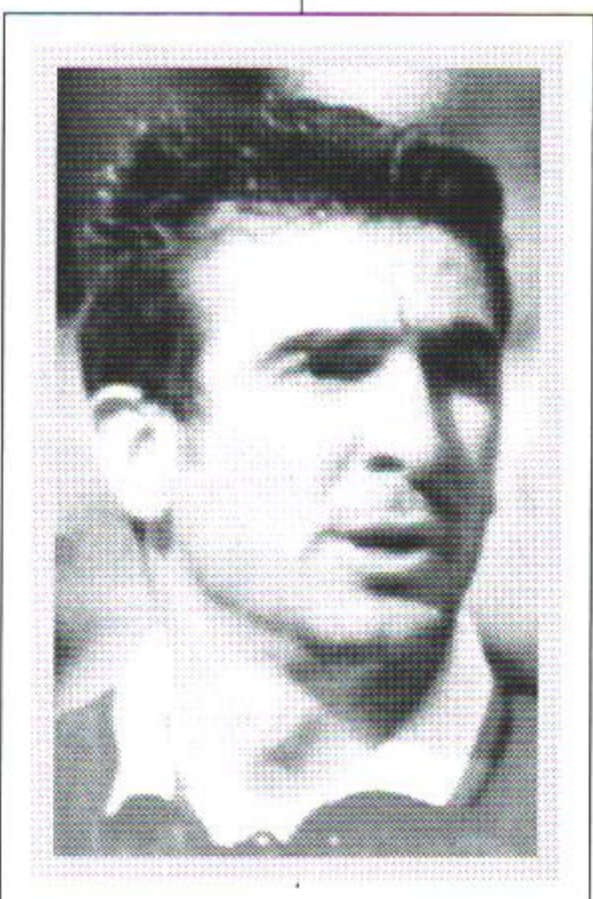
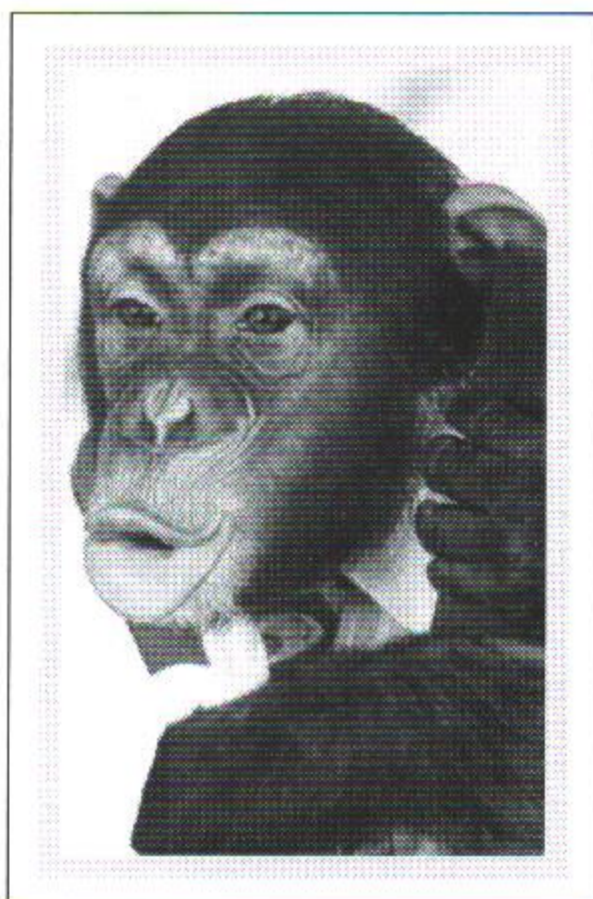
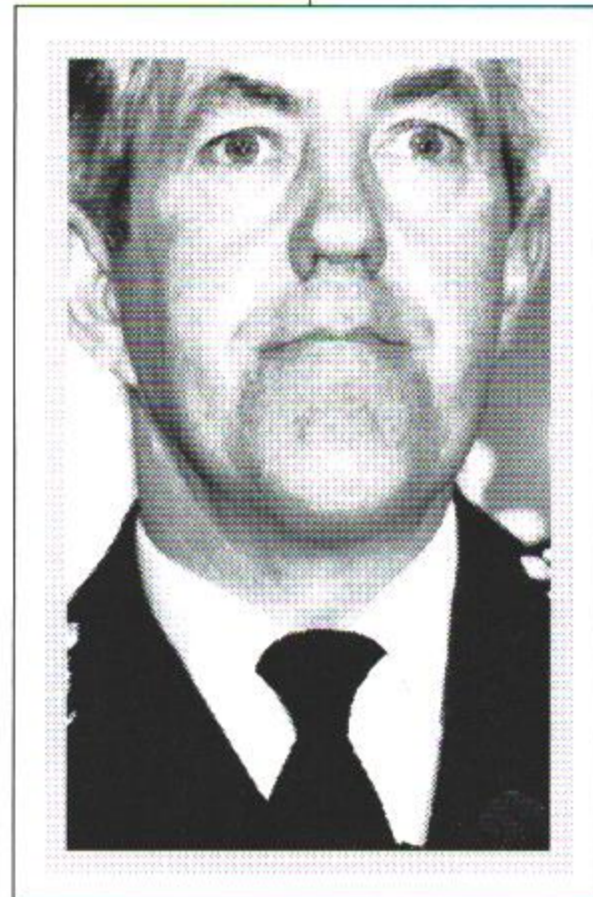
Nobel physicist *Brian Josephson* explains why he quit to become a psychic researcher

It was astonishing how good it made me feel.

Neo-Luddite *Kirkpatrick Sale* on the joys of smashing an IBM desktop with a sledgehammer

Do not touch me. I do not even let my followers touch me.

Aum Shinrikyo leader *Shoko Asahara* refuses medical treatment



To work here you have to be cuckoo—like me.

Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali on life at the UN

She has been having it rammed down her throat for the past 18 months.

Geoff Knights, partner of *EastEnders* star *Gillian Taylforth*, on her ordeal since the pancreatitis-in-a-lay-by court case

I went to a psychiatrist lately and he said, 'Were you ever molested as a child?'. And I said, 'No, I was dying to be molested'.

Elton John

I used to have a MONKEY. A friend told me it was a child substitute. I said her child was probably a monkey substitute.

Cosmopolitan's ex-editor *Marcelle d'Argy Smith*

Hair bird's nested all over the place, fuck me shoes and three fat inches of cleavage.

Germaine Greer on fellow feminist columnist *Suzanne Moore*

You still have to worry about where the next Rolex is coming from.

Mel Eddison, already a millionaire, welcomes his £2.5m lottery win

There is nothing toffee-nosed about watching opera.

Jeremy Isaacs, director of the Royal Opera House

Ronnie was a lovely man.

'*Mad Frankie*' *Fraser* on the late *Ronnie Kray*

He proved that a life of self-indulgence, if lived with a whole heart, may also bring a certain wisdom.

Alan Bennett on the late *Peter Cook*

An irascible old fart.

Hunter Davies on the late *Sir Kingsley Amis*

A cantankerous old cunt.

The late cartoonist *Giles* as described by an acquaintance

Fifty-seven old farts.

Will Carling on the Rugby Football Union committee

He is a freak.

Will Carling after All-Black *Jonah Lomu* beat England on his own

Off you go, Cantona. It's an early shower for you.

Crystal Palace fan *Matthew Simmons'* version of what he said to *Eric Cantona*

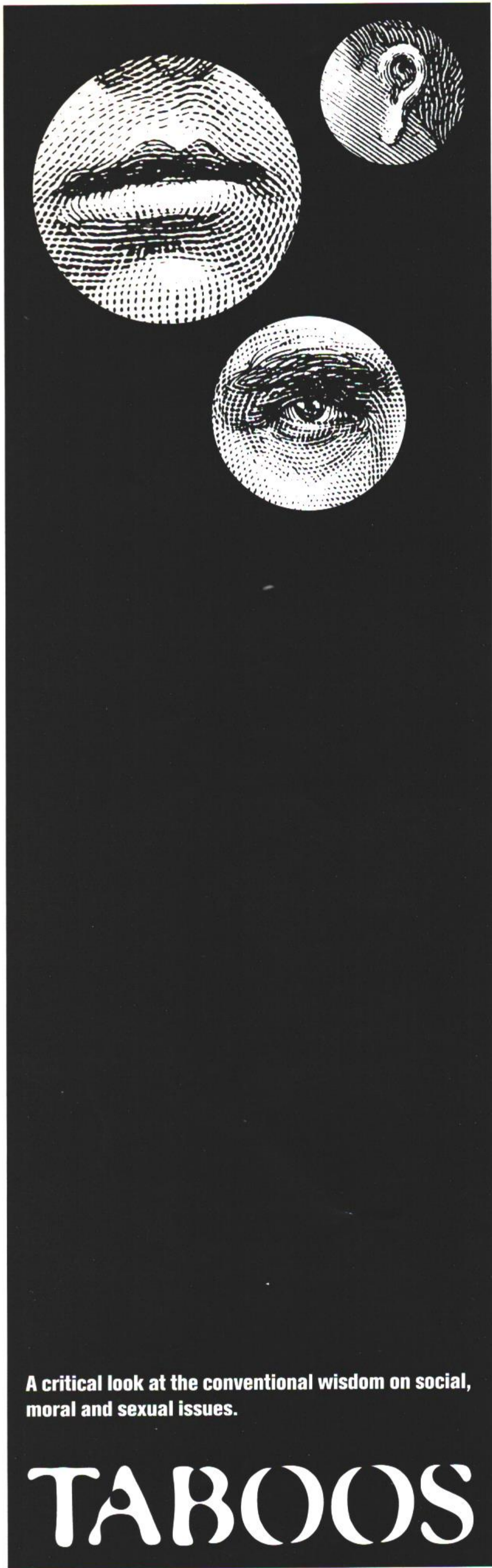
When the seagulls follow the trawler it is because they think that sardines will be thrown into the sea. Merci.

CANTONA speaks to the press after escaping a jail term for replying to *Simmons*

Please leave a message unless you are a journalist, in which case you can fuck off.

Stephen Fry's ansaphone

END



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

TABOOS

Amanda Macintosh
refuses to
panic about the
contraceptive pill

Keep taking

Pill scares—we have seen them before and no doubt we will see them again. Every couple of years, the safety of the contraceptive pill is put to question, and each time thousands of women are panicked into swapping the relatively few risks associated with hormonal contraception for the greater risk of unplanned and unwanted pregnancy.

In 1977, reports linked the pill to heart disease. In 1983 links to breast cancer and cervical cancer hit the headlines. Now we are told that the most sophisticated brands of pill increase women's risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT). In October the Department of Health advised GPs to stop prescribing pills containing the progestogens gestodene and desogestrel and to switch pill-users to other formulations. The advice caused a mega-panic among women, among doctors (many of whom first heard the announcement on the evening news), and among pharmaceutical companies who face seeing their best-selling brands disappear from the market.

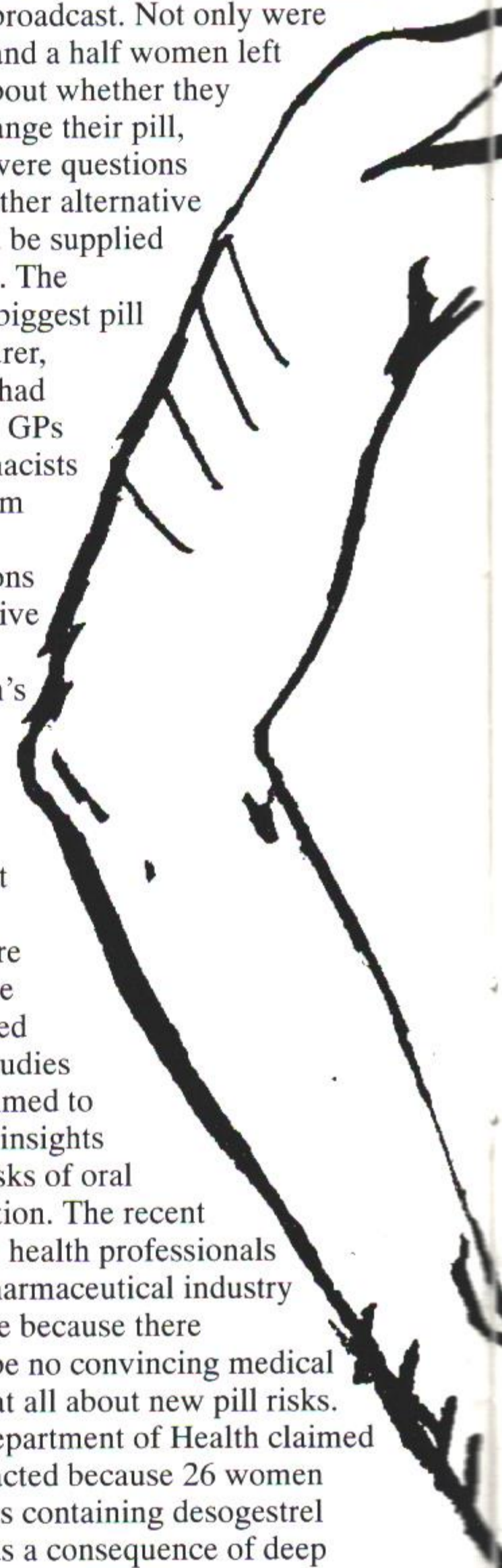
There is usually a little something at the root of a pill panic. For instance, there is an accepted association between the pill and breast cancer—but the increased risk is very, very small. Among non-pill users, two women in every 1000 under the age of 35 will get breast cancer; among pill-users the number rises to three. No one is quite sure why this is the case, and there is some speculation that the pill only hurries along a cancer which would have emerged anyway later in life. It is also true that pill-users are more prone to cervical cancer than sexually active women who use barrier methods of contraception, but this may be because barrier methods protect against the genital wart virus (some types of which are associated with cervical cancer) rather than because of any effect of the pill itself.

Beyond the evidence, however, pill scares are always built on hype and hysteria. And October's alarmist warning, issued at a snap Department of Health

press conference, set a new standard for panic. Half of all pill-takers use the 'suspect' brands Femodene, Femodene ED, Minulet, Triadene, Tri-Minulet, Marvelon and Mercilon. So over-the-top was the Department of Health's warning that within 24 hours doctors and family planning experts were queuing up to denounce the way in which the message had been broadcast. Not only were a million and a half women left anxious about whether they should change their pill, but there were questions about whether alternative pills could be supplied if they did. The country's biggest pill manufacturer, Schering, had to write to GPs and pharmacists asking them to restrict prescriptions of alternative pills to one month's supply in case stocks ran out.

At least past pill panics were in response to published medical studies which claimed to offer new insights into the risks of oral contraception. The recent scare took health professionals and the pharmaceutical industry by surprise because there seems to be no convincing medical evidence at all about new pill risks.

The Department of Health claimed that they acted because 26 women taking pills containing desogestrel had died as a consequence of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) in the last 14 years, and 12 taking gestodene pills had died in the last nine years. Yet this is





the tablets

not new information. And far from illustrating the dangers of the pill, the small number of deaths over a decade or so is testimony to the safety of a drug taken by vast numbers of women every day.

The risk of a potentially fatal blood clot among women who take gestodene or desogestrel-based brands is estimated to be 30 per 100 000 users per year, compared with 15 per 100 000 users per year of other types of pill. The risk of DVT for a healthy woman not on the pill is five per 100 000. And the risk of thrombosis for a healthy woman during pregnancy is 60 per 100 000.

In other words, your risk of suffering a DVT whether you are on the pill or not is negligible, and far lower than it

would be if you were pregnant. Smokers over 35 do have a significantly higher risk, as do

women with a personal or family history of circulation disorders, but these women should be advised against using the pill. Current medical opinion believes that young women who unexpectedly suffer clotting problems while on the pill carry a particular protein in their blood which can be detected by a simple blood test. Had the Department of Health been trying to solve a genuine public health problem in October, it might be thought that a more rational response would have been to

advise GPs to screen pill users for that protein.

But the pill panic had nothing to do with providing rational solutions or a rational discussion of the facts. Even the studies which the Department of Health used to back up its case were interpreted in a shoddy, unscientific manner. Much of the medical research which health officials claimed justified their action has in fact been floating around for years and is largely discredited.

For example, in 1988, Dr Herbert Kuhl of Frankfurt University claimed that gestodene-based pills increased women's risk of blood clots. But Kuhl's findings were criticised by other experts as 'bad science'—he had studied just 22 women, and subsequent attempts to repeat the study could not replicate his findings. In 1991 a panel of 16 experts, organised by Professor Walter Spitzer, chair of epidemiology at McGill University, re-examined the evidence following continued speculation about gestodene. They declared Kuhl's work to be 'unreliable and uninterpretable'.

Paradoxically, Spitzer's subsequent work lit the touch-paper to the latest explosion. He has been conducting a study of almost 4000 pill users in Europe and a preliminary paper drew attention to the tiny increase (estimated at two a year in Britain) in deaths from blood clots among women on gestodene pills. It was this study that health officials used to justify their press conference. A furious Spitzer flew to London to condemn the British authorities as irresponsible for creating an epidemic of anxiety through 'the misuse of five years of my life's work'. The Department of Health had failed to mention that Spitzer's study was also looking at the possible benefits offered by gestodene pills in reducing women's risk of heart attacks. As several pill experts have pointed out, the partial presentation of Spitzer's work may lead women to switch from one pill to another to reduce a negligible risk of DVT, only to find their new pill ►

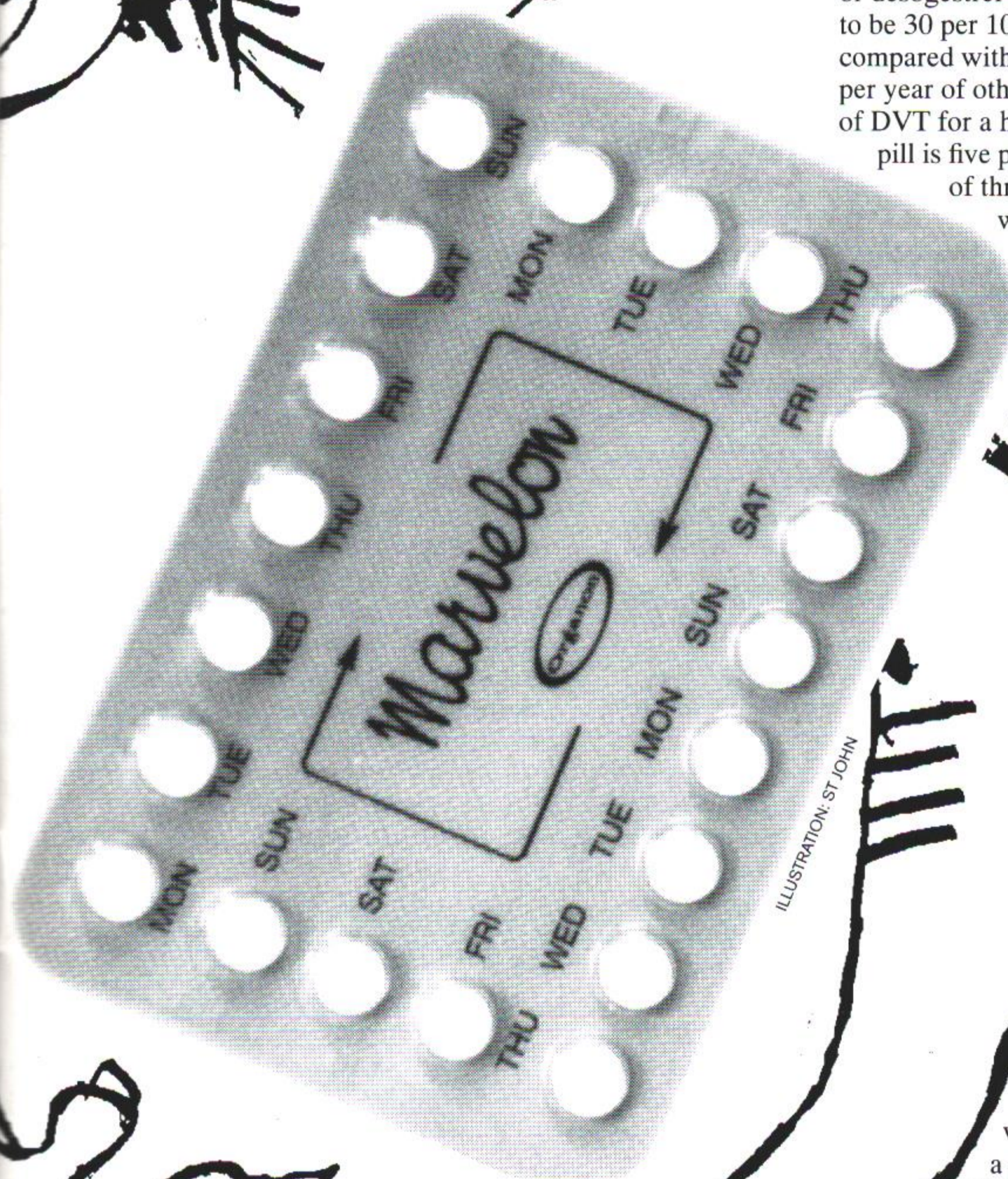


ILLUSTRATION: ST JOHN



increases the risk of heart attack!

Why did health officials issue their alarmist warning? Perhaps they panicked following high-profile reporting of the deaths of two young pill-users. Perhaps the action was triggered by the knowledge that medical negligence lawyers are attempting action against pharmaceutical companies on behalf of women claiming side-effects from hormone-based contraceptives. Perhaps there is a financial agenda. Gestodene pills are among the most expensive on the market, and only last year the government sought to prevent doctors prescribing the very brands of pill fingered in this latest panic, on cost grounds. Or perhaps, in these anxious times, health officials were instructed by ministers that it was better to appear to be doing everything possible to 'inform' women than be accused of holding back information on possible pill-related health risks.

Whatever the story behind the Department of Health's announcement, one thing is certain. Pill panics strike home today because there is an audience already susceptible to the message. In the 1960s the development of hormonal contraceptives was seen as a means to liberate women from the fear of untimely motherhood. The pill allowed women to enjoy spontaneous, recreational sex without consequences. Today, women are much more suspicious of what are seen as hi-tech methods of fertility regulation. Instead of celebrating the benefits of a contraceptive that allows you to have sex how you want when you want it, women's magazines are quick to point out the disadvantages of 'artificial hormones'.

It is a sign of the times that the next new contraceptive method to hit the market will be a mini-computer which monitors traces of natural hormones in a woman's urine, and confirms when she is able to conceive. She can then prevent pregnancy by avoiding sex at this time. This is, in effect, an updated version of the only method of family planning approved by the Pope. The old joke, 'what do you call a couple who rely on natural family planning? Parents', isn't told much in reproductive health circles these days because natural methods are back in fashion. Such is the mistrust of modern medicine, doctors and drug companies in the 'nervous 90s' that a significant number of women would rather put up with not having sex for a week each month than ingest artificial hormones.

Rather than look for the benefits of new drugs, there is an increasing tendency to look for the problems and side-effects. This is true throughout modern medicine. A new drug which can slow down the development of



multiple sclerosis is greeted, not by a celebration of biotechnology but with warnings about how much it will cost the NHS. Triumphs in genetic engineering are met with warnings about scientists playing God. It is no surprise that when it comes to contraceptive developments, the perils rather than the possibilities are scrutinised.

Panic can only impair proper research

An article which declared that the 'artificial hormones' in the pill could reduce your risk of ovarian cancer by 60 per cent and your risk of endometrial cancer by 50 per cent, halve your risk of benign breast disease and cut your chances of ovarian cysts to a tenth of what they would be if you used condoms would be just as true as one which said that gestodene pills increase your risk of DVT. But you are unlikely to see a report based on these statistics on the evening news.

Even the qualities of the pill which were once seen as advantageous are now questioned. We expect self-styled reactionaries such as Mary Kenny to declare that the pill has 'promoted promiscuity' and contributed to the exploitation of women. The pill, she wrote in the *Daily Mail* 'has signalled to young men that they have no responsibility in the procreative relationship and it has signalled to young women that they are crumpet on the market'. But when former punk wild child Julie Burchill condemns the pill for 'foster[ing] an attitude that young women should keep sex on tap at all times', we know that the times have indeed a-changed. Today's pill scares combine a moral message with a health message: sex is a high-risk activity, and if you use drugs to protect yourself against the risk of unplanned pregnancy you expose yourself to another set of risks.

It is only right and proper that the safety of contraceptive methods in general and the pill in particular should be closely scrutinised. Contraceptives are used by *well* women and so, unlike most other drugs, any side-effects or adverse reactions cannot be balanced against the unpleasant symptoms of a disease they are supposed to treat. You might think an increased risk of thrush is a small price to pay for an antibiotic cure for your excruciating cystitis. But a significant risk of a serious side-effect

from the pill would for most women be too high a price to protect against an unwanted pregnancy which might not happen anyway—especially when there are other methods of contraception available.

The contraceptive pill merits additional research because the long-term effects of the most modern brands are largely unknown. The pills we take today may look pretty much the same as those taken by our mothers in the early 1960s, but they are as different as today's Nissan Micra is from the old Mini Traveller. The amount of hormones contained in the pill is much smaller—one day's supply of hormones from the early pills was equivalent to a week's worth of the modern brands—but the nature of the hormones has changed. Modern pills still rely on oestrogens and progestogens but the formulations have been modified and may have a different effect on the body over the long term.

Furthermore, the sheer numbers of women on the pill make any problems with it a legitimate cause of public concern. Three million women in Britain—a quarter of all those aged 16 to 49—are currently on the pill. Despite increased use of condoms, the number of pill-takers continues to grow. But the culture of scares and alarmism that has grown up around the pill has nothing to do with serious investigation of its long-term effects. Indeed, panic can only impair proper research.

Nobody, not even the pharmaceutical companies who make mega-profits, will claim that the pill is entirely risk free. No drug is. But there is a huge body of evidence identifying those relatively small groups of women for whom the pill genuinely poses a significant danger, and GPs should be able to screen out those who would be better advised to use another method of contraception. For the rest of us, the contraceptive pill remains one of the best ways we have of enjoying sex without consequences.

Relative risks

Risk of an individual dying in any one year from:

flu	1 in 5 000
road accident	1 in 8 000
playing football	1 in 25 000
accident at home	1 in 26 000
murder	1 in 100 000
railway accident	1 in 500 000
as a result of taking the pill	1 in 500 000 to 1 in 1 million

Source: British Medical Association

The price of human eggs

There is something a little unsettling about people selling bits of their body so that others, who have money, can benefit. Stories from India of healthy young men selling a kidney to exclusive hospitals where rich patients pay for the chance of a donated organ sound like tales from the edge of humanity—and indeed they are. There is little sense of humanity when people are living close to starvation, and, when a market in organs offers a way to fill empty stomachs, the niceties of medical ethics are in short supply.

Yes, it is sordid. But however abhorrent the situation seems, at least the relationship between rich and poor is clear. The rich have the money to buy health, and the poor jeopardise their own health to earn enough for themselves and their families to stay alive. The role of the market in medicine is clear too. Healthcare is just another setting in which the rich get the service they pay for, and those who cannot pay go without.

In Britain, health providers like to pretend it is not really like this. Here, too, your chances of receiving life-saving treatment may well depend on your ability to pay. But while the role of the market mechanism is seen as an acceptable organising principle for the distribution of resources within the health service, there is still a pretence that the market does not extend to dealings with patients.

In Britain any suggestion that financial inducements could be used to increase the number of organs for transplant would be greeted with outrage. We are not even paid to donate blood. In fact much is made of the 'gift relationship' between those who donate and those who may need to receive. Blood donation is seen as a civic responsibility which should be untainted by financial reward. The notion that there should be a financial incentive to contribute is always met by squeals of outrage that, should payments be offered, the poor would end up selling their blood to survive.

The same discussion has enveloped recent suggestions that fertile women might be offered a financial inducement to 'donate' eggs for use in infertility treatment. In October the issue received a blast of publicity following the discovery, by the media, of an agency which brings together women in need of donated eggs and those who are willing to provide them—for a fee. The arrangement between the women gets around the current regulations which specify that clinics themselves should not provide a fee to donors.

The story provided a cue for medical ethicists of all persuasions to come together and condemn the undermining of the gift-relationship. Baroness Warnock, who chaired the committee which drafted the law and the guidelines under which infertility clinics now operate, called for legislation banning payment for eggs, claiming that 'eggs should be donated like blood'. Most infertility experts fell in behind her.

The principled objection of the profession is a bit bizarre and, you could argue, more than a little hypocritical. Men are routinely paid £15 'expenses' for providing sperm for donation. OK, it's not much, but then all the guy has to do is wank into a jar, and the fees have kept medical students in beer money for years. Egg donation involves a woman undergoing prolonged hormone treatment to stimulate her ovaries and then an invasive medical procedure, sometimes under general anaesthetic, to extract the eggs. So any payment—expenses or fee—would need to be significantly more. The going rate seems to be between £750 and £1000.

Until now such payments have been banned and, as not many women in their right mind would go through this painful performance for altruistic reasons, donated eggs are almost as rare as hen's teeth. But, as everyone working in the infertility field knows, many clinics organise *quid pro quo* arrangements—perhaps offering free IVF treatment if a woman allows those of her eggs not used in her own treatment to be used for someone else. This has gone on for years, the ethics of it have occasionally been debated, but the regulatory authorities have turned a blind eye. Why? Probably because the explicit exploit-the-poor-to-aid-the-wealthy aspect is absent. Everybody can be very refined and talk about the significance of the 'gift of life'.

One reason why payment-for-eggs cases give cause for concern is that infertility treatment is about the creation of new lives. Professor Bob Winston, the infertility world's medical moralist, has argued that he opposes payment for eggs

because 'treating children like commodities seems sleazy'. At least he has the integrity to oppose private treatment *per se* and to refuse to work outside the NHS. As for the rest of the medical profession, it is hard to see how they can claim that it is unethical to pay women for their eggs while accepting that it is quite ethical for women to pay for medical treatment. You either accept the role of the market or you do not. Because when healthcare can be bought and sold, then sperm, blood, eggs and kidneys will all find their price.

The medical authorities are doubly sensitive to the 'cash for eggs' controversy at a time when there is such heightened sensitivity to economic issues in the health service. When every discussion about healthcare seems to end in a debate about money, the old ethos and ethics of the NHS seem far away—and a reassertion of altruism and the need for gift-relations is a useful foil to demonstrate a sham commitment to past principles. It is perverse that those who have praised the values of market principles in healthcare are overcome with altruism when it comes to egg donation. As a result, women are expected to make gifts of their eggs while market principles rule clinical services.

It is worth reminding those who support the market that the sale of eggs, of kidneys and ultimately of life itself to the highest bidder is the logical extension of their system—sleazy as it is. ●

Why is it unethical to sell eggs but ethical to sell healthcare?

A killjoy's and loser's guide to the lottery

The National Lottery has been turned into an all-purpose national scapegoat, says Mick Hume

What can the National Lottery draw tickets and scratchcards on sale at your local shop have to do with the announcement of 'a reduction of trouser-making capacity' in Cleveland? Ask Peter Lucas, chief executive of Baird Menswear Brands.

In early November, the Baird's boss announced that his firm was stopping the suit jacket production line and cutting trouser-making capacity at its factory in Hartlepool, Cleveland, with the loss of 290 jobs. And he blamed the £100m a week taken by the National Lottery for the sales downturn. 'All that money is coming from somewhere', the shrewd Lucas told the *Financial Times*.

Maybe so, but why would anybody suppose that it is coming out of Baird Menswear's trouser pockets? Is it the case that if people were not queuing at the newsagent's counter to get their lottery tickets they would be beating at the gates of Baird's, demanding to buy dusty suits which even their manufacturer admits are hardly the height of fashion in Hartlepool? Baird's workers were certainly not in the mood to take out their anger on Anthea Turner, staging a protest stoppage to point the 'It's you' finger of blame at their bosses instead.

Yet Peter Lucas is not alone. In the same week that he gave his staff their cards, top City economists claimed that the National Lottery was responsible, not just for cutting trousers, but for depressing the entire British economy.

Noting that the annual rate of economic growth in Britain fell from four per cent in 1994 to less than 2.5 per cent in the third quarter of 1995, David McKie, economist at the merchant bank JP Morgan, declared that the National Lottery was responsible for around a third of that slump. In McKie's eyes, it appears, the lottery rather than the poor productivity of British firms is the major reason why the economy is teetering back towards recession. (Presumably the only reason why business confidence figures slumped to a three-year low in November was because the top executives surveyed had failed to win a tenner in the weekly draw.) Torn between the desire to celebrate the tax-spinning lottery and the need to grab hold of any passing excuse for economic failure, the Treasury agreed with McKie that the lottery must have reduced the economy's growth, but refused to speculate by how much.



Just as chaos theory suggests that the flapping of a butterfly's wings on one side of the world could cause a hurricane on the other, so Lucas, McKie & Co seem to think that if a butterfly buys a lottery ticket in the City of London it could create industrial devastation in the north-east of England. But why on Earth should the success of the National Lottery be seen as a cause of failure in the national economy?

It is not as if people are deciding to purchase a lottery ticket rather than investing their pound coin in the hi-tech capital goods British industry needs to compete on the world market. Nor is a shortage of money (which McKie claims is caused by lottery winners hoarding their loot) responsible for the lack of investment; indeed many British corporations are currently loaded down with multi-million pound cash surpluses that make the biggest lottery winners look like paupers by comparison. The problem behind the falling growth figures is the shortage of profitable outlets in Britain where capitalists could invest their mountains of capital, not the

abundance of lottery outlets where you and me can squander the national assets a pound at a time.

The nonsense about scratchcards being responsible for Britain's economic crisis can only appear credible because of the general 'I-blame-the-lottery' attitude which seems to prevail in every public debate today. The notion that lottery organisers Camelot (expected annual turnover £5 billion) have got the British economy (annual output £550 billion) by the numbered balls sums up the irrational and alarmist terms in which the lottery is now being discussed.

The National Lottery has been turned into an all-purpose national scapegoat for Britain's ills. While national heritage secretary Virginia Bottomley stands alone in crediting the lottery with 'the rebirth of Britain', everybody else is making equally bizarre claims about its detrimental effects. It seems that almost every day



PHOTOS: BBC, CAMELOT

Ireland wrung their hands over the way that 'the National Lottery is undermining the public culture which has served us well...the way that the National Lottery is adversely affecting our society'. Meanwhile Methodist elder statesman Lord Soper laid into the lottery as 'a cowardly and stupid way of compensating for a lack of moral purpose'. Anybody would think that Britain had been a happily united, morally certain, culturally confident and God-fearing nation until that fateful day when the lottery balls started spinning in November 1994. The church leaders' attempt to connect their own loss of moral authority and influence with the rise of the evil lottery looks like a more outrageous confidence trick than anything attempted by Camelot's advertisers.

(Incidentally, the Social Responsibility Representatives' report also noted that 'the National Lottery confronts the churches with certain ethical dilemmas'—presumably over whether or not they should profit from gambling by applying for grants from the lottery Good Causes' fund. Every church except the Church of Scotland has so far managed to defeat its conscience in this wrestling match, and opted to take the filthy lucre.)

Others, too, have sought to load the responsibility for major social problems on to the back of the National Lottery. Social commentator David Selbourne has laid into the lottery in remarkably sweeping terms:

'Morally, it is disruptive as it destroys people's aspirations. It distorts the valuation of work and effort by randomly rewarding individuals, handing enormous sums to those who have done nothing to deserve it.'

Now, you might naively have thought that people's aspirations are being destroyed by the fact that they can see little chance of getting a decent job and a good life in today's climate of recession and insecurity. You might even have supposed that the 'valuation of work and effort' had been distorted by a system in which many are working longer and harder for less reward. But it seems you were wrong. According to David Selbourne, it's the lottery wot done it all. He appears to think that the lottery is like a new outpost of the dependency culture, creating sloth and destroying enterprise by handing the British people riches on a plate. He obviously does not play the bloody thing.

The medical profession, too, seems to be developing something of a lottery fetish, linking it with problems which have rather deeper roots than a computerised lucky dip on a 15-minute TV show. In an editorial entitled 'Gambling with the nation's health?', the *British Medical Journal* identified the problematic 'social impact of the National Lottery':

'If the lottery widens inequalities of income it will have important implications for health, as shown by evidence of an association between inequality of income in industrialised countries and lower life expectancy.' (26 August 1995)

The one fact in this statement is that the poor live shorter, more sickly lives. Highlighting that association between income and health might provide a useful counter to all of the fashionable propaganda about our health being determined by personal behaviour and diet. Yet the *BMJ* seems to mention the link, not to attack poverty itself, but only to get a new angle for bashing the lottery. Even when they recognise a real problem, these days it seems never to take the po-faced experts long to find a way to blame the National Lottery for everything from ill-health to inequality.

Mention of poverty brings us to the nub of the killjoy's case. In parliament, newspaper offices and pulpits, brows furrow and breasts are beaten as the moralisers rail against the lottery for preying on the poor. This line of attack might sound reasonable enough to many people. But scratch the surface, and there is something much more objectionable being said.

The argument is not really against poverty as such; nobody would need to mention the lottery to protest about that. At root, the campaign against the 'exploitative' National Lottery is a complaint about the way that the poor spend their money. It is a sanctimonious criticism of alleged fecklessness and lack of moral fibre among the lower orders, who are being duped by wicked Camelot into spending 'money they cannot afford' on lottery tickets and scratchcards. The emphasis is always on the need to constrain the sinful spending of impoverished individuals who cannot be trusted to make their own decisions. It does not seem to have occurred to these critics that the real problem might be that we live in a society where some people cannot even spend a pound as they see fit without having to worry about whether they can afford it.

There are some striking parallels between the anti-lottery attitudes of bodies like the Methodist church and the Labour and Liberal parties and their old crusade against the 'demon drink'. Just as a cocktail of alcohol and the moral weakness of the working classes was held responsible for poverty, violence and family breakdown in the past, so the combination of scratchcards and the immorality of the modern 'underclass' is blamed for similar problems today. And the politicians and priests still see the solution as imposing more controls on the way people behave, and reducing the temptations which the devil sets before the poor. Back then they demanded (and got) restrictive licensing laws and no drinking or dancing on Sundays. Now they want fewer scratchcards, less advertising, smaller jackpots, and tighter restrictions on who is allowed to buy lottery tickets, in order to save us from ourselves.

This patronising attitude permeates every discussion about 'ordinary people' and the National Lottery. 'I have never gambled in my life', pronounces holier-than-thou playwright and professional scouser Alan Bleasdale, before gasping of his 'moral horror' at the way that 'the worn-out, the elderly, the shabby and the desperate' queue up to waste their money on ►

over the past couple of months some worthy body has issued a report accusing the lottery of harming the British way of life in one way or another.

David McKie has branded the lottery 'a new religion', and many other commentators seem convinced that playing the game is a dangerous form of devil-worship for the 1990s. Like the folk demons of old, the lottery has been blamed for everything that people do not like but cannot understand about modern life. It is a whipping-boy upon which politicians, priests and pressmen are working off many of their fears and frustrations. In an age when they all agree that 'There is no alternative' to the market, nobody dares to suggest that their problems might be a consequence of capitalist society having reached an impasse. Other explanations must be found, other guilty parties identified. And something as big and brassy and popular as the National Lottery, with its brazen celebration of money and fun, is a prime suspect for the killjoys and do-gooders.

Take the churches: their leaders seem to have become convinced that the lottery is somehow to blame for everything that they object to in society today. In a recent lengthy statement on the lottery, the Social Responsibility Representatives of the Council of Churches for Britain and

lottery tickets while 'every small charity myself and my friends are involved in has lost out'.

The concerned tone of the Methodist Conference's statement about the impact of the lottery on 'the poor, the unemployed and the vulnerable' conceals a similarly disparaging attitude. Note, for instance, the Methodists' particular objection to 'the potentially addictive' scratchcards: 'The wide availability of scratchcards, and the big prizes they offer, backed by massive advertising, makes them potentially extremely harmful.' Sorry, but why should any of these factors make scratchcards 'extremely harmful'? Only if you believe that the masses are gullible fools, ripe to be led down the path to sin and damnation by the lure of bright cardboard, fancy adverts and big pound signs. It goes without saying that the members of the Methodist Conference themselves, like other members of the moral lobby, are immune to the siren-like call of the scratchcards which is supposedly turning the rest of us into idiots and addicts.

The widely expressed opinion that 'big prizes' can be 'extremely harmful' sums up the outlook of the lottery's moralising critics. It says that most people are such immature morons that they could not handle having money without harming themselves and others. So when the *Guardian* published its list of lottery 'Losers' it included two of the biggest—but most working class—lottery winners, who it suggested had not found inner happiness from their millions (although they have found luxury homes, classic cars and a helicopter). In debates on the lottery leading Labour and Liberal politicians have expressed similar views on the dangers of easy wealth. No doubt we can expect a Tony Blair-Paddy Ashdown

government to impose punitive taxes which relieve all of Britain's idle rich of the timebomb ticking in their bank accounts. Or perhaps not.

The National Lottery's critics might say they object to it as a 'tax on the poor'. But their real message was put more honestly by right-wing journalist Boris Johnson, who called it 'a tax on stupidity'. They think many of us are just too thick to watch Mystic Meg or scratch a card without running the risk of being corrupted and addicted for life.

The snobbish down-your-nose view of lottery players was captured well by the letters which the *British Medical Journal* received in response to the editorial quoted above. Written by medical professors and consultants, they were published under headings such as 'Lottery is immoral', 'Inability to reason statistically is prime cause of lottery fever', and 'Lottery has Orwellian resonances'—the latter from a consultant microbiologist who reminded *BMJ* readers that, in 1984, Big Brother used a lottery to keep the stupid 'proles' happy. Which only goes to show that George Orwell was an elitist snob too.

The fact is that around 90 per cent of people in the UK have played the lottery at some time, with no sign of ill-effects. It is what used to be called 'harmless fun'—a concept deemed inherently contradictory in our fearful, safety-obsessed age. The proportions of players are spread relatively evenly across social classes. Of course

in one sense the critics are right to claim that spending money on a lottery ticket affects the poor 'disproportionately', since a pound is a bigger proportion of a social security Giro than it is of an executive's salary cheque. But that is true of money spent on everything from food and clothes to fuel and cars. So why single out the lottery for protests about inequality? Because, like the demon drink, it combines the elements of sin, personal choice and victimhood that are the stuff moralistic sermons are made of.

All in all, the circus surrounding the lottery offers a telling insight into the state of public life in Britain today. It reveals that the government

The lottery's critics think the masses are gullible fools easily led to sin and damnation

is so unpopular that, even when it introduces an initiative as popular as the National Lottery, it quickly backfires on the Tories in a cloud of recriminations. But don't get too smug about that. The opposition parties' sanctimonious criticism of the lottery for leading the gullible poor astray and tempting us with 'too big' jackpots also provides a glimpse of the grey future in store for Britain under a Labour-Liberal government. When the Liberal Democrat conference in September voted to limit the size of lottery jackpots, one delegate warned his colleagues not to single themselves out as 'the killjoy party'. So long as Blair's New Labour is around, he need not worry on that score.

No doubt the Tory Treasury is using the lottery to subsidise public spending and conceal cuts, Camelot shareholders are making a lot of money, and well-connected people like the Churchill family have enjoyed handsome hand-outs from the lottery's Good Causes fund. But it should hardly come as a shock to discover that an enterprise is being run to make a profit and the rich are reaping the benefits. Welcome to capitalism: if you want to do something about changing it, the lottery is the least of your problems.

It is time to stop whingeing about the National Lottery being 'unfair', and start worrying about the dangerous assumptions that underlie most of the criticisms of it—assumptions about 'ordinary people' being feckless, irresponsible fools who need to be told how to spend their own money and run their lives.

Given the religious fervour which seems to run through much of the argument, it is ironic that one of the more sensible statements on the lottery came from Rabbi Julian Jacobs, the Chief Rabbi's spokesman on relations with non-Jews. 'People have to be relied upon to be arbitrators of their own lives', he says. 'If they choose to spend their money on the lottery that is up to them.' We're with you, Rabbi. But then again, as a leader of God's chosen people, maybe leaving it to the luck of the draw gives you an unfair advantage. ●



Small beer

The National Union of Students has launched a campaign to curb student drinking—a poisoned chalice, writes Erik Empson



How NUS sees its members: an illustration from the *Big Blue Book of Booze*

The National Union of Students (NUS) has brought a whole new meaning to watering down student politics. Its safer drinking campaign launched jointly with Drinkline (an alcohol helpline) warns that student drinking is dangerous and needs to be regulated.

The NUS campaign is promoted in *The Big Blue Book of Booze*, a bright and colourful pamphlet which epitomises a patronising attitude towards students. There are cartoons, daft puns and 'scary' diagrams, but very little information about the supposed dangers of drink. Doubtless budding computer scientists and media students will find the infants' school reading scheme style of the *Blue Book* 'accessible and informative'.

Is it possible to have a safe drink? Imagine a small non-alcoholic lager in a non-violent plastic glass fitted with non-spill stabilisers, sitting firmly on a green-cross-code beer mat with a free condom attached.

One of the things that the *Blue Book* recommends is that students have a 'drink diary', monitoring their drinking to be sure that they keep in line with the recommended units per week. This way, they can work out which 'risk' category they fit into.

However, the figures for student drinking levels are remarkably low. According to the Health Education Authority, the average young man of 18-24 consumes 18.8 units of alcohol per week, the average young woman 6.4 units. This is actually below the recommended levels of 21 units and 14 units per week respectively (21 units is about 10 pints of beer, or probably 20 pints of the beer served in a student union bar). Drinkline's picture of alcohol-crazed students is far from reality.

The assumption behind the *Blue Book* is that drinking at university leads to drinking later in life. NUS president Jim Murphy sees his role as providing 'education about safe limits of drinking' which may 'prevent students and young people from establishing drinking habits which could prove a problem later in life and can threaten

their health'. Perhaps, as an aspiring Labour politician, Jim is getting tough on the causes of becoming a wino while shadow home secretary and former NUS president Jack Straw gets tough on winos. But is the link he fears a real one?

Most people will recognise that it is not. It is nice that Jim is concerned about my welfare from cradle to grave, but I already have a mother to do that for me. The reality of student life is that it is three years in which to let go, before you are forced to work like a Russian peasant for the rest of your life to pay off your student debt. The notion that drinking at university is linked to alcoholism in later life is surreal.

Why, on so little evidence, has NUS launched this campaign? You do not have to read between the lines of the *Blue Book* to realise that the safer drinking campaign is about lecturing students about their personal lives. Drinking is attacked on the grounds that it leads to promiscuous, violent and irresponsible behaviour. Through a discussion of drink, NUS can poke its nose into a whole number of things that students supposedly get up to and that NUS does not like.

The pamphlet gives us a caricature of a 'typical' night's drinking which looks more like an episode of *Crapston Villas* than the union bar. Fiona drinks to keep up with the lads (God forbid!) but ends up having a 'marathon vomiting session' and, worse still, in bed with Wayne! This was probably a better bet than Gary who is gay and ends up in bed with Nobby, the barman (they didn't use a condom). Jane goes home drunk and is sexually harassed in a taxi, saved only by a sober taxi driver. Tut,tut.

The *Blue Book* says that promiscuous behaviour is caused by drinking, and throws us the figure that 45 per cent of students who drink have had sex with someone they would otherwise avoid. But lowering your inhibitions is what drinking is about, unless of course you do it for the taste. And waking up next to someone you wish you hadn't is surely all part of the experience. It would be more accurate to say that drinking is caused by a desire to be promiscuous.

The picture of the student bar as a swirling cesspit of fornication and sexually transmitted disease is unreal. Indeed NUS has heaped a whole new set of inhibitions on top of those your mum and dad gave you. Anyone who walks into a student union these days will have to wade through a barrage of free condoms, sexual advice and face a lot of young attractive students who will not have sex without love.

Under the heading 'how to be a bonehead drinker', the *Blue Book* maps out a drunkard's life of violence, unprotected sex, promiscuity, theft and general anti-social antics with all the sanctimony of a Victorian melodrama. In the *Blue Book*, drinking has been redefined from a normal, enjoyable and sociable activity to a nasty, irresponsible practice that only morons do. Throughout, alcohol is referred to as a drug, carrying with it all the connotations of addiction, misuse and irresponsibility.

Students have been drinking for years. Indeed the great problem with student politics has been its near-exclusive concern with cheap bar prices. But now 'safety' on campus has become the overriding concern—a catch-all term for the promotion of old-fashioned moralism in the new guise of 'safety consciousness'. Union campaigns have taken a turn towards safety—safety from crime, safe sex, safety from lecherous lecturers and a whole host of other equally negligible 'dangers'.

The intrusive focus on policing student behaviour is doing far more to undermine college life than drinking. What is the point of a union whose principle preoccupation is how to protect students from each other and from themselves? If we want to be saved we can join a religious sect—if we can find one that NUS hasn't banned already.

Instead of moral policemen, students need a union that will campaign for better resources and bigger grants. The fact that many students cannot afford the price of a pint is a far bigger problem than potential alcoholism on campus. ●

Shopping at Boots

Jan Montague
sees the
'child pornography'
scandal over
Julia Somerville's
photographs as
a snapshot of
a society in which
we are all under
constant suspicion
and surveillance

So we are all potential child pornographers now. When Julia Somerville and her boyfriend Jeremy Dixon were arrested in November, after taking bathtime snapshots of her young daughter, it highlighted the fact that today we are all under suspicion, our behaviour measured by the standards of the lowest un-common denominator—in this case, paedophiles.

Somerville and Dixon were arrested after the newsreader's boyfriend went to collect two films which he had taken into Boots the chemists in Covent Garden to be developed. Photo-lab assistant Sheldon Atkinson had reported one of the films to his superiors, in line with the company's guidelines to staff, because it contained 28 images of Somerville's daughter naked in the bath. The police were informed and arrived to lay in wait for Dixon.

What exactly is Boots on the look-out for? Several commentators observed that a child pornographer with half a brain would hardly reveal their perversion to the local chemists. In any case, paedophiles are turned on by images which the rest of us would not recognise as in any way erotic. It has been noted that paedophiles in prison pass around babywear catalogues—so when are the police going to start knocking on the doors of Mothercare customers?

Apparently it was the number of pictures of Somerville's child and the fact that her boyfriend asked for a duplicate set that alerted 'photo shopper' Sheldon Atkinson to the dangers of the abusive bathtime nightmare. If it had just been one or two snaps, he said, it would be all right, but 28 was 'too many'. Which poses the question, how many equals obscene? Would six of the same bathtime pictures be acceptable, or 12, or 20?



A picture of innocence?

Even poor, confused Sheldon had to admit that the child 'was smiling and didn't seem miserable or worried'. In some of the shots her mother was apparently visible, reflected in the mirrored bathroom tiles—ogling her naked daughter, or keeping an eye on her? It all depends on whether you have a dirty mind or not.

As the definition of child abuse expands to include anything from smacking to taking photographs without a child's consent, we can all be caught up in the web of suspicion. It is not that there is a sudden upturn in dodgy relationships with children, but that the world is viewed through suspicious eyes that imagine the worst in what were once seen as normal relationships. Stepfathers, boyfriends and grandfathers who want to get close to the children in their families are now suspected of having base motives, and are labelled naive if they do not relate to the children in a way that is constantly tuned to how it may be misconstrued.

Retired agony aunt Claire Rayner was one of the few to raise the far-reaching consequences of allowing the dirty minds at Boots and Scotland Yard to define what is normal in human relationships:

'What is the world coming to if we react to the nudity of small children with such disgust and suspicion? ...There is no erotic content in the sort of pictures taken by parents every day....When I look through my family's photograph album, I see pictures of my children nude on the beach, in the bath, in the garden. I would guess that there isn't a parent in the country who hasn't got similar pictures.' (*Independent*, 6 November 1995).

I would guess there is hardly a parent in the country who isn't having doubts about those pictures now, thanks to the self-appointed protectors of the nation's children.

The exaggerated sense of the number of people around with sinister sexual preferences, and the assumption that we are all confused about the boundaries of normal adult-child relationships, reflects the period of fear and uncertainty in which we live. It leads inevitably to demands for more guidelines and regulations—and more intrusion into our affairs by outside agencies.

Boots has obviously agreed to act as eyes and ears for the police, although the company refused to comment on the nature of this particular unhealthy intimate relationship. It seems that while we must expect to have to explain our intimacies on demand, the snoopers are under no obligation to lay open to public scrutiny their own dodgy couplings with the authorities. The police can now spy on areas of our lives that in the past

they could only fantasise about: getting their beady eyes inside our bathrooms and sticking their noses into our intimate moments.

The publicity given to the Somerville case brought to light numerous other incidents involving Boots photo-police. A mother was arrested for taking shots of her three-year old daughter lying naked by the fireplace, with the intention of giving them to the little girl's grandma as a Christmas present. Holiday-makers who put their holiday snaps in for processing found the police knocking on their door the following morning demanding an explanation for the pictures of them mooning at the camera and smoking dope (in Greece). It is clear that the only exceptional thing about the Somerville case was the celebrity status of the victim.

Boots has a policy that 'if a film contains pictures of activity which staff suspect to be illegal, the police are contacted and offered the opportunity to see the film. It is then up to the police to take any further action they consider appropriate'. According to the over-active imaginations behind the counter, not only is bath time an orgy for paedophile tastes, but holiday snaps are to be treated as the stuff of the international porn industry. As Sheldon Atkinson said, 'we get a few dodgy ones of people on holiday who have gone over the top and flashed the occasional breast, and we normally keep those back'. Quite why flashing the occasional dodgy breast should be an 'activity which staff suspect to be illegal', or how we are supposed to take photos on foreign beaches without the inclusion of the odd nipple, remains a mystery. Perhaps Boots and their shady friends in Scotland Yard's Paedophile and Child Pornography Unit will issue some guidelines to clean up our Costa Brava camera angles.

Nosey parkers

As what was once considered normal behaviour comes under suspicion, more and more unexpected agencies are entering into a sordid liaison with the authorities to keep an eye on us. Under the government's 'Milkwatch' and 'Postwatch' schemes, milkmen and postmen are recruited to watch for suspicious activities such as coming home late at night or having strange cars parked outside your home. Pharmacists have previously been asked to check up on customers who might be 'benefit fraudsters' (a move which was resisted by many in the profession who did not want this new policing role). The authorities are finding more ways of prying into ever more private areas of our lives. If even the local chemist's assistant is a professional nose yarker then who isn't?

Yet even though many people felt uneasy about the treatment of Somerville

and Dixon, few felt able to challenge the right of Boots and the police to investigate the pictures and arrest the couple. Public criticism was largely confined to the media's role, and the question of who leaked the story to the papers. Sheldon Atkinson was suspended from his job, not for shopping Somerville (that is, after all, company policy), but for talking about it to the *Sun*.

The authorities successfully muted any criticism of the police action by pressing the 'children at risk' panic button. The spectre of the child abuser has now become the most effective pretext for justifying any authoritarian measure. When they play the 'imagine-if-it-was-your-child' card, the powers that be feel confident of trampling over the rights of adults with impunity.

'Be grateful'

Clive C Walsh, director of the British Association of Social Workers, even wrote to the *Guardian* suggesting that, instead of complaining about her treatment, Ms Somerville should be using the spotlight to aid the anti-child abuse crusade by 'helping us all to be confident enough to welcome being asked to explain'. Silly old Julia for getting all hot and bothered about being labelled a child abuser, can she not see the empowering potential of being arrested, taken to a police station and questioned until 4am? So long as they tell us it is for the good of the children, we are supposed to 'welcome' the new inquisition.

The inevitable consequence of these child abuse scares is to teach us to eye each other with suspicion. Child protection experts always emphasise that abusers are cunning geniuses who can worm their way into tight-knit families. 'We know', Walsh wrote, 'just how often abusers of children insinuate themselves into family situations'. Tell us Clive, 'just how often' does this happen? Like all the facts of child abuse it is left to our imaginations. The *Sun* Woman's editor, Jane Moore, noted that 'if a boyfriend of mine used up an entire roll of film taking naked pictures of my daughter I would consider it very odd behaviour indeed'. In other words, we cannot even trust the people we are intimate with to be intimate with our children in case they turn out to be a raving paedophile.

By raising the spectre of the child abuser, the 'protectors' believe they can bulldoze through commonsense objections to their assumption of the role of moral guardians. While we are looking under our beds (or in them) for the bogey man, our rights and freedoms are being stolen through the back door by the milkman, the postman, the photo-lab assistant and the rest of the growing army of special constables and snoopers.

Massacring the in Rwanda



PHOTOS: SEAMUS MURPHY

e truth

The Rwandan civil war ended almost 18 months ago, yet the country remains obsessed with what is known as 'the genocide'—an obsession shared by human rights and relief agencies, and a United Nations war crimes tribunal.

Just back from a visit to Rwanda and the refugee camps in neighbouring Zaire, Fiona Foster argues that the obsession with 'the genocide' has criminalised an entire community and obscured the real causes of the Rwandan tragedy

More than a year after Rwanda's civil war was supposed to have ended, Kigali airport still looks like a battlefield. The walls are spattered with bullet holes, broken windows have not been replaced and shattered glass has not even been swept up. Arriving at the airport gave me the first of many signs that this was a country determined to put the evidence of what is known as 'the genocide' on display for all who visit.

'The genocide' is the description given to the killings carried out last year by supporters of the old regime, dominated by the Hutu ethnic group, before it was overthrown by the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), run by Tutsis. Civil wars are usually followed by calls for reconstruction and reconciliation. In Rwanda, however, such talk is considered morally reprehensible. Here aid agencies and human rights organisations are the first people to tell you that it is too early to talk about reconciliation—first the killers must be caught. Here aid agencies are more likely to be found building prisons or training magistrates than providing food or medical facilities.

While my hosts—young aid workers from Ireland—had not been in Rwanda during the war, they immediately embarked on a guided tour of 'the genocide'. Few visitors to Rwanda escape the tour, a gruesome sortie around the sites of civilian massacres carried out by the militia of the former government. Under the new government's orders, the badly

decomposing bodies of the victims have never been buried.

While it is hard not to be overwhelmed by the evidence of the horrific carnage, it was something I had not been prepared for which really struck me during my stay in Rwanda. On the three-hour drive from Kigali to Gicongoro, our car was stopped five times at Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) roadblocks. Waving their guns, the young soldiers made us get out of our car as they rummaged through our luggage, paying particular attention to written documents. Our hosts explained that a number of aid agencies had been thrown out of the country after documents critical of aspects of the new regime were discovered.

While we were detained I watched the hundreds of ordinary Rwandans forced to wait at the roadside as soldiers searched through the luggage of entire busloads. The atmosphere was tense, the people looked afraid, the soldiers were throwing their weight around. While my hosts told me that the RPA had stopped the genocide and saved the country, I was struck by the fact that the country's new army were not treated as saviours by the people.

Every day of my stay brought new reports of arrests and shootings by the RPA. One aid worker was visibly distressed to discover that, during her short holiday in Ireland, two Rwandans she knew had been killed and another thrown into prison by the RPA. When I asked whether she could do anything to help the one arrested, she looked shocked: 'But they might have been ►



involved in the genocide', she said, muttering that it is impossible to be sure about anyone in Rwanda. On the day I was leaving news was coming through of an RPA massacre of 200 Hutus in a dawn raid on a village on the border with Zaire and similar massacres have been reported since then.

Many of those arrested for genocide are implicated on the word of one or two accusers. In Rwanda today, if you

The UN tribunal will only investigate killings between April and July last year—which means the guilty will all be Hutus

don't like your next door neighbour, or would like his land, the thing to do is accuse him of involvement in the genocide. The fate awaiting those accused is grim. If they escape summary execution, they are thrown into chronically overcrowded jails in which people are quite literally rotting to death for want of space.

In Gitarama Prison nearly 7000 Rwandans, including over 100 children accused of genocide, are being held in a building with space for 600. It has been reported that four prisoners a day are dying in appalling conditions in this prison alone (Amnesty International Urgent Action, 9 June 1995).

While Western non-governmental organisations (NGOs) clamour for justice, the truth is that there is nothing resembling a judicial system in Rwanda. Justice in Rwanda today means revenge killings and internment without trial.

The official obsession with the need to punish those guilty of 'the genocide' has produced a polarised country gripped by fear and violence. When aid workers and human rights activists insist that it is too early to talk about reconciliation in Rwanda, they are echoing the line of the Tutsi-run government. In an interview with the British-based NGO African Rights, government minister Marc Rugenara summed up the official attitude to those accused of taking part in 'the genocide':

'Even death does not deserve them. But we cannot escape our responsibility to see them punished. If it is said that to have peace there can be no punishment, my answer is that there will never be peace in Rwanda.'

'The genocide' might be over in Rwanda, but there is no peace and there is certainly no justice.

One of the most disturbing things in Rwanda is the extent to which the moral certainties created by 'the genocide' have prevented any further investigation into the underlying causes of the civil war. By removing the massacres carried out by Hutu militia last year from their wider political context, NGOs have succeeded in replacing the search for real solutions with a one-sided search for punishment. This is reflected in the remit given to the Tribunal set up by the United Nations to try people accused of 'genocide' in Rwanda. While both sides committed terrible atrocities during the four-year war in Rwanda, the UN Tribunal will only investigate killings which took place between April and July last year—which means that the guilty will all be Hutus.

The other consequence of removing the massacres from the wider context of the war is that the blame is located in the pathological psyche of extremist Africans:

'Genocide is such a pathological political condition that truly unusual motives are required for people to contemplate it...Hutu extremism is a bland name for a political philosophy that is not only racist and fascist, but positively genocidal.' (*Death, Despair and Defiance*, African Rights, September 1994)

If this is really true, then clearly all that remains is to wipe out these pathological killers and we will have peace in Africa.

The brutal simplicity of this version of events, and of the narrow preoccupation with 'the genocide', ignores the complex factors behind Rwanda's civil war—most notably, the role played by outside powers in provoking and sustaining the bloody conflict.

In the popular version of events in Rwanda echoed by aid agencies and the Western media, the shooting down of President Habyarimana's plane in April last year was the green light for 'Hutu extremists' to unleash a pre-planned genocide against Rwanda's minority Tutsi community. This alleged attempt to exterminate an entire race was apparently only thwarted when the Rwandese Patriotic Front took power after the Rwandese Patriotic Army's military victory in July. The real story of the war in Rwanda is very different.

Sadly for the people of Rwanda, the RPA is not the saviour that the aid agencies and human rights activists would have us believe. And neither did the war in Rwanda start in April last year. The war began in 1990, when the RPA invaded Rwanda from Uganda, where it had been armed and trained by the Western-backed Ugandan government. The invasion had the

support of Britain, the USA and other Western powers which had been trying to impose 'democracy' on Rwanda for some time. The RPA was made up of members of Rwanda's minority Tutsi tribe, which had been favoured by the former Belgian colonial regime, many of whom fled Rwanda after independence. The story of Rwanda from 1990 to 1994 is one of a bloody battle for power between the RPA, backed by the USA and Britain, and the country's Hutu government under President Habyarimana, backed by France and Belgium. Both sides were responsible for human rights abuses and massacres.

By 1993 Rwanda was being torn apart by the war and by Western-imposed economic austerity. Belgium had switched its support to the RPF, leaving the French as the only Western power backing the government. Under pressure, in August 1993 the government reluctantly signed the Arusha Accords on power-sharing with the RPF. The Accords were backed by the USA, Britain, the United Nations, the World Bank and the Western media. When by February 1994 the Accords had not been implemented, the UN threatened to pull out its forces and allow a final RPF offensive. It was clear that the UN was handing Rwanda to the RPF on a plate. The Habyarimana regime was isolated and cornered. When the President was assassinated on 6 April 1994, the final, desperate phase of the war erupted. While government militia massacred civilians in terrible circumstances, this was not a pre-planned genocide of one tribe by another. Those targeted by government militia were Tutsis and Hutus suspected of supporting the RPA invasion.

Structural adjustment

In their depiction of 'genocide', the Western NGOs and their friends in the media have ignored the political forces at play in Rwanda over the previous four years and concentrated on creating the spectre of the 'Hutu extremist', pathologically inclined towards murder. In so doing, they have also deflected attention from the material conditions which influenced the levels of barbarity and desperation displayed in wars in Africa.

Rwanda is the most densely populated country in Africa. Each square kilometre of agricultural land has to support more than 400 people; 85 per cent of people live beneath the poverty line and a third of children suffer from malnutrition. The war in Rwanda coincided with the shock therapy administered by the World Bank's structural adjustment programme which produced even more misery through massive cuts in health and education programmes. There can

be no doubt that when neighbour killed neighbour in Rwanda, many did so as much in a desperate struggle for land and resources as in the battle for power. The war in Rwanda was particularly barbaric, but so were the conditions in which the Rwandan people were forced to live—conditions exacerbated by the very Western governments and international institutions which now sit in judgement on these people.

for even greater outside interference in the country. The term genocide was deliberately framed by NGOs in Rwanda in order to invoke the UN convention which obliges all signatories to 'prevent and punish genocide'. While the USA was reluctant to dirty its hands with a military intervention in Rwanda, the establishment of an American-run International Tribunal to deal with 'the

'the genocide', anything now goes for many NGOs in Rwanda.

I flew from Kigali to Goma a day after the Zairian government had started forcibly to repatriate some of the million Rwandan refugees who fled to Zaire after the RPF victory. While the BBC World Service reported that 'Hutu extremists' in the refugee camps were pressurising refugees not to return home, you did not have to be an extremist of any kind to see that Rwanda is not a safe place—especially for Hutu men. Many refugees fled into the volcanic hills around Goma to endure life without food and shelter rather than risk being forced to go back. Yet despite the evidence of revenge attacks and arbitrary detention inside Rwanda, the official line of the UN High Commission for Refugees and other aid agencies in Zaire was that voluntary repatriations should proceed. In the refugee camps the atmosphere was one of terror. Of course these people want to go home, many long to return to seek out friends and family. But many also know people who returned only to find that they are accused of involvement in 'the genocide', often by people now living in their homes.



Prisoners are held all day in a stair well, so overcrowded is this Kigali jail

Unlike many other conflicts in Africa, the Rwanda story has continued to attract the interest of the Western media. Much of the recent coverage has been critical of France and Belgium for harbouring Rwandans accused of genocide. Documentaries and features have 'exposed' the well-known role played by France in arming and supporting the old regime. Yet the media have never questioned the roots of the RPA or investigated the role of Britain and America in backing the RPA invasion. The fact that Paul Kagame, head of the new Rwandan army, was trained by the Americans and was formerly chief of intelligence in the US-supervised Ugandan army does not seem to concern journalists obsessed with 'the genocide'. While the media have always stressed the pre-planned nature of 'the genocide', no reporter has pointed out that the RPA invasion was a carefully planned invasion carried out with the full knowledge of the West.

Not only has the obsession with 'the genocide' prevented any proper investigation of the forces which led to the bloodshed, it has also legitimised the imposition of a Western-backed minority regime on an African state. Before the war Rwanda was 90 per cent Hutu, 9 per cent Tutsi and one per cent Twa—yet the government and army is now almost entirely Tutsi. If that wasn't enough, the NGOs' obsession with genocide has also legitimised the call

genocide' has allowed Washington to intervene in Rwanda's affairs in a morally acceptable way.

One of the worst consequences of the exclusive focus on 'the genocide' is that massacres and human rights abuses by the RPA are now being tolerated and even justified by NGOs and journalists. When the RPA massacred over 1000 Hutu refugees while forcibly closing down a displaced persons camp in Kibeho in March this year, human rights activists went so far as to claim that many of those killed were really the victims of 'Hutu extremists' in the camp. Journalists reported these claims around the world. Other killings, like the RPA massacre of 13 priests and two bishops in June 1994, are presented as understandable acts of revenge. Indeed some human rights and relief organisations have even praised the RPF as champions of international law:

'The RPF has one enormous credit to its name. It succeeded in inflicting a decisive military defeat on a genocidal regime, and thereby halting the mass killings of civilians and opening the prospect of the trial and punishment of those guilty of crimes against humanity. In doing so it was fulfilling its fundamental moral and legal obligations under international law.' (*Death, Despair and Defiance*)

It seems that, so long as it can be presented as revenge against

Awaiting judgement

By reducing the war in Rwanda to a genocide in which only one side participated, the NGOs have successfully criminalised an entire community—the majority of Rwanda's people. Aid agencies have even been attacked for providing food-aid to killers in the refugee camps. Some, including Médécins Sans Frontières, have withdrawn from the camps on this basis. Others like Oxfam have defensively argued that they must stay because there are innocent women and children among the killers. As I flew out of Goma, reports were coming through that the RPA had set up a screening centre on the border and had already arrested several hundred young men believed to be involved in 'the genocide'. The knowledge of what awaits them sickened me.

The lesson I would draw from my visit is that we must reject the term 'genocide' in Rwanda. It has been used inside and outside Rwanda to criminalise the majority of ordinary Rwandan people, to justify outside interference in the country's affairs, and to lend legitimacy to a minority military government imposed on Rwanda by Western powers.

Many of the people I talked to in Rwanda were convinced that they and their families would soon be killed. The sad reality is that while the obsession with 'the genocide' lives on, there will never be peace. ●

The End of the Free World



After declaring the End of History, what do you do for an encore? Francis Fukuyama told James Heartfield about his new book *Trust*, and explained that he's not so keen on liberty after all

The last time I heard Francis Fukuyama speak it was hard not to like him. He was promoting his famous first book *The End of History and the Last Man*, which celebrated the triumph of the 'free world'—read free market—in the Cold War. He was talking to a crowd of Hampstead intellectuals in Waterstones bookshop, and much as I wanted to take issue with him, the pious indignation of his audience was more objectionable. They were outraged that the free market should be allowed to operate without any regulation, regulation by people like themselves that is. In their eyes, everything was potentially so dangerous that too much freedom was a bad thing. Fukuyama's optimism about a future without strife was too much for these gloom merchants. By contrast, Fukuyama came across as a cheerful optimist, with a basic belief in the ability of his fellow man to make the right choices without interference from above.

Of course, Hampstead's Stalinesque elite had missed the point. *The End of History* was not as optimistic a book as it seemed. Underneath the triumphalist, post-Cold War rhetoric was a grim sense of historical closure. Fukuyama was putting the rhetorical flourishes on an idea that Britain knew only too well from our former PM Margaret Thatcher: 'There is no alternative'. Like Thatcher, Fukuyama was closing off the idea of any alternative to the free market mechanism as a way of organising society. Far from being an optimistic view of the future, still less one of unbounded freedom, this was a view that cut off all alternatives to the dictatorship of capitalism over man, 'the last man' in the more gloomy second part of *The End of History's* title.

The argument of *The End of History* took its force from the real changes in the balance of political power. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the retreat of radical regimes and movements in the Third World boosted the idea that the Cold War had been won. All the conflicts that had troubled the West previously would now come to a speedy conclusion. No more class conflict without the 'soviets' to stir them up; no more international conflict without the Red Army parked on the old border between East and West Germany; no more conflict in the Third World without the Soviet Union

to galvanise opposition to the West. From South Africa to the Philippines, a wave of democratisation was sweeping the world that, for Fukuyama, confirmed the dependence of civil and political liberty on the extension of the market.

Even in *The End of History*, there were some doubts about the world living in harmony under the market. Fukuyama acknowledged that 'history', which he took to mean political conflict, still lingered on in backward countries like Iraq. He argued that the West would need to wage war on these 'historical' societies until they caught up with the civilised, post-historical world. Nonetheless, the implication was that all the old conflict would eventually be left behind, an anachronism from a bygone, 'historical' age.

But in Fukuyama's new book, *Trust: New Foundations of Global Prosperity* it seems that all the conflicts he declared solved in *The End of History* re-emerge in different guises. *Trust* is Fukuyama's new thesis: without a culture of trust to undergird it, the market can be a problem, as much as a solution. On its own, he now says, the market is not enough. It needs cultural norms to hold it together, like the nuclear family and respect for your neighbours and for society. Interestingly, it is an argument that allows him to smuggle all the old conflicts that were declared solved in *The End of History* back into the picture.

Oh those Russians

In the over-mannered gentility of an English hotel tea-room, the dapper foreign policy adviser turned author is explaining the importance of a culture of trust to me. So, for example, poverty in Africa, something that we might have expected the extension of the free market and the triumph of democracy to solve, is apparently attributable to a lack of a culture of trust. Everyone is so busy ripping each other off and ignoring their responsibility to society that they never get anywhere.

And, says Fukuyama, that is why Russia, too, has not gained by the extension of the free market either: 'A lot of the problem in Russia right now is that there's no respect for the rule of law, people interpret the absence of a strong state as an excuse to steal, to terrorise their fellow citizens because

now all the restraints are off.'

By denouncing the Russian people for their lack of respect for 'law and order', Fukuyama gives a justification for the differential impact of the free market in the world, and its inability to develop large parts of the globe. It is not capitalism which creates unevenness and inequality, but the differing degrees of trust to be found around the world: 'it seems to me this is precisely an area where trust is critical, but it cannot be taken for granted and the levels of trust and personal responsibility vary from one society to another.'

Equal, but different

On the argument of *The End of History*, these kinds of differences should belong to the past. Then Fukuyama seemed to argue that it was the absence of the free market that held back underdeveloped societies. But now he explains the differential impact of the free market as something that happens for other reasons. A less tangible quality of culture, trust, or its absence, accounts for the success or failure of different societies. What was previously explained out of existence—the failure of the market system—is now brought back in as a problem of a cultural inadequacy on the part of the victims of that failure.

Fukuyama is careful to insist that he has not gone back on his word: 'I believe that the institutions issue has really been settled—that there is an optimal set of institutions, which is liberal democracy and capitalism, which form the basic framework for any modern society.' However, there are still differences to be explained: 'I think that's 80 per cent of the explanation. But if you're really at the end of history you have all these capitalist democracies that are quite different from one another, you've got to look at the remaining 20 per cent, this residual, and it seems to me that these cultural factors do matter.'

Underlying the discussion of cultural differences is a need to explain the relative success of Japan in comparison to America in recent years. American commentators have found the comparison irksome and some have exaggerated the differences. Generally this discussion involves pouring scorn on Japanese success, but some writers like Lester Thurrow have tried to justify a more combative ►



industrial policy by emphasising Japan's advantages over America. A Japanese-American himself, Fukuyama writes intelligently on the subject. *Trust* makes the point well that most authors exaggerate the differences between the two countries, and Fukuyama told me that cultural explanations of national differences are 'something that's subject to rather easy abuse'. The difference between those

The fantasy of a class peace at the End of history is premature, and Fukuyama is all too willing to reopen hostilities

people who said that Asians were just indolent and his own arguments that Japanese society is culturally more hard-working is that 'that was an old cultural prejudice', whereas 'all of mine are correct' he jokes.

Despite his more knowing attitude, Fukuyama partakes in all of the prejudices about the differences between the Japanese and Americans. 'I do think it's too conformist a society', he says. But his purpose is to emphasise what he sees as aspects of Asian societies that are lacking in the West: 'I think that in a way both economically and politically we really do want a kind of balance between individualism and the ability to cohere socially, and the Japanese push that balance too far over in the communal direction and I think present-day America has pushed that balance too far in the individualistic direction. So I think it would be healthy if both societies became a bit more like each other.'

Like so much of the comparative discussion of Japan and America, the real issue for Fukuyama is not international conflict, but rather the question of domestic order. Whether real or imaginary, the differences between those two countries are cited to highlight a problem in America. As Fukuyama sees it that problem is due to an excess of individual liberty over social cohesion. The weight of his argument is that individual liberty must be qualified. For that reason, he now takes issue with the traditional, individualistic case for the free market:

'The problem I have with modern neo-classical economics is that it's forgotten that complex side of behaviour and focuses only on man basically as a selfish individual and then tries to understand how we get to modern economics from that premise. I think that that's an unnecessary and

unnecessarily obscuring simplification of the basic human behaviour model.'

Well, that is all very well and good, but I get nervous when free marketeers start saying that there is more in life than freedom. Something tells me that he is not qualifying the free market in favour of human need or human development, more likely it is a call for social restraint, and he does not keep me waiting. 'You know, I believe that we have taken the concept of individual rights too far. In the United States our Bill of Rights is completely unqualified with regard to any other kind of social responsibility', he despairs, in a warm, West Coast twang.

So much for the triumph of the free world. No sooner has Francis Fukuyama got the 'institutions' he wants than he starts complaining that some people have too much freedom and need to be restrained. Behind his doubts about the virtues of freedom are the very conflicts that he thought he had wished away.

In the *End of History*, Fukuyama was operating according to a long-standing capitalist prejudice that social conflict was all due to left-wing agitation. He thought that once the contestation over 'institutions' like the market was resolved, so too was the conflict. But social conflict is built in to capitalist societies. The truth is that it was not the lower orders that were fighting a class war against respectable society, but rather that capitalism is built on a class war against the lower orders. The market facilitates the domination of capitalists over the rest of society. Consequently the fantasy of a class peace at the End of History is premature, and Fukuyama is all too willing to reopen hostilities in the name of defending 'society' against the recalcitrant: 'You have a class of people that are extremely violent...it's not just middle-class fantasies of sedition', he warns darkly. 'I mean, these are poor people that have to live in basically a kind of state of nature situation, with gunfire in their hallways every night.'

Rights reaction

So why is American society failing, given that it has enjoyed the benefits of the institutions of a free market and a liberal democracy? When I press the point Fukuyama suddenly becomes a lot more critical of capitalism: 'I think that part of it is the training of capitalism itself because that tends to disrupt a lot of traditional social relationships. You know you've lost lots of jobs in the mid-West where you had traditional communities or families and it's been very hard on them.'

However, as he sees it capitalism cannot really be the problem. Instead, people's own excessive expectations of

what society can deliver lead them to elevate their individual desires over social cohesion. The solution according to Fukuyama is to restrain their over-extended belief in liberty, that he dubs the 'rights revolution': 'I think that in a way the rights revolution is at the core of a lot of the problems. The rights revolution is simply a legal expression of a broader cultural problem which is a kind of celebration of individualism which in my view amounts to a certain kind of selfishness. What the rights revolution has done is it has given a moral language with which to legitimate what is ultimately a kind of selfish and asocial behaviour. I think it's something that's been happening in the United States for 30 or 40 years now.'

It is hard to square Fukuyama's view that there is too much liberty in the USA with the facts. Already there are more than a million people in jail there. Recently, under the three strikes and you're out rule, a 36-year old man was sentenced to life imprisonment in Los Angeles for stealing four packs of cigarettes.

Liberty v capitalism

But if the arguments in *Trust* mean anything, they mean that liberty and capitalism do not mix. As the capitalist economy fails to deliver, options and choices are narrowed. Without the relatively high incomes of the postwar era people find that the free market is more like a barrier to freedom. Restraining our civil liberties is a way of getting people to lower their expectations to accommodate capitalism's shortcomings. Instead of all of the propaganda about the free world, the triumph of capitalism can only mean that more and more of our civil liberties are held in the balance. And if that is the choice, I choose freedom over capitalism.

As he leaves, Fukuyama recalls the criticisms he got for *The End of History* in the Hampstead branch of Waterstones two years ago. Then, he reminds me, he was attacked for elevating liberty and freedom over solidarity. This book, he says, addresses that lack. 'Trust' is his version of solidarity—a solidarity that seems to mean the suppression of liberty for the sake of guaranteeing order under capitalism. It is a shame. Not only does he think that there is no alternative to capitalism, but now he has joined the regulators and moralists among the Hampstead intellectuals who think that ordinary people just cannot be trusted to choose for themselves. But then, that was always what it really meant to say 'There is no alternative'.

Trust: New Foundations of Global Prosperity is published by Hamish Hamilton, £25 hbk



The law 'n' order party

New Labour is outflanking the Tories by transforming every issue into a question of law'n'order, reports Andrew Calcutt

Last year I attended an evening course on the criminal justice process at King's College in central London. At the end of the first session, the lecturer warned the students about the possibility of being attacked on our way home. He advised us not to walk out of the college alone, but to escort each other to our various London Underground stations. It occurred to me at the time that this advice was intended not only as a measure for our protection, but also as a way of encouraging students to get to know each other. Previous generations of students might have gone to the pub or even to bed together. But mutual escort duty was the only bonding experience available to the class of 94-95.

A number of students declined the offer, myself included. Incidentally, none of us was attacked either *en route* from the class or at any other time during the nine months' duration of the course. But I seem to recall the lecturer recounting how he had been the victim of an attempted robbery on the tube.

It later transpired that the aforesaid lecturer is secretary of the Labour Campaign for Criminal

Justice. When I heard this, his homily about not walking alone seemed doubly appropriate. Just as my erstwhile teacher tried to instil a sense of community by encouraging his students to huddle together for fear of being attacked, so the front bench of the Labour Party is attempting to utilise the fear of crime as the means to reconstitute a wider sense of social solidarity.

Labour leader Tony Blair has declared that 'fighting crime is the ultimate public good undertaken by a community which believes in itself as a community'. Councillor Derek Sawyer, Labour spokesman on policing in London, is also a firm believer in 'the restoration of community' by means of fighting crime: to 'tackle crime at a fundamental level', Sawyer argues, is to 'say that we really do believe in society'.

My lecturer was presenting in miniature the ethos of New Labour, in which fear of crime is the thing we have in common; and fighting crime and social regeneration are taken to be one and the same. According to the neighbourhood watch mentality of New Labour, British people will

renew themselves as a nation by standing shoulder to shoulder against crime. Participation in the fight against crime will re-establish a sense of community and a new mood of togetherness to offset the corrosive effects of Tory greed and individualism.

The New Labour outlook has wrong-footed the Tories. Home secretary Michael Howard expected to play the law-and-order card again in the run-up to the general election, until public opinion registered approval in the usual manner. Instead he has found himself besieged by a wide range of critics, including prison governors, probation officers and high court judges. Howard has been unable to regain the initiative, even when shadow home secretary Jack Straw put in a disastrous performance during the high-profile parliamentary debate on the dismissal of the Prison Service director.

New Labour, on the other hand, is fully justified in claiming that 'we are now the party of law and order' (Labour Party conference document, 'Safer communities, safer Britain'). During the past two and half years, the Labour Party has leap-frogged over the Tories to win ►

support on a wide range of law'n'order issues. But New Labour is not only ahead of the Tories on traditional law-and-order issues. Blair's party is redrawing the political map by extending the question of law'n'order into all areas of social policy. Issues which were hitherto significant in their own right are now being subsumed under the general rubric of law'n'order.

New Labour is extending the long arm of the law into areas such as the home where it previously did not reach. The city of Edinburgh, under a Labour local authority, was the test-bed for the 'zero tolerance' campaign against domestic violence, proclaiming the new-found readiness of the authorities to get involved in matters which would previously have been of little concern to them. The Tory government then adopted the Labour model and launched nationwide initiatives on similar lines.

Blair's party is also at the forefront of converting public misgivings about the criminal justice system from concern over convicting the innocent into apprehension that the guilty are using the 'ambush defence' and other ruses to escape their just deserts. Straw gazumped Howard

Flagging up law'n'order as an issue of paramount importance is not peculiar to New Labour. But Blair's party is handling the issue in a new way. The traditional Tory method was to highlight a particular crime, eg, mugging, which was identified as beyond acceptable limits and alien to a healthy society, ie, committed by blacks. But this kind of scapegoating is now out of date—as Straw found to his cost when he lapsed momentarily into the old format with his attack on 'winos, addicts and squeegee merchants'. Rather than depict the threat of crime as something extraordinary and alien, New Labour tends to highlight the ordinary, everyday character of crime, endorsing the proposition that it is committed by ordinary, everyday people like you and me. According to the New Labour ethos, since everyone is either a victim or a criminal in the making, and possibly both, it is only common sense to be wary of the person sitting next to you, and to keep a tight rein on your own behaviour.

In sharp contrast to old school Tories, New Labour invites members of the public to rally, not against a clearcut external enemy, but against

each other and against the deviant within us all. We are invited to embark on an uncertain journey of self-examination, and advised to expect the worst of ourselves. This approach to law'n'order strikes more of a chord with the public mood of the mid-1990s than does the eighties-style scare-

mongering of the Tories. Labour's anti-crime policies can connect better with the general atmosphere of apprehension in our times, informed as it is by widespread economic insecurity and the breakdown of ideological certainties.

Straw's law'n'order ethos enjoys more support than Howard's because it tends to correspond better with the social climate of self-doubt and uncertainty. It has helped New Labour pull in front of the Tories by a margin which some opinion polls put as high as 40 per cent. If Labour politicians are promoting a different kind of law'n'order as the touchstone of their new politics, they are being met half way by a voting public which can see its own insecurities reflected in Blair's agenda.

The extension of law'n'order into every aspect of social conduct and interpersonal relations can only mean the advent of a new style of repressive government which transcends the traditional divide between left and right. What's really new is that the underlying philosophy of the new order is rooted not in the ideological legacy of the right, but in a radical criticism associated with the left wing of the old era.

The radical roots of the New Labour ethos are discernible in its emphasis on the social factors inherent in crime, summed up in the Blairite formula 'Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'. New Labour indicts successive Tory governments for inciting the breakdown of communities and making crime into the defining experience of modern Britain, all in the name

of market values. Blair's message is that Thatcherite contempt for society will not be allowed to continue under New Labour:

'the breakdown in law and order is intimately bound up with the break-up of strong and cohesive local communities. We are the party committed to rebuilding communities and reclaiming the streets for ordinary people. Market forces cannot solve this problem. It requires us all to act in cooperation to defeat it.' ('Safer communities, safer Britain')

Here lies the core of New Labour thinking. The party has adopted the market economy as the only way to run society. But in the name of the great god law'n'order, even 'market forces' are open to criticism. In the New Labour lexicon, 'community' and law'n'order are synonymous; and 'cooperation' means recognising the obligation ('something that we all have to work at') to participate in the fight against crime. In the New Labour worldview, the potential for people to act together is brought down to the level of shop-thy-neighbour.

In restating the importance of society over individual self-interest, New Labour redefines society primarily as a vehicle for more efficient policing. Law'n'order is presented as the ultimate function of society, and the highest ambition its citizens can aspire to.

One of the effects of this degraded outlook is that every aspect of domestic policy becomes a cog in the machinery of law'n'order. New Labour is not only the party of law'n'order, in the sense that it goes further than the rest; it is the law'n'order party in that social control has almost become its defining concern, with every

Straw's law 'n' order ethos enjoys more support than Howard's because it corresponds better with the climate of uncertainty

by being the first to propose that defence lawyers must disclose their case before trial without similar obligations being brought to bear upon the prosecution—a proposal subsequently incorporated into a draft bill by the Tory home secretary, and described by Richard Ferguson QC, chair of the Criminal Bar Association, as 'a quite frightening development...towards a police state'.

New Labour's development of law'n'order as an all-purpose remit is furthest advanced in policy areas pertaining to local government, where Labour is already in office. In July 1995 when Straw unveiled plans for a community safety order (a super-injunction which could be used to restrain, evict or even jail 'nasty neighbours' on the initiative of police and council officers), Tory ministers were left standing by Labour proposals which they could only describe as 'draconian'.

Labour authorities have also set the pace for the use of professional witnesses and probationary tenancies on council estates. The Labour council in Reading developed the Fraudwatch scheme which encourages local residents to report alleged housing benefit cheats. While other Labour councils are adopting the scheme on the recommendation of Labour frontbencher Frank Dobson, right-wing cabinet minister Peter Lilley has felt unable to introduce similar measures against social security claimants. The extension of council-run policing patrols is another example of New Labour stealing a march on the Tories: the Labour council in Blair's own Sedgefield constituency was months ahead of Wandsworth, the Tories' flagship borough in London.



other consideration seemingly subordinated to it.

The unique significance of law'n'order in the mindset of New Labour is shown by the extent to which it now figures in every other policy discussion. Where once there were discrete issues such as housing, education and employment, and politics was all about deciding which was paramount, in the politics of New Labour any issue is considered important only in so far as it appears to be a factor in controlling crime and bolstering the rule of law.

For example, the demand for pre-school education originated as part of an attempt to free women from the burden of domestic childcare. New Labour has adopted the demand, but for different reasons altogether: to 'strengthen families' and 'decrease the risk of delinquency'. What was once a debate about untying women from the kitchen sink is now about ensuring that children are locked on to appropriate role models at an early age.

In a similar vein, New Labour's plans for adventure playgrounds, after school clubs and youth clubs are motivated on the grounds that 'there is a lot of truth in the old saying "the devil makes work for idle hands"'. Funding for youth workers will be available in proportion to their crime-prevention role. State-sponsored youth activities have always been at least partly concerned with taking young people off the streets and corralling them together under the watchful eye of 'social missionaries'. But rarely has this rationale been advanced with such candour, and to the exclusion of every other consideration.

In New Labour circles, employment and training are mentioned primarily in relation to the further erosion of social norms which might

result from their absence. Likewise the impact on local crime rates is now a major consideration in the refurbishment of Labour-controlled council housing. Roadbuilding is subject to similar scrutiny. Public transport systems are vouchsafed not because they provide a quick and efficient means of travel (which they do not), but because the public domain is said to be a more dangerous place without them. Even health and safety at work is being redefined as a crime problem, with workers allegedly more at risk from colleagues and clients than from employers.

In the politics of New Labour any issue is important only in so far as it bolsters the rule of law

The subordination of every other issue to the paramount concern for law'n'order is summed up in the promise that 'Labour in government will...place a duty on every local authority to consider the impact on crime and crime prevention of all the decisions they take—not least those relating to planning, design and the urban environment'. Under New Labour, the top priority of civic architects is not to rebuild Britain's crumbling cities, but to attempt to construct order. The function of particular buildings is secondary to the over-arching question of social control.

New Labour champions the concept of

'multi-agency policing', and accuses the Tory government of failing to implement the crime prevention recommendations of the Morgan report, published by the Home Office in 1991. The Labour Party endorses Morgan-style multi-agency policing on the basis that 'this type of strategy would require local businesses and other large employers, schools (both students and staff), local authorities, the police, churches and community groups to come together' and 'set about cracking down on the crime which causes most problems in their area'. This means not

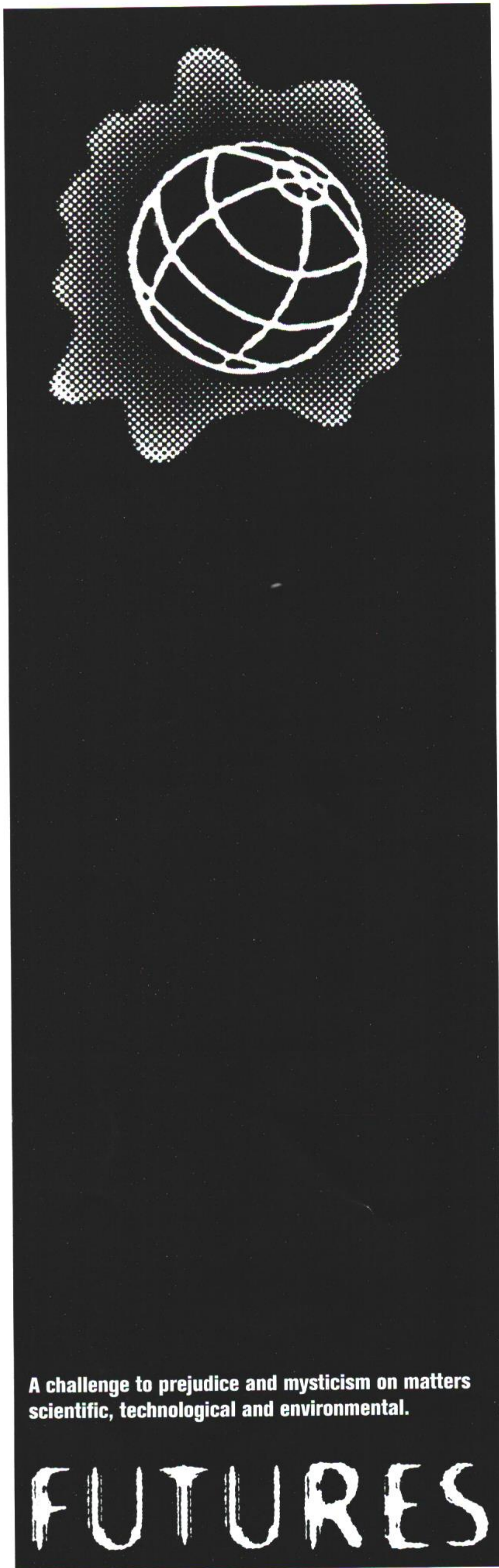
only involving a wider range of agencies in policing, but transforming the role of those agencies so that policing becomes their major concern.

In adopting the Morgan report, New Labour has gone way beyond the traditional demand for 'more bobbies on the beat'. The

new emphasis is on turning more state employees and non-governmental organisations into 'bobbies' or para-police. Recent government measures designed to involve teachers or social security officials in the policing of immigrants show that the Tories have also embarked upon the same route. But New Labour is equipped to go further and faster in this direction. Under New Labour, further developments towards a 'police state' will not involve jackboots and prison camps. It is more likely to mean that policing ourselves and each other will be built into the foundations of Blair's new Britain. ●



PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER



A turning point in Aids research?

1995 may be seen as the year in which science began to win the war against Aids. But why has it taken so long? Stuart Derbyshire argues that medical science has been influenced for the worse by the moral hysteria surrounding the issue of Aids

At a press conference called in April 1984, Robert Gallo of the American National Institutes of Health and Margaret Heckler of the American Department of Health and Social Services announced the discovery of the virus which caused Aids. The expectation was that the discovery of the virus, soon labelled HIV, would lead to a vaccine within a few years. Ten years later, despite massive investment in research, little progress had been made. One commentator concluded that 'the focus on drugs and vaccines made sense a decade ago, but it is time to acknowledge that our best hunches have not paid off and are not likely to do so' (B Fields, *Nature*, Vol369, 1994, pp95-96).

By the early nineties growing disenchantment with existing approaches to Aids research had sparked increased interest in the work of critics like Peter Duesberg, professor of molecular biology at the University of California, Berkeley. Duesberg claimed that HIV was not in fact the cause of Aids. In Britain, his ideas were promoted in the *Sunday Times*. In America, Dr Robert Willner publicly injected himself with the blood of an HIV-positive donor in order to promote his book, *Deadly Deception: The Proof that SEX and HIV Absolutely DO NOT CAUSE Aids*.

After research findings in 1995, the picture is a little clearer. A comparative study of two groups of haemophiliacs—one infected with HIV, the other

HIV-free—has confirmed HIV as a primary cause of Aids beyond most people's idea of reasonable doubt (S Darby, *Nature*, Vol377, 1995, pp79-82). And important breakthroughs have been made in our understanding of the operation of HIV.

It has been clear for some time that the progression of Aids is associated with increased viral (HIV) burden. However, it was unclear why HIV operates so slowly given its high rate of replication; in other words why such a long time-gap could exist between HIV infection and the onset of Aids. Two landmark papers in *Nature* have helped to clear up these issues.

Some researchers had previously suggested that HIV was a peculiar virus which lay dormant for long periods before springing into action and destroying the immune system. This has now been shown to be false by research demonstrating that HIV is active and abundant in most patients from early infection. Even in people with HIV who have not yet developed Aids, between 50m and two billion HIV particles are created and destroyed each day. However, this activity is hidden by the equally active response of the immune system, which immediately replaces the T-cells that HIV infects and destroys (see X Wei, *Nature*, Vol373, pp117-22 and D Ho, *Nature*, Vol373, pp123-26). HIV tends to win out, but only in the long run. The analogy has been

drawn with fierce trench warfare—from a great height above the fight, it is not obvious that much is happening at all. Hence the illusion that HIV lay dormant for long periods.

This finding has important implications for treatment. There is now a scientific rationale for intervening early with anti-retroviral agents, while the immune system is still intact. A continual impact on viral load is required in order to arrest the progression of HIV infection in the body's immune cells. Early results from such treatment suggest a moderate increase in patients' life-expectancy. Much more exciting are the results of studies with long-term non-progressive HIV infection (*New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol332, pp201-16). It has been suggested that HIV-positive subjects who remain clinically healthy with stable T-cell counts, despite 10 or more years of documented HIV infection, may carry 'protective' mutant viruses. Investigation of these could lead to the development of an Aids vaccine.

There are still many uncertainties in the basic science (for a summary see J Cohen, *Science*, Vol269, pp1044-45), and leading players are rightly cautious about trumpeting the new findings given that treatments remain some way off (see RC Gallo, *Nature Medicine*, Vol1, pp753-59). But all things considered, research in 1995 offers the first signs of a more subtle understanding of the disease, and of hope for a treatment.

Welcome as these developments are, and taking full account of the complexity of the scientific issues involved, there is a question that needs to be asked: why has it taken so long for a better understanding of Aids to develop?

The dour assessment made in 1994 by Fields, cited above, was quite accurate. Despite 10 years of research the only available treatment for Aids patients is the drug AZT, an old chemotherapy drug which is highly toxic. The focus of Fields' assessment was also accurate. While it is true that some scientific development has aided Aids research (such as the development of Polymerase Chain Reaction—PCR), the real problem has been the focus of Aids researchers and the hunches they followed.

The 'hunches' which Aids researchers have been chasing for the past decade have been perverted by the moral climate surrounding Aids. If we are to make progress in the next decade, we need to identify the forces that have been partly responsible for dulling the imaginations of those working in the field.

Aids has long been used as a moral and political football. In the

early eighties a disease which seemed to specialise in attacking young gay men was a dream come true for right-wing moralists who condemned promiscuous gays as swirling in a 'cesspit of their own making'. The emphasis on the peculiar threat Aids posed to gays soon developed into a scare about Aids being a threat to everybody. Aids became the centre of a moral crusade which declared that promiscuous sexual activity threatened

a heterosexual explosion of the disease. Gay men still bore a heavy burden of stigma—explicitly or implicitly they were blamed for introducing a killer disease into the wider population.

The argument that Aids was a highly infectious, rapidly lethal disease which anyone engaging in 'unsafe' sexual practices could catch was spread across our television screens and high streets by government advertising campaigns featuring icebergs and tombstones. ►



Across the West, the notion of a heterosexual Aids explosion was promoted by governments and moralists who saw it as a potent weapon with which to encourage young people to stay on the sexual straight and narrow.

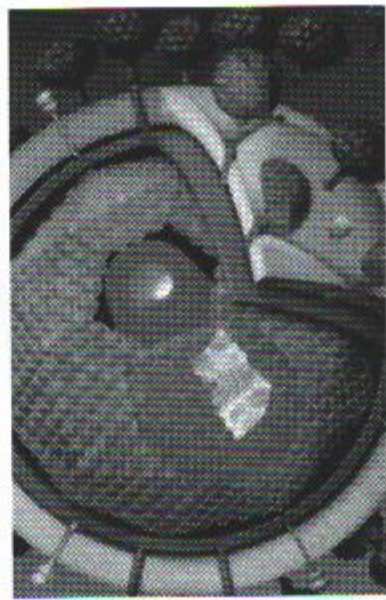
The emphasis on a heterosexual explosion of Aids encouraged two mistaken or simplistic viewpoints within the scientific community. Firstly, it was simply assumed that HIV infection was easily transmissible through any form of sexual intercourse in the Western world. This idea was first challenged by Dr Michael Fitzpatrick in *The Truth About the Aids Panic* (1987), which argued that there was no scientific basis for fears of a rampant heterosexual epidemic in the West, and that such fears had been inflated and manipulated for political purposes. These arguments, since developed in *Living Marxism*, have been vindicated by the relatively limited progression of the disease.

The second mistaken assumption was that the transition from HIV infection to full-blown Aids was fairly swift, and uniform across the population. This rested on what has now been shown to be a very simplistic view of the working of HIV; a view informed by a moral consensus rather than by free scientific inquiry. Scientists simply assumed that HIV loaded the host cell with virions and antigens and burst it, in a similar fashion to the flu virus, because this assumption matched the expectation of a widespread fast-moving Aids epidemic. The pursuit of a quick vaccine, along the lines which led to the eradication of smallpox, reflected this simplistic outlook. Researchers failed to pursue what was novel about HIV, such as the long time-gap between HIV infection and the onset of Aids; some even dismissed these unusual features as 'pure luck' (Weiss, *Science*, Vol260, pp1273-78).

By 1988, efforts to prove the widespread dissemination of HIV and the claims of impending doom reached their first peak. The Cox report suggested that there would be 3000 new cases of Aids per year in the UK by 1990. However, it was also becoming clear by 1988 that HIV was a tricky beast to understand, and one which was not going to roll over and die in the face of a miracle vaccine.

This situation *should* have led to a questioning of previous assumptions, and the development of more sophisticated models of both HIV transmission through the population and its interaction with the immune system. But this did not happen. Instead, the moral prejudice which lay behind the theory of a heterosexual explosion had the effect of keeping blinkers on many scientists.

A gap opened up between the theories and reality. The situation was



ripe for Peter Duesberg's claim that 'HIV is not the cause of Aids' (*Science*, Vol241, p514). Duesberg pointed to a mixture of failed epidemiology and failed treatments to challenge the Aids research and to promote his own theory of Aids as a consequence of drug abuse and other 'exotic' lifestyle practices (P Duesberg, *International Archives of Allergy and Immunology*, Vol103, pp131-42).

Censorship and personal abuse are not unknown in science, but new depths were reached in Aids research

History will no doubt view Duesberg as mistaken on the primary role of HIV infection in the development of Aids. And the research published during 1995 will be seen as crucial. But the seven-year argument between the scientific mainstream and the circle of critics centred on Duesberg illustrates the way in which the moral climate surrounding the discussion of Aids has had a dangerously detrimental impact on research.

John Maddox, editor of *Nature*, took it upon himself to attack Duesberg over the years. Following the research findings of 1995, Maddox penned a gloating editorial calling on Duesberg to make 'a public acknowledgement of error'. That many HIV positive people had followed Duesberg was, said Maddox, a sad comment on how desperate they had become to avoid the death sentence which mainstream science saw in the HIV-positive condition.

While correct in substance, the bombastic tone of Maddox's argument served to hide an unpleasant truth about Aids research. The dispute over whether HIV caused Aids could continue for so long because the scientists involved were too quick to accept the misguided notion of a heterosexual Aids explosion. Apocalyptic models of how HIV was likely to progress encouraged a simplistic understanding of how HIV worked. This allowed Duesberg the space to mock the scientific establishment and peddle his own version of the moralistic message blaming deviant 'lifestyles' for spreading Aids. The irony is that Duesberg never had much of an argument. His theory was negative—derived from the fact that there were many unknowns about how HIV causes Aids. (As an aside it is worth noting that Maddox's extreme 'orthodoxy' serves to

hide another unpleasant truth: back in 1983 he himself argued along similar lines to Duesberg about the role of HIV, backed up by the prejudice that 'the most obvious threat to public health' came from the 'pathetic promiscuity of homosexuals'—see *Nature*, Vol302, p749).

The moralistic climate surrounding the discussion of Aids did more than help to create the space for Duesberg to promote his theory. It also helped foster a debate which was unusually polarised; a debate which at times became more akin to a struggle between religious sects than a dispute about science.

Duesberg's theory was not all that new. He had already spent several years arguing against a role for retroviruses in the development of cancer on very similar grounds. Through the pages of medical journals, cancer researchers debated the issue in the established way. Most believed Duesberg was wrong, and an irritating maverick to boot, but they were confident that time and science would prove their case against him.

By comparison, the reaction of the biomedical scientific community to Duesberg's alternative view of Aids was unusually emotional. HIV researchers were prepared to violate scientific procedure to bring Duesberg down. Scientists formed 'camps' and deployed weapons unacceptable in normal scientific dispute. Those who opposed the orthodoxy on HIV and Aids became known as the 'dissenters' and were shunned. *Nature* fast-tracked any articles that refuted Duesberg's claims, by-passing the normal peer-review process. Duesberg's funding was withdrawn and he was excluded from scientific meetings. The 'dissenters' were forced to meet separately like some clandestine cult. Bans, censorship, intrigue and personal abuse are certainly not unknown in the scientific world, but with Aids, new depths were plumbed.

The rigid imposition of a religious orthodoxy on the discussion of HIV and Aids did not merely work against Duesberg's ill-founded ideas. Far more seriously, the scientific world's refusal to engage in open debate and free investigation set back the entire cause of tackling the disease. No doubt Duesberg will soon find another maverick cause to champion. Others have lost far more through the way that a moral agenda has stood in the way of developing an understanding of and treatment for Aids.

As a more subtle understanding of HIV is developed, a critical eye should also be cast over the mistakes of the past. Scientists need to recover a more independent perspective, less constrained by untoward trends in the moral and political climate.



Harrowing times

I have before me a selection of illustrations from schoolboy fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In one entitled 'Jack Rogers in the hands of pirates', Jack marches nobly, head erect, hands bound, among a motley band of negroes and other swarthy types, who grip daggers in their teeth and brandish spears and cutlasses. In 'Tom Stapleton: the Boy Scout', chisel-featured Tom (holding a big stick) stands up to a bunch of Cro-magnon louts who are jeering at his uniform. 'One English public school boy is worth 10 of any furriner alive!', boasts Harry Hollingwood in *A Middy of the Slave Squadron*, and there's a picture to prove it—'A fierce encounter'—in which a public schoolboy throttles a club-wielding savage two-foot taller than himself. Meanwhile in 'I exerted all my strength and rammed my long spear further up'—an illustration from *The Bear King*—no fewer than three grizzlies are skewered at one go by our intrepid hero.

Who wears their shoes today? Prince William now moonlights as a pin-up model for *Smash Hits*, a periodical whose title has precious little to do with archery, Spitfires or any other redblooded pursuits. The Jockey Club has abolished bowler hats for its members, as have various regimental clubs. Apparently they attract the ridicule of 'the public'—a sure sign of their continuing value, I should have thought. Now Harrow has joined the ranks of esteemed establishments in retreat.

In keeping with the trend among lesser educational institutions, Harrow has decided to dispense with some of the more archaic aspects of its uniform, on the grounds that they are thought 'provocative' by local oiks. These layabouts apparently consider it good sport to set upon Harrow pupils. According to a recent edition of the school magazine, *The Harrovian*, 'Only two weeks of term have passed and already a major "incident" has taken place downtown. This, of course, refers to the deeply unpleasant experiences of several Harrovians who, on a Thursday afternoon, had the ill-fortune to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. One was mugged at knife-point, whilst another was punched'.

Although the above article was entitled 'Us and them', it was no clarion call to enjoin the battle against unruly social inferiors. This is in stark contrast to previous generations, who tended to respond in kind. When the *Sunday Telegraph* reported the bullying of Harrow boys, Patrick Steeler wrote to the paper to remind its readers of the traditional Harrovian method of dealing with townies demanding money with menaces. He recalled the tale of 'Bottles', a 16-stone ex-prizefighting thug 'whose principal trade lay in extracting money from small boys' during the 1870s:

'One day, one of the boys, Frederick Leyland, was walking along Ducker Road when Bottles, in his most truculent mood, came lurching up from the nearest pub and proceeded to assault Leyland with obscenities. Leyland's reply was to hit the huge bully right between the eyes. A desperate combat ensued at the end of which the late ornament of the prize ring was left senseless in a ditch. Bottles was broken.' (15 October 1995)

Today it is the Harrow boys who have lost their bottle. Forget respect and deference, today's Harrovians just want to be loved; but they will settle for being victims (no doubt the Boarding School Survivors helpline is jammed). The author of *The Harrovian* piece went on to complain that the traditional school uniform (the 'bluer') 'attracts a great deal of attention...especially in town where the rest of society dresses "normally"'. One can hardly imagine Winston Churchill complaining that his dress emphasised his station in life, or wishing to blend in with the mob. Yet *The Harrovian* suggests that the Harrow boys themselves are partly to blame, strutting about like 'the stereotypical rich kid' and 'a snottynosed bunch of brats'. Headmaster Nicholas Bomford has even felt it necessary to issue guidelines on correct behaviour in town.

All of which must be music to the ears of the television companies. The Headmasters' Conference (the public schools' leading body) has decided that a major public relations drive is in order. An advertising campaign is promised and, more audaciously, plans are afoot for a soap opera (my servants tell me they are very much 'the thing') and a drama

series 'along the lines of *The Choir*'. A Mr Winkley, who calls himself the Head of Uppingham, admitted it was a 'risky strategy', but it seems to me that this is precisely the kind of bold, imaginative leadership the country is crying out for.

No doubt the Boarding School Survivors helpline is jammed

I was impressed to note the number of businesses who had faxed their way on to the *Sun's* Armistice Day 'roll of honour' by nobly pledging to sacrifice

profits by joining in a two-minute silence. Then I noticed that the 11 November falls on a Saturday this year—a fact not mentioned on the *Sun's* cut-out-and-display window posters. Given this fortunate coincidence, and writing as the great day approaches, I fully expect this campaign to top even previous triumphs such as Garry Bushell's one-man struggle to rehabilitate St George's Day (no noticeable progress after five years), and of course the legendary 'Up Yours Delors' protest in Trafalgar Square, which attracted two members of the Monday Club, three schoolboys, myself and a *Living Marxism* photographer.

Visitors to London's South Bank can currently enjoy, if that's the right word, an exhibition called 'Art and Power' including various vast megalomaniacal monuments to Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini. However, there is one curious omission: the 40-foot high bust of Winston Churchill, originally proposed in the 1960s, and now astonishingly resurrected as a contender for subsidy by the Millennium Fund. Just the thing for a vigorous forward-looking nation, eh? This monstrosity would sit by the Thames just next to the National Theatre, and has been seriously suggested as 'Britain's answer to the Statue of Liberty'. If that's the answer, I can't imagine what the question was. ●

It is a long way from the small south Derry farm of Seamus Heaney's childhood to the Swedish Academy in Stockholm where his Nobel Prize for Literature will shortly be conferred. It is a long way, too, from the rural Ireland of the 1960s, where his earliest poems are set, to the post-nationalist, post-modern Ireland for which Heaney is a cultural icon. Heaney's writings over the past 30 years provide a fascinating record of his personal and poetical journey, inviting comparison with the work of WB Yeats, the only other Irish poet to be awarded a Nobel Prize and who likewise was deeply influenced by turbulent times. Any comparison between the two is, however, more revealing for the differences than for the similarities.

Yeats' scornful and passionate temperament predisposed him to engagement in the great issues of his day. Heaney's genial charm, on the other hand, conceals a much more circumspect approach, one that has 'aspired to a kind/Indifferent, fault-on-both-sides tact'. Yeats came from a section of Irish society that was used to exercising a public voice. Heaney's small farmer stock traditionally 'fought shy/Spoke an old language of conspirators/And could not crack the whip or seize the day'. This peasant reticence was exacerbated

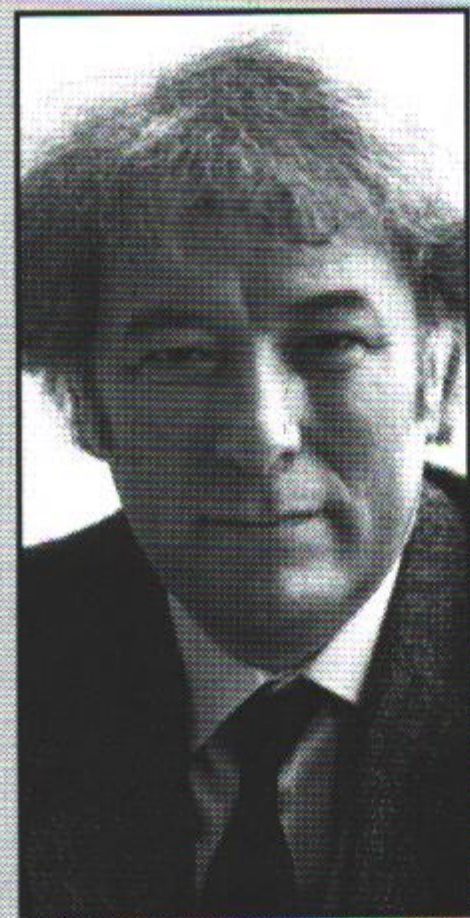
by the oppressed position of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland: 'Smoke signals are loud-mouthed compared to us', as Heaney put it in 'Whatever You Say, Say Nothing', a poem from *North*, one of his most important collections, published in 1975.

The most decisive difference, however, lies in their attitudes to Irish nationalism. Whereas nationalism for Yeats was axiomatic and self-evident, there is with Heaney, as early as *North*, a dissolution of the national ideal into a plurality of cultural identities. Nowhere is there a sense of a potentially liberating struggle against oppression, even when that oppression itself is vividly evoked. Instead, human actors are seen as blind executors of a violent cultural heritage. This leads to a duality between Heaney the poet, who partakes of some abstract, humane values, and the Heaney who is determined by his cultural identity. Here is the oft-quoted conclusion to *Punishment*, a poem in which a prehistoric victim of ritual murder is compared to women tarred and feathered for consorting with British soldiers:

I who have stood dumb
when your betraying sisters,
cauled in tar,
wept by the railings,

who would connive
in civilised outrage
yet understand the exact
and tribal, intimate revenge.

This is a small masterpiece of equivocation: every key word is weighed, paired and balanced (betraying/wept, connive/understand, tribal/intimate) so that the superficial impression is of painstaking even-handedness. Yet, seen in the context of *North* as a whole, it is obvious that Heaney not only accepts the basic premise of British propaganda, that the Irish War is an atavistic tribal conflict, but helpfully reformulates it in mythical terms, using the device of an exhumed bog-preserved corpse as a symbol of an



The eloquence of ambivalence

Louis Ryan dissects the work of poet and Nobel Prize-winner
Seamus Heaney

old animosity freshly—and pointlessly—disinterred.

North marked a crucial moment in Heaney's career. Its studied ambivalence proved congenial to both British and Irish audiences, and launched him in the USA. It was also a turning point in his poetic development. It marked the culmination of a tendency towards tortuous, astringent diction, quite unlyrical in the traditional sense of the term, whose basic unit is most often neither the stanza nor even the line, but the individual word. It is as though the poet were picking his way through a lexical minefield, creating images of extraordinary compression and pregnancy as he does so.

Heaney's poetry progressively relaxed and broadened in scope through the late 1970s and into the 1980s. During the eighties the official presentation of the Irish War from both London and Dublin changed from the confrontational language of tribalism to the more benign jargon of cultural identity and the 'two traditions'—Catholic, nationalist, Irish on

the one hand and Protestant, Unionist, British on the other. This reformulation suited Heaney very well. His poetry no longer needed to be splayed on the contradiction between a tribalist understanding of the conflict and his own residual allegiance to the nationalist community, but could instead celebrate the diversity of all manners of Irishness—and further more, could do so without calling into question Britain's domination of the country.

By the time of *Seeing Things* (1991) the war itself had virtually disappeared from Heaney's writing. This latest collection to date (Heaney's next collection of poetry is due out in May) might equally well have been entitled *Knowing Your Place*, for Heaney's preoccupation here is with identity and the sense of belonging in one's cultural landscape. These themes are taken up more explicitly in his recent collection of essays, *The Redress of Poetry*. Here Heaney makes clear that what is important is not what people strive for, but who they are and where they come from. Applied to Irish politics, this makes the nationalistic project seem thoroughly hubristic from the start since it aspired to transform people rather than to 'ratify' (a favourite Heaneyism) their time-honoured identities.

This leads to some interesting conclusions: 'Until [partition in 1921], diversity was the norm within the Union. From Belfast to Brandon, everybody, whether Gaelic speakers from Ballyferriter or Scots speakers from Braid, everybody had one home under the Crown; if they were not quite at ease within an old

dispensation, they were at any rate held equally in place by it.' To be *held equally in place*—by the Crown or by some other external agent of authority—is indeed a succinct formulation of the multicultural condition. First the blandishments of poetry, if you are *not quite at ease* with where you find yourself—then a little bit of coercion if you prove recalcitrant. Though, of course, our nice Nobel Laureate would not wish to draw such unpleasant conclusions from his premises.

Heaney's nostalgia for the Union may come as a surprise to those who think of him as a self-consciously Irish poet. After all, wasn't this the same writer who kicked up such a fuss about his inclusion in an anthology of contemporary *British* poetry? ('My passport's green./No glass of ours was ever raised/To toast the Queen'.) But this is to miss the point. For Heaney, cultural identity is the primordial fact, in comparison with which all political arrangements are so much ephemera. In such a perspective it is almost more objectionable for a poetry anthology to mistake its cultural boundaries than for one country politically to dominate and oppress another. Even so, Heaney has been at pains to explain away that rare moment of outspokenness: 'I wrote about the colour of the passport, not in order to expunge the British connection in Britain's Ireland [heaven forbid!], but to maintain the right to diversity within the border, to be understood as having full freedom to the enjoyment of an Irish name and identity within that Northern jurisdiction.'

However shifting—and shifty—Heaney's public positions may be, there is no gainsaying his poetic talent. For an international reputation such as his, however, talent is a necessary but not an adequate condition. What is also required is the ability to articulate the prevalent intellectual and cultural mood. Heaney has always been an accommodating poet, content to add his own subtle touches 'to the music of what happens'. His is poetry that offers assurance and 'in-placeness' (another Heaneyism), poetry as refuge from the desolation of our atomised existence. It constantly reveals new dimensions to the ordinary conditions of life, yet it has neither the critical standpoint nor the poetic will to imagine any transcendence of those conditions.

'The intellect of man is forced to choose/Perfection of the life or of the work', Yeats famously wrote, 'And if it take the second must refuse/A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark'. Where Yeats' great refusal braces us to face that darkness, Heaney leads us instead into the humble dwelling-place of cultural identity with all its reassurance and constraints. ●

Black and white films, coloured stories

Two current films explore the issue of race in America and in France. *Panther* is a romanticised yearning for community, writes Kenan Malik, while Ian Walker thinks *La Haine* tells it as it is about life in the Parisian banlieues (bottom)



Let us begin at the end. *Panther*, Mario van Peebles' study of the Black Panther Party, closes, as it opens, in Oakland, California. 'In 1965 there were 30 000 drug addicts in the USA', runs the final voice-over. 'Yesterday there were three million.' And then the credits roll.

It is a most inexplicable ending, but one which is revealing of the nature of van Peebles' film. The Black Panthers were intimately concerned with a myriad of social issues that still trouble black America, from unemployment to police brutality. But drugs was not one of them. Drugs, however, form a central part of van Peebles' narrative. In the opening

scenes we see heroin being sold on the streets of Oakland. One of the central characters is shot dead by a drug pusher. In the final climactic scene, a group of Panthers torch a warehouse full of drugs. And, most crucially, the film suggests that it was an FBI/Mob conspiracy to flood the ghettos with drugs that destroyed the Panthers and led to the problems facing black America today.

Panther's preoccupation with drugs reflects the obsessions of nineties black intellectuals. From Jesse Jackson to Louis Farrakhan to Colin Powell, today's African-American leaders are overwhelmed by the breakdown of the black community which they see as the product

of drugs, guns and crime in the ghetto. Films from black directors have tended to reflect this concern, from John Singleton's *Boyz 'n' the Hood* to Spike Lee's latest work, *Clockers*. *Panther* also picks up these threads. What van Peebles gives us is not the story of the Black Panther Party, but rather a rewriting of that story to fit in with current black concerns. The result is both poor history and poor drama.

Panther deals with one of the most exciting and important periods of post-war American history. The party was founded in October 1966 by two black college students Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. The Panthers recruited

Sound of the suburbs

La Haine (Hate) opens with news footage of riots in a Paris banlieue, or suburban ghetto, after an Arab youth is brutally beaten by the police. It then picks up the lives of three young friends, Hubert, a black boxer, Vinz, an unemployed Jew, and Said, the son of Arab immigrants, and follows them through a day and a night in the aftermath of the riot.

Each character tries to reconcile the desire to oppose the injustice in their lives with the need to survive. Vinz has found a policeman's gun, lost during the riot; he is keen to use it to exact revenge on the police. Hubert is more stoical, believing that there are both good and bad cops.

Said refuses to think about anything apart from getting by and having a good time.

The three characters are by their race and class marginalised from society. In their banlieues they are harassed by the police, bored by unemployment and gazed at like zoo animals by the media. In the city centre they are treated as dangerous aliens by police and residents. As they travel from the banlieue to Paris and back again they are drawn into a series of confrontations with authority, which ends in a shoot-out with the police.



Courtney Vance and Marcus Chong try on their Black Panther uniforms

from the black working class and poverty-stricken areas of East Oakland and quickly gathered support by organising armed patrols to defend the area against police attacks. Like *Malcolm X* before them, the Panthers tapped into the anger and frustration that festered in the black ghettos of the northern American cities. The Panthers' militancy appealed to a working class audience that felt degraded by racism and abandoned by the middle class-led civil rights movement. Despite their political naivety, the Panthers helped politicise the black struggle, recognising as they did the need to transform American society in order to win equality for blacks.

Matthieu Kassovitz, the young director who also wrote the script, manipulates a range of cinematic devices—the news footage of real riots, the visual use of words and phrases, the monologues over the soundtrack, the use of monochrome—to help create a sense of intimacy with the characters while marking out their circumstances. The maturity of Kassovitz's pacing and the skills of the three principals stop the drama becoming either a bland polemic against the police or yet another gun-toting-boys-from-the-hood movie.

The central character is Said. While Vinz and Hubert debate reconciliation or revenge, it is Said whom we, and they, follow as he chats up girls, gatecrashes an art exhibition, and travels to the city centre to try to reclaim money owed to him. Said's failed attempts at roguish hustling and petty shoplifting add humanity and humour to the narrative and stop the characters coming over as simply victims. Because of Said's very ordinariness, because all he desires is to chat up girls, to earn some easy money and to survive, the encounters with the

The authorities responded ferociously. J Edgar Hoover declared them to be 'Public Enemy Number One' and they became prime target for the FBI's Cointelpro or Counter Intelligence Programme. The FBI embarked on a shoot-to-kill policy which resulted in 27 Panthers being shot dead by the police in 1969 alone. The story of the Black Panthers is not simply dramatic, but reveals many themes that are still significant—the importance of race in America, the degree of oppression faced by the black population, the failure of the struggle for equal rights, the possibilities of social advancement, the weakness of radical politics.

To bring this story to the screen, van Peebles has assembled a rich collection of talent. The scriptwriter is his own father Melvin van Peebles, who, though never a Panther himself, was a close friend of both Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. Co-producer is Preston Holmes, who has worked on five Spike Lee films, including *Malcolm X*. Among the technical consultants was J Tarika Lewis, the first female member of the Panthers.

Given its exciting subject matter, and its impressive pedigree, and opening as it does at a time in which OJ Simpson, Colin Powell and Louis Farrakhan have all helped put the issue of race back at the centre of America politics, *Panther* should be the film of the moment. Yet it is strangely bereft of both excitement and significance. Rather than use the story of the Panthers to paint a picture of American race relations, van Peebles has deliberately narrowed his gaze to give us a romanticised study of the black community. From the opening shots of a happy young cyclist riding through Oakland, (only to be cut down by a speeding car), *Panther* is a self-consciously homely film. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale are the homeboys-next-door whose aim is to do good by their community, rather than challenge oppression.

What is missing in the film is the wider context in which the Panthers emerged. Take the issue of Vietnam. The central

character, Judge, is a Vietnam veteran, and we see Huey Newton addressing an anti-war rally. But beyond this there is no sense of the significance of the war to sixties American society. The civil rights movement enters the film only when we see the newscast of Martin Luther King's assassination. The riots that ripped through American cities in the late sixties as an outburst of the anger which the Panthers tapped are acknowledged only through a short clip of burning and looting following King's death. In order to reconstruct Oakland as a mythical black community, van Peebles has effectively isolated it from the rest of America. Reducing everything to 'community action', *Panther* suggests that distraught parents campaigning for road safety after the death of a young cyclist is of the same moment as the Panthers' armed challenge to the police, because both flow out of the needs of the community.

Most of all, van Peebles has attempted to isolate the mythical black community from the corrosive effects of politics. The closest he gets to acknowledging that politics may have been important to the black struggle is in a jokey scene in which Panther members sell Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book* to college students to raise money for the party. If politics played no part in the rise of the radical black movement, it seems to have played no part in its demise either. The failure of the dream of equality, van Peebles suggests, lies not in the political weaknesses of radical black organisation and of the left, but a political conspiracy to flood the ghettos with heroin. It must be a comforting thought for today's black intellectuals.

Perhaps the most revealing part of the film is the way it deals with the question of gun control. The Panthers took up arms as part of their defence of equal rights—and the American government introduced gun control as a means of depriving them of that right. Today it is black radicals who support gun control as a means of cleaning up the ghetto, while the right defend the right to bear arms. The irony in all this seems entirely lost on van Peebles. ●

police became that much more powerful and brutal.

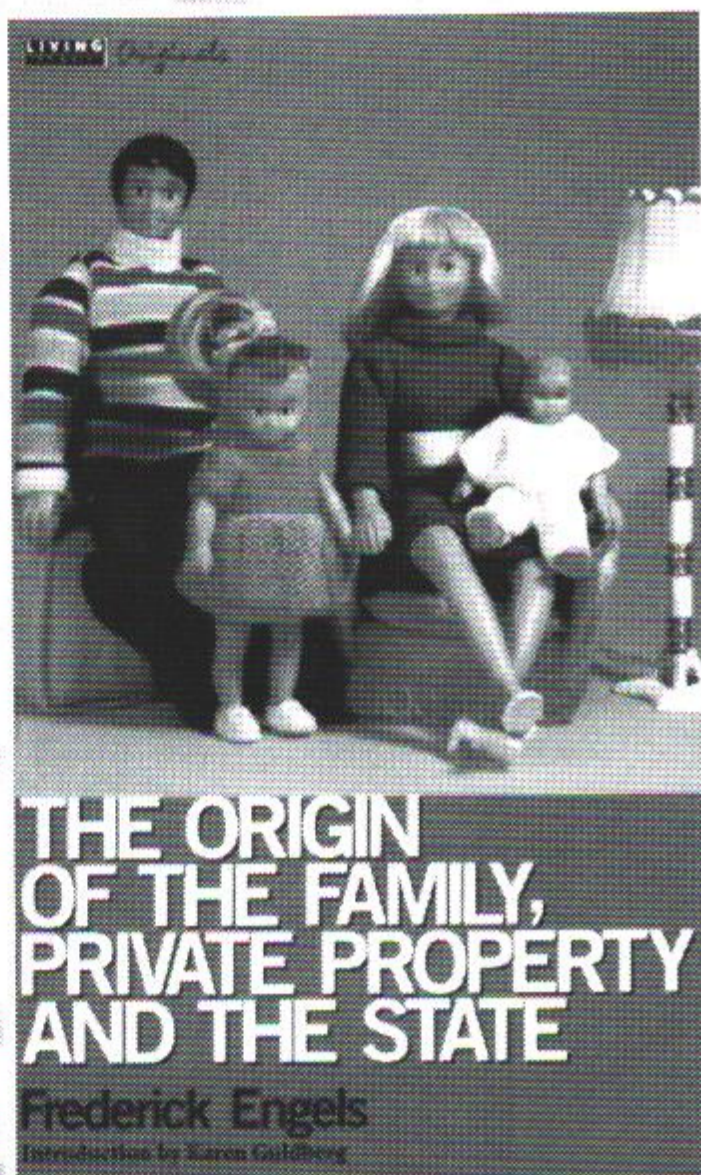
The film reveals the limits imposed on Said, Vinz and Hubert's capacity to control their own lives. Those things that belong to the young men—their clothes, language, mannerisms—are ultimately signifiers of weakness. The culture of youth and homeboy gangster posturing is not celebrated, but used to show how little influence the youth really have. In the climactic scene, Vinz's gun becomes a symbol of the three men's weakness because it allows them a recourse to a justice that will resolve nothing.

La Haine manages to weave an intimate story about the lives of three young, marginalised men into a broader narrative about race and identity in contemporary France without ever losing its sense of the dramatic or becoming overly polemical. It is a film that allows us to empathise with the central characters without romanticising their existence. It is a rare film indeed that is dramatically compelling and politically acute at the same time.

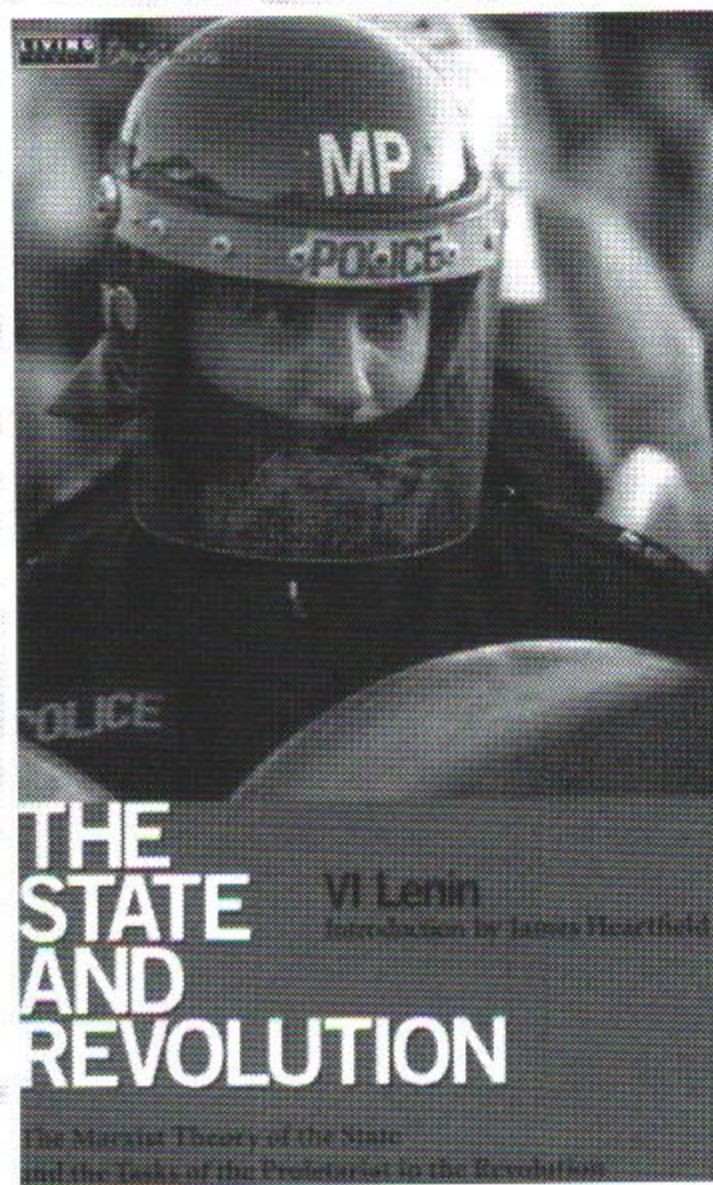
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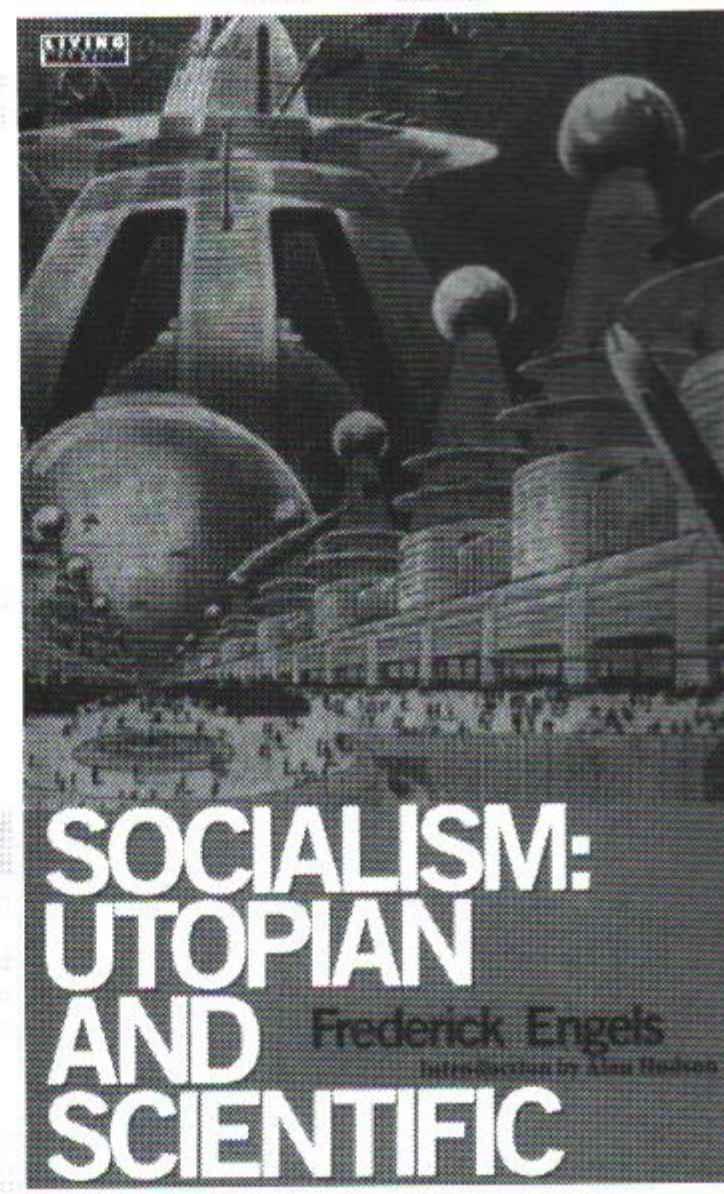
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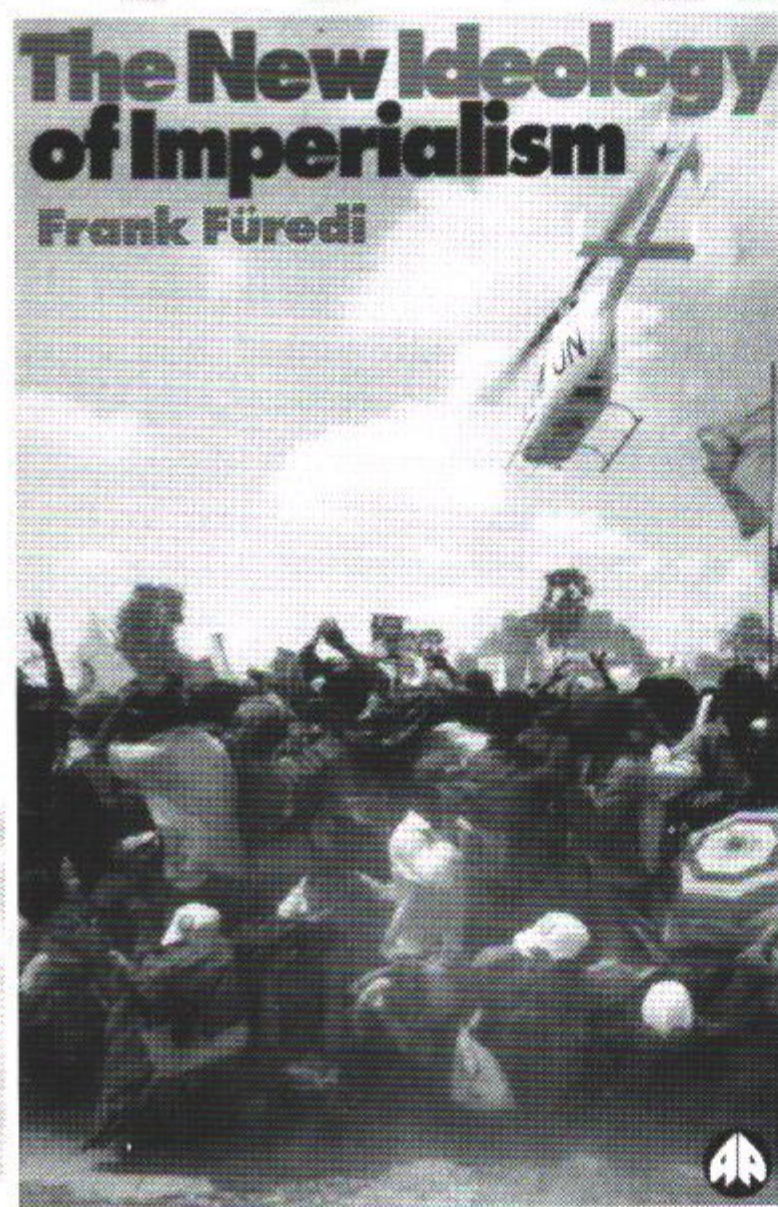
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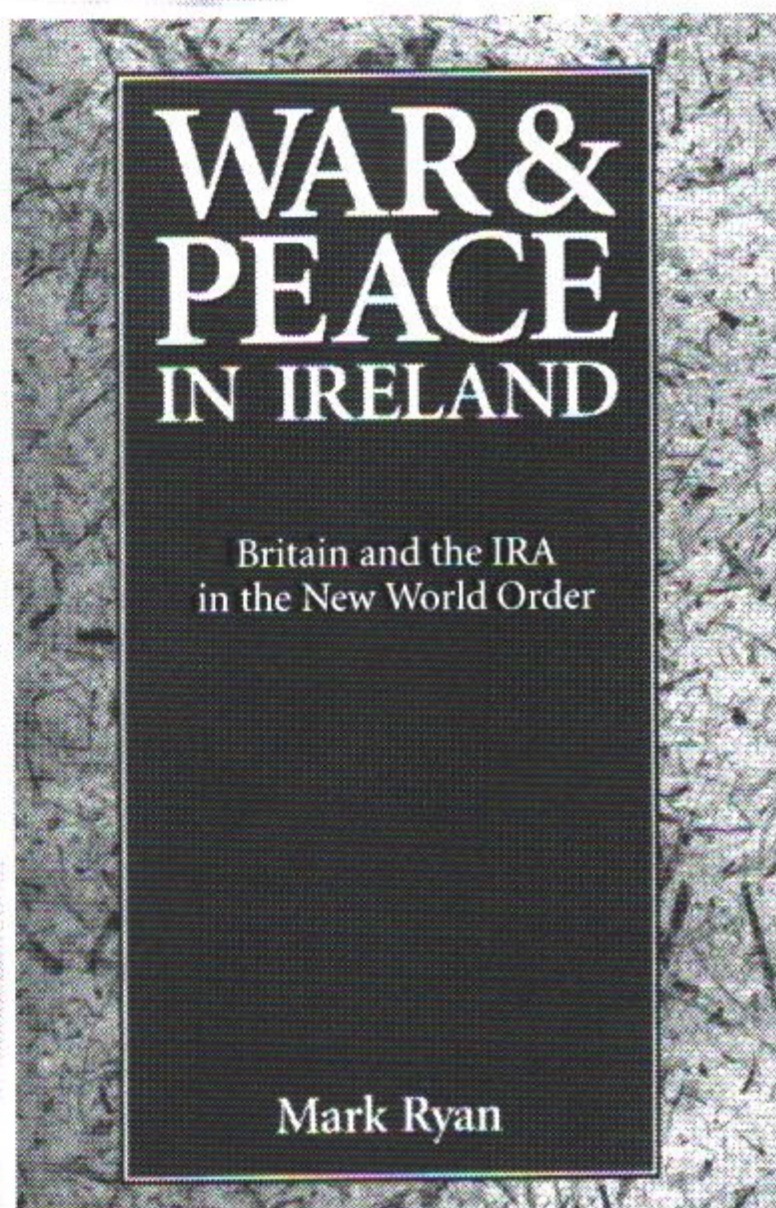
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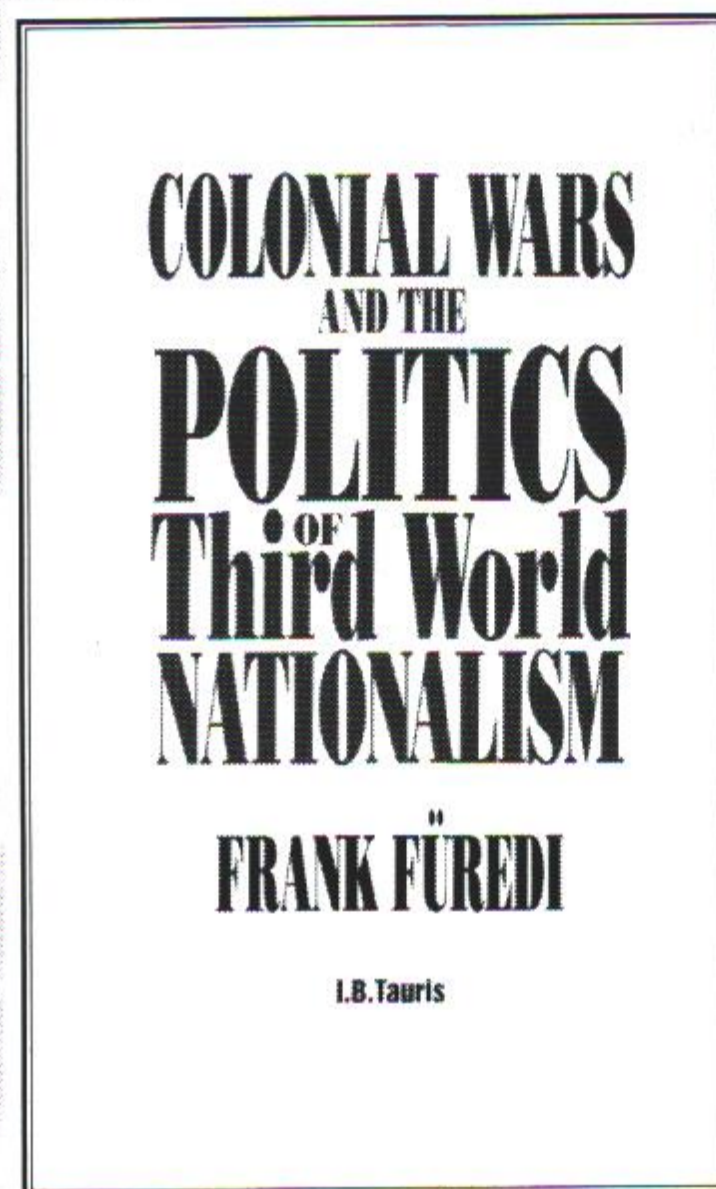
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MARXIST

REVIEW OF BOOKS

Here is a much-needed reply to contemporary prejudice against science, writes Michael Fitzpatrick

Standing up for reason

Re-enchanting Humanity: A Defence of the Human Spirit Against Anti-Humanism, Misanthropy, Mysticism and Primitivism, Murray Bookchin, Cassell, £40 hbk £13.99 pbk

Science and the Retreat from Reason, John Gillott and Manjit Kumar, Merlin, £18.95 hbk £10.95 pbk

At a recent social gathering of parents at my son's infant school in North London, I met somebody who has recently qualified, if that is the right word, as a druid. As I was brought up as a Catholic, I readily recognised that affinity for ritual and costume, that combination of mystical claptrap, reactionary prejudice and an air of condescension that seems common to clerics of all faiths. What I found alarming was the fact that this New Age shaman gained a generally sympathetic response from those present for his demeaning attitude towards modern civilisation, progress and science, and at least tacit approval for his retreat into a mythic cult of the pre-literate past.

As we descend into a new Dark Age of irrationality, it is a pleasure and an inspiration to turn to two newly published books which champion reason and humanity against the prevailing climate of anti-humanism, which disparages our capacity for creative intervention in nature and society.

Murray Bookchin, founder of the Institute for Social Ecology in the USA, and a veteran radical activist and writer, challenges the 'deep-seated cultural malaise' of modern society. His book is a spirited polemic against this malaise, manifested in a wide range of intellectual and political trends, from sociobiology and Gaia, through 'deep ecology' and cults of the primitive, to postmodernism and technophobia. John Gillott and Manjit Kumar, well known to readers of this magazine for their writings on a wide range of scientific themes, offer a comprehensive critique of the degraded relationship between science and modern society. They focus particularly on the interpretations of advances in nuclear physics and the current vogue for theories of chaos and complexity.

A few minutes conversation with a druid was enough to make me fully share Bookchin's horror at the 'appalling regression by a sizeable part of the public into supernatural and supranatural cults', into what he characterises as 'a throwback to mediaevalism'. It is even more alarming to

recognise the pervasiveness of anti-humanistic and misanthropic trends today; as Bookchin reminds us, even in the Dark Ages a belief in the human capacity for redemption was kept alive, ironically by the Christian churches. What is most frightening today is the casual disdain for reason expressed by feminists, ecologists and postmodernist theorists, and the widespread nodding of heads such pronouncements induce.

In his devastating attack on the deep ecologists behind the US conservationist direct action group Earth First!, Bookchin denounces the elevation of privileged claims of intuition over demands for logical consistency. As he rightly insists, 'this is no trivial matter':

'It took thousands of years for humanity to begin to shake off the accumulated "intuitions" of shamans, priests, chiefs, monarchs, warriors, patriarchs, dictators and the like—all of whom claimed immense privileges for themselves and inflicted terrible horrors on their inferiors on the basis of *their* "intuited wisdom". Once we remove the imperatives of rational inquiry that might challenge their behaviour and the scientific criteria of truth that might challenge their mystical claims to insight, social elites are free to use all their wiles to subjugate, exploit and kill enormous numbers of people on the basis of unsupported belief systems, irrational conventions, and purely subjective views of society and the world.' (p98)

Amen to that. Without respect for the rules of formal logic it is scarcely possible to hold a conversation or conduct everyday life.

In his critique of the vacuous primitivism that has become so popular in response to contemporary despair about the future, Bookchin provides a useful outline of the evolution of the species *Homo sapiens*. By contrast with the fashionable blurring of the distinctions between civilised ►

and primitive societies, and between man and apes, Bookchin emphasises the discontinuities, elevating the influence of social over biological factors in determining what it means to be human.

Above all it is our capacity for reason that makes us human: 'To be a human animal, in effect, is to be a reasoning animal that can consciously act upon its environment, alter it, and advance beyond the passive realm of unthinking adaptation into the active realm of conscious innovation.' The history of civilisation is that of rational and creative human intervention in the natural and social world, purposefully improving the conditions of human existence.

The defect of modern society is not that it suffers from too much civilisation, but that it is not civilised enough

The goal of the 'enlightened humanism' that emerged out of the economic, social and intellectual transformations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the creation of a rational society, in which we can become truly human. As Bookchin observes, the problem we face at the close of the twentieth century is that this goal remains unfulfilled. The defect of modern society is not that it suffers from too much civilisation, but that it is not civilised enough.

Rather than elevating the animal heritage of humanity, which can only result in a 'stultifying conservatism', Bookchin argues for 're-enchanting humanity'. By this he means promoting a secular view of the world in the face of mysticism and emphasising the human potential for the creation of a rational society against the ascendant irrationalism and despair.

Bookchin covers a wide range of richly-deserving targets with great polemical verve. Yet he offers only partial answers to some key questions. Though he points to the impact of hectic social changes, to popular disillusionment at the impact of technological innovation, to the increasing mystification of social reality, he falls short of a full explanation of why anti-human trends have become so influential now. Nor does he satisfactorily explain the particular forms assumed by contemporary anti-humanist prejudice, most notably the prominent place of individuals and movements once considered radical.

For insights into these and other matters we turn to Gillott and Kumar, whose focus on science (the weakest chapter in Bookchin's book) opens up an analysis which is deeper, more historical and more radical.

Science and the Retreat from Reason begins by setting the postwar upturn in popular interest in science in the wider context of the twentieth-century stagnation of capitalist society and its relationship with science. The dramatic development of nuclear power and nuclear weapons, space exploration and computer technology were all narrowly driven by the exigencies of the Cold War. Though these programmes produced some useful spin-offs, they yielded no systematic benefits to society and generated widespread fears of the dangers of nuclear war or other catastrophe, and encouraged popular suspicion towards science and scientists. The H-Bomb symbolised the divorce of science from society and illustrated the paradox of scientific advance proceeding in a narrow and restricted way, in tandem with anti-scientific prejudice.

Gillott and Kumar describe a 'vicious circle', tightening

over the past century, in which the loss of confidence in the forward momentum of society leads to a loss of purpose and direction among scientists, which in turn means that scientific developments are likely to encourage insecurities and reinforce pessimism.

The authors clarify the position of science in modern society through a finely drawn contrast with its role in the 'scientific revolution' of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the great democratic revolutions of the following century. Then economic, social and intellectual developments conspired to put science at the cutting edge of social advance. The combination of a faith in the capacity of humanity to intervene constructively in nature, a belief in the distinctiveness and superiority of humanity over nature and a confidence in the perfectibility of humanity through the improvement of society provided a framework for an unprecedented upsurge of theoretical reflection and practical experimentation.

During the course of the nineteenth century, however, the growing scale of economic crises and social conflicts within the capitalist system created an increasing resonance for the anti-Enlightenment prejudices of reactionaries. The result was the gradual estrangement between science and society, culminating in what has become known as the Victorian compromise. Society was removed from the legitimate sphere of rational 'scientific' intervention, allowing conservative influences, notably religion, renewed influence. Science was allowed to continue in increasing isolation; not surprisingly mystical notions now flourished in previously highly sceptical scientific circles.

The traumas of the early twentieth century inevitably intensified the divorce of science from the project of social progress, and its adverse consequences for both science and society. In this context Gillott and Kumar provide a fascinating account of the impact of the development of modern quantum mechanics.

As the argument over waves and particles continued, the problem of indeterminacy was identified as an objective feature of reality itself

The theory of quantum mechanics offered a dramatic theoretical resolution of two decades of controversy surrounding the recognition of the dual character of both light and matter as comprising both wave and particle forms. This elegant mathematical theory radically subverted much of traditional physics. The key argument that followed concerned, not so much the theory itself, but its interpretation and wider significance.

The 'Copenhagen interpretation', formulated by Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg in 1927, has come to dominate the field. In his famous 'uncertainty principle', Heisenberg asserted the impossibility of simultaneously specifying both the momentum and the position of a subatomic particle to an arbitrary degree of accuracy. At first this was understood as a subjective problem arising from the limited techniques of measurement available. However, as the argument continued, the problem of indeterminacy was identified as an objective feature of reality itself. This position was codified at Copenhagen.

The consequences of this shift were enormous: it opened the way towards a subjective view of nature in which reality

is regarded as something constructed by the observer. Furthermore, it meant that any attempt to discover causal connections or regular patterns of interaction among phenomena was futile. Heisenberg did not shrink from drawing wider conclusions: 'because all experiments are subject to the laws of quantum mechanics, quantum mechanics definitely shows the invalidity of causal laws.'

The indeterminism and acausality of the Copenhagen interpretation imply a contradiction to Enlightenment theory and classical science at the most fundamental level of matter. The inescapable conclusions are that it is impossible to gain a knowledge of causes and effects in the natural world in such a way as to guide human intervention. Indeed, drawn to its logical conclusion, the Copenhagen position denies the separation of human subject from nature as the object of intervention and makes all science futile.

The most dramatic and influential abandonment of Enlightenment humanism can be found in the writings of the left-wing 'Frankfurt school'

Gillott and Kumar point out that Albert Einstein refused to endorse the Copenhagen interpretation, accusing its authors of playing 'a risky game with reality'. He insisted on the objective character of physical reality, independent of the vagaries of perception and substantiation. He also insisted on the existence of causality in the universe, independently of human consciousness. In his view quantum mechanics was a useful, but incomplete theory, requiring further elaboration, not a complete and coherent theory as promoted by Bohr and Heisenberg. Yet, despite all Einstein's efforts and attempts at experimental refutations, the Copenhagen position has remained dominant.

Why? Gillott and Kumar recognise the appeal of the mathematical formalism of quantum theory as a means of resolving the crisis in physics. They also acknowledge the thesis elaborated by Paul Forman, that the Copenhagen formula was heavily influenced by the climate of anti-rational, anti-scientific and anti-causality prejudices prevalent in Weimar Germany in the mid-1920s. But neither of these factors can explain its wider and enduring popularity. In their view, this can only be understood in the context of the overall loss of faith in progress in modern times and the pessimistic emphasis on the limits to human knowledge and control over nature. Thus one of the greatest scientific advances of the twentieth century has contributed to the degradation of science and the retreat from reason.

In explaining the forms assumed by the retreat from reason, Gillott and Kumar trace the deepening exhaustion of both the major political and intellectual traditions that trace their origins to the great division between right and left that emerged in response to the French Revolution.

Conservatives have never objected to science as technique, merely to the subversive consequences of applying reason to society. Such prejudices were forcefully expressed by anti-democratic ideologues such as Gustav LeBon in France and Oswald Spengler in Germany in the early years of this century. Discredited by the Nazis, explicitly anti-scientific irrationalism receded in the postwar period, to be replaced by a narrowly instrumental scientism.

A more dramatic shift has taken place on the radical/liberal flank, which was historically pro-science. The retreat

from reason is here identified by Gillott and Kumar in Max Weber, Sigmund Freud and Ludwig Wittgenstein in response to the First World War and its aftermath. The most dramatic, and ultimately most influential, abandonment of Enlightenment humanism can be found in the writings of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in the late 1940s, formerly Marxists of the Frankfurt School, disoriented by the catastrophic defeats of the fascist era. The influence of these ideas can be traced through the writings of Herbert Marcuse, to the New Left of the 1960s to the Greens.

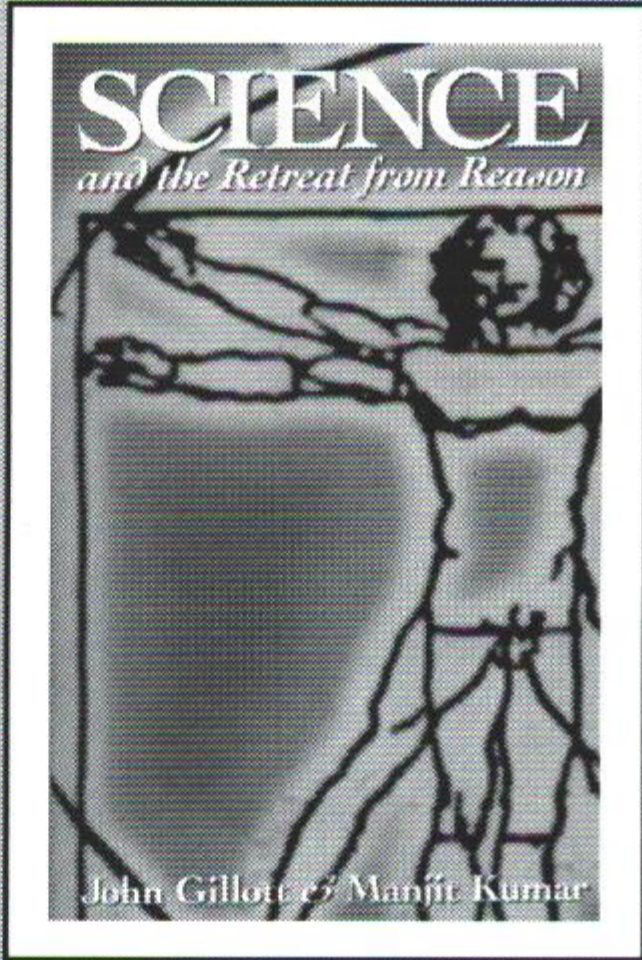
The events of the past five years—the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ending of the Cold War, the onset of the slump—have exposed the irrelevance of the politics of the past and provoked a remarkable convergence of traditional opponents. Gillott and Kumar provide an illuminating example in the ecological writings of Elmar Altvater, a veteran German radical, and Garrett Hardin, a veteran American reactionary, which share many common themes.

While Bookchin tends towards a rather ahistorical presentation of intellectual influences, Gillott and Kumar provide a balanced and historically specific account. For example, Bookchin exaggerates the importance of the reactionary philosopher Martin Heidegger's later writings for today's ecologists. In fact such anti-scientific prejudices could only gain widespread influence when they were reformulated by left wingers like Adorno and Horkheimer, or Heidegger's errant pupil Marcuse. For Bookchin, the radical disillusionment with the promise of May '68 explains all. Gillott and Kumar situate the demise of the left in the wider context of twentieth-century defeats and trace the convergence of radical despair with conservative gloom.

Both books offer a wealth of information and inspiration for the ongoing battle with the forces of darkness. *Re-enchanting Humanity* takes a bold and libertarian stand against all forms of Green and New Age reaction. *Science and the Retreat from Reason* is the most substantial contribution to the Marxist critique of the role of science in capitalist society for at least half a century.

SCIENCE
and the Retreat from Reason

John Gillott
and
Manjit Kumar



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The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice, Christopher Hitchens, Verso, £7.95 pbk

'Who would be so base as to pick on a wizened old lady, well stricken in years, who has consecrated her entire life to the needy and destitute?' Who indeed but our intrepid polemicist Christopher Hitchens, in a slender volume that follows his Channel 4 documentary attacking Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Hitchens' book is the same knockabout stuff as the documentary. Where he really excels is when he attacks the wizened old lady for counselling the acceptance of poverty and suffering. The saintly Teresa is fond of saying things like 'I think it is very beautiful for the poor to accept their lot', and, as Hitchens puts it, she promotes a cult based on suffering and subjection. Once she wrote that 'there are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread, but there are many more dying for a little love'. Pass the sick bag. Mother Teresa told the victims of the Union Carbide plant gas leak in Bhopal that they should forgive the company that poisoned them and perhaps smile a little more. 'A fortune cookie maxim of cretinous condescension', says Hitchens.

As *The Missionary Position* delights in pointing out Mother Teresa mixes with the obnoxious and powerful: Ron and Nancy Reagan, Papa Doc Duvalier, Bob Maxwell, Margaret Thatcher and even ER, defender of the (Anglican) faith, who looked on as her husband gave the nun a prize of £34 000 for 'the promotion of faith in the world' (I guess any faith will do).

But perhaps Mother Teresa is too easy a target. Today's missionaries are more likely to come bearing contraceptive pills than rosaries, or to give lessons in 'appropriate technology' rather than counsel outright submission to poverty. The underlying message is similar—curb your aspirations and adopt a moral agenda set in the West—but the form is different. At a 'peace' conference on the eve of the US invasion of Haiti, Hitchens declared his support for the marines boasting 'I am a socialist imperialist'. Perhaps his hostility to Mother Teresa's missionary zeal is more a difference over style than content.

David Nolan

Microserfs, Douglas Coupland, Flamingo £9.99 hbk

Douglas Coupland is a thirtysomething Canadian who made his name with the heavily ironic *Generation X* (1992). His latest fiction eschews the McJobs milieu (X-speak for fast-turnover, deeply unsatisfying employment) for the life-world of West Coast software designers, where everyone is enslaved to the consuming passion of work, work, work; hence *microserfs*.

Coupland's trademark is capturing the nuances of lifestyle, and his latest crop of characters is backed up with plenty of closely observed detail, to the point where *Microserfs* veers close to fictionalised journalism—a docudrama set in a world where jargon is the essence of conversation. This Nerdish argot is interspersed with commentary about the replacement of history with memory and the 'stalematedness' of infotopia,

all wrapped up in apparently trivial exchanges. Some of Coupland's observations are trenchant and illuminating, but he cops out by putting them in the mouths of characters who are clearly flawed, never in the voice of the author.

Although *Microserfs* is ostensibly a description of a new sensibility, its flat tone, and yearning for depth, is strongly reminiscent of the seminal novel of postwar American youth, JD Salinger's *Catcher in The Rye*. Holden Caulfield, Salinger's protagonist, first appeared 40 years ago, but pomo Danny has a lot in common with him, including fond memories of a dear-departed sibling whose absence represents a profound sense of loss together with the loss of profundity in among the opaque superficialities of today.

Whereas Caulfield stays true to his uncertainties, Danny concludes by saying that 'what's been missing for so long isn't missing anymore'. In the final pages of the story, Danny and his peers find a state of grace by teaching his stroke-stricken mother to communicate via a keyboard and computer monitor: a spiritually uplifting ending which is so sickly it makes *Love Story* seem like *Dirty Harry*.

Andrew Calcutt

The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution, Michael Lind, Free Press, \$25 hbk

In this defence of America's cultural unity, Michael Lind, a senior editor at the right-wing magazine *New Republic* attacks multiculturalism as a divisive and tokenistic gesture that only benefits the country's white overclass. In reality, he argues, American culture is already national, a new melting pot that now includes Hispanics and Asians on top of the well-stewed mix of European ethnics. His hope is that there will be a new racial amalgamation.

Against the stream Lind insists that America is not in danger of 'Balkanisation', breaking up into its different nationalities, but of 'Brazilianisation', where an elite class lords it over a racially divided working class. Lind's picture of the overclass, a handful of white families who run the country from inside their fortress-like communities is perceptive. With an eye for detail he explains their passion for diets and exercise; 'fear of fat is fear of lower-middle-class vulgarity; of the animal grossness, the unselfconscious corporeality associated with "rednecks" and "hardhats" and "Bubbas" and "ethnics" and "white trash"' (p148). Lind knows that this elite has benefited from the incorporation of a black and Hispanic elite through quotas and political tokenism.

But Lind's concern for the working man is skin-deep. His phoney New Deal rhetoric is just a convenient vantage point from which to attack the Clintonite liberal yuppie elite. Despite the populist rhetoric, Lind is not against elitism as such, just the kind of elitism that leaves right wingers like him on the outside. If he is critical of the elite, it is the kind of criticism that Julian Benda or Oswald Spengler made in the twenties when they railed against the 'treason of the clerks'. Lind wants an overclass that unites America against its economic competitors and against immigration.

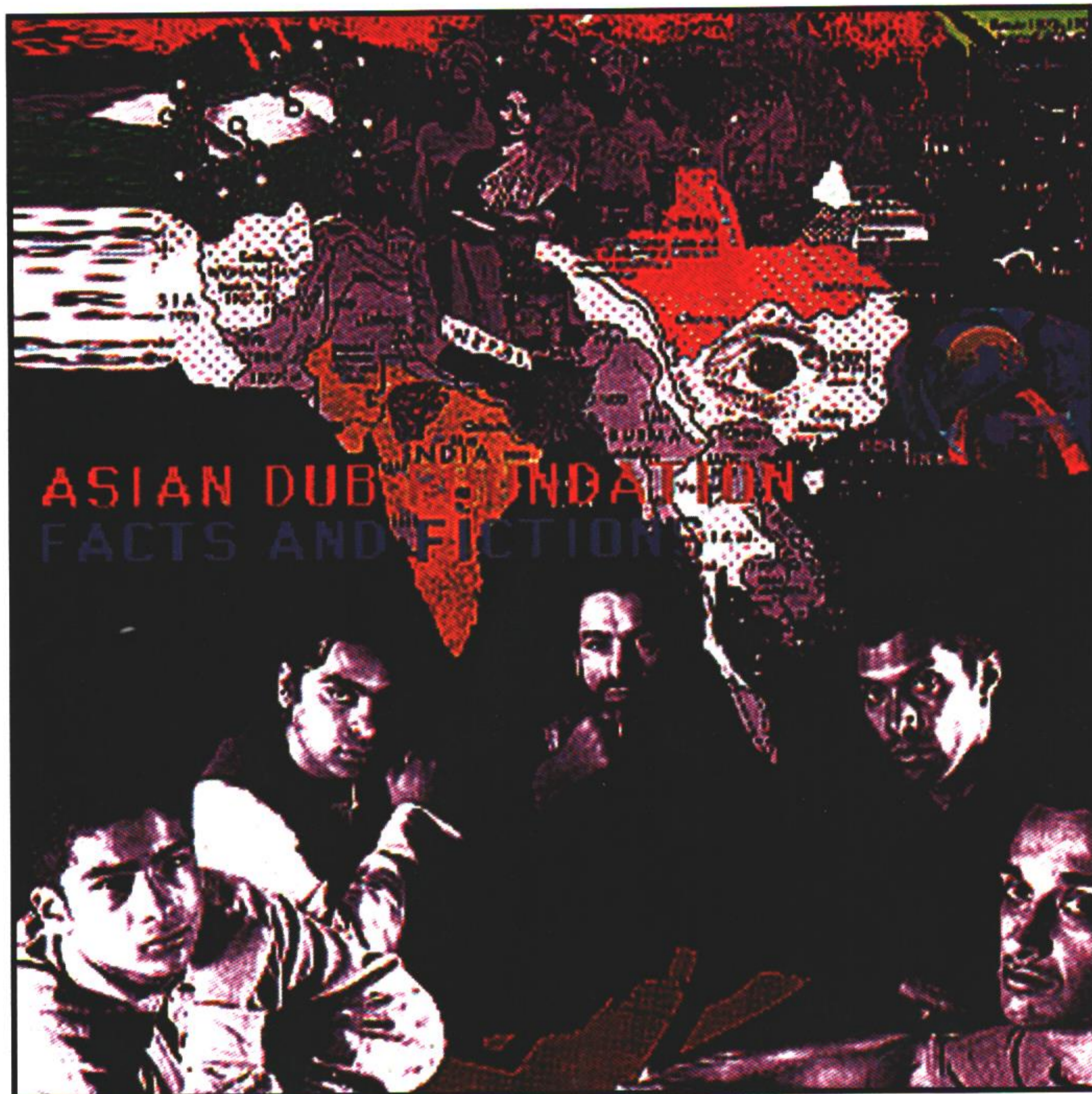
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