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The *Guardian* won public plaudits for its bold exposés of Tory sleaze. So why is it trying to warn everybody off a freelance journalist's own investigation of the Neil Hamilton affair? asks James Heartfield

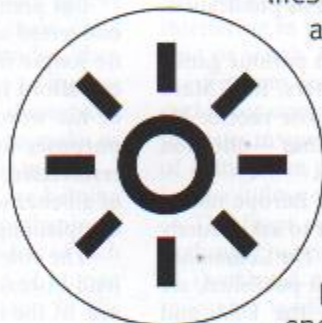
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Even the Christian churches now want to follow the teachings of Diana, patron saint of victims, reports Brendan O'Neill

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Sustainable development, indigenous lifestyles, micro-credit and non-governmental organisations look great in text books and policy documents, but what do these concepts mean to the people on the receiving end in Africa, Asia and Latin America? *LM* reporters scratch away some of the gloss



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MICK HUME

Editor



THE RETURN OF MARX (& SPENCER)

THE EDITOR WOULD LIKE TO REASSURE his readers that this is not an article about the continued relevance of *The Communist Manifesto* on the 150th anniversary of its publication. Thank you. Now read on.

While playing the Victorian parlour game, 'Confessions', with his daughters, Karl Marx was asked what was his favourite motto. He replied 'De omnibus dubitandum'—question everything.

If his spectre was haunting Europe today, the first question it would want to ask is surely this; why, exactly 150 years after *The Communist Manifesto* that he wrote was first published, are respectable commentators in the USA and Europe now resurrecting Marx as an important critic of capitalism?

Marx may be coming back into fashion in influential circles, yet the fact is that what he wrote is in many ways less pertinent now than at any time in the past century and a half. In its origins Marxism is, after all, a theory of proletarian revolution; and of what relevance is that, in a modern world where the working class movement has been consigned to the heritage museums and the only people likely to be

storming palaces are tour parties of sad little pilgrims worshipping the ground that Princess Diana walked on?

But perhaps that is the point for the newly converted admirers of Marx. Since his name no longer frightens the chattering classes, they can afford to patronise him and pick out those of his words that can be spun to suit their purposes today. So it is that Marx has been resurrected, not as a revolutionary with a vision of a better world, but as a conservative moaner complaining about the one we live in now.

The role that Marx has been allotted is to lend historical and philosophical authority to one of the most powerful—and most dangerous—notions of the late twentieth century: the idea that society must restrain itself for safety's sake, that humanity must be held back or risk disaster. Marx's critique of the destructive tendencies within capitalism is now being wheeled out to back up the influential argument against 'too much' economic growth, 'too much' progress. A man whose life's work was dedicated to breaking the chains that held back the human potential has been dressed up to look like a locksmith instead.

Marx's criticism in the *Communist Manifesto* of the destructive side of unfettered capitalist expansion certainly resonates with the gloomy and breast-beating mood of the late 1990s. The irony is, however, that when the 29-year old Marx wrote the *Manifesto* in the late 1840s (with the assistance of the 27-year old Frederick Engels), he was also keen to acknowledge the achievements of capitalism, the universalising aspect of the market's growth, the way in which it broke down many of the old barriers to human advancement.

Yet the productive, expansionist aspects of capitalism, which in the past Marx himself was prepared to celebrate, are now pointed to from all sides as a problem, even a threat, facing humanity and 'the planet'. There could be no surer sign that we are living in a different world than Marx, one where none of the old assumptions holds good, where we cannot even take it for granted that increasing the wealth and liberty of humanity will be accepted as a worthwhile goal. Even yesterday's far-sighted champion of emancipation can find himself forcibly recruited into today's army of doom-mongers, tolling the bell for human progress.

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In these vastly changed circumstances, those of us who begin from the same starting point as Marx did in his day—wanting to realise the human potential—can find little direct guidance from him about how to reach our goal. Instead we have to negotiate our own way across the new map of politics.

Every important issue is now shaped by society's failure of nerve, its loss of faith in itself. Tackling this sentiment is as important now as, say, puncturing capitalist triumphalism was in the past.

For example, discussions of the world economy today are often dominated by dire warnings of potential disasters. Each new event tends to be interpreted in the worst possible light. As Phil Mullan examines elsewhere in this issue of

regulation and less risk-taking. It is not just bureaucratic old fogeys who want to put the brakes on, either. Inasmuch as there are any radical causes around these days, they all seem to be about restraining human passions, whether for fast cars or easy cash.

There appears to be a grim determination to level everything down in society today, to put us all on a nice safe plateau of mediocrity. Those who ask for higher wages and better living standards are told they should be ashamed of themselves when there are hungry and homeless people out there. Centres of excellence like the Oxbridge universities are told that they must give up their privileges and live like the former polytechnics.

Spencer; 'bizarre' does not begin to describe it.

So what is to be done about it? *LM* magazine exists as a focus for those who want to start challenging the contemporary climate of low expectations, on any and every front. Our magazine has evolved along with the changing times over the past decade, developing from the review of the (now wound-up) Revolutionary Communist Party into a publication which seeks to promote an agenda very different to that of the old left: an agenda based on a firm belief in the much-maligned human and individual potential.

The fight for free speech, which we have made much of at *LM*, is an issue that sums up the kind of message that needs to be broadcast

MARX MAY BE COMING BACK INTO FASHION, YET THE FACT IS THAT WHAT HE WROTE IS IN MANY WAYS LESS PERTINENT NOW THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST CENTURY AND A HALF

LM, whether the threat that the experts are worrying too much about is inflation, deflation or disinflation, the underlying danger they identify always seems to be too much growth. This is a breathtaking turnaround in economic thinking. In the past, those who saw over-production as a source of capitalist instability would argue for consumers to be given more money to soak up the surplus goods. Now they argue instead for a cutback in production itself, as if in absolute terms there really were too many goods in the world.

As Mullan points out, the depressed state of economic thinking bears little relation to anything that is happening in the engine room of the real economy. Instead there is a predisposition to spot problems before they even exist, and to urge caution just in case the worst comes to pass. This is a reflection, not of economic developments, but of the wider mood in society outside the economists' study doors.

Risk avoidance, the precautionary principle, safety-first, remember the Titanic—these are the watchwords of our anxious age. In every field from genetic engineering to road building, the loss of nerve leads to a demand for more

These mind-numbing attempts at levelling down, painting the world monotone grey, are usually justified in the language of phoney egalitarianism. But does anybody seriously believe that, if the middle classes have their child benefit cut or Oxbridge loses its subsidies, then the government will give the money to the less well-off? It is simply an exercise in sharing out the misery, using moral blackmail to make us accept that less is somehow better for us all.

Taken together, current trends are helping to lower humanity's horizons, strengthening a climate in which we come to expect less of each other and of ourselves. At the level of human relations, the end result can be seen in the teachings of the new religion that Brendan O'Neill describes emerging around the late Diana; the worship of victimhood, the celebration of frailty, the belief that we are all 'damaged goods' in need of some kind of therapy, the wallowing in self-pity and alienation (see p20).

And while the recently-deceased princess lives on as an icon for our insecure times, a long-dead philosopher is also being resurrected in order to reinforce the message of low expectations and restraint. Diana and Karl, Marx and

today. It says that people should not be treated, or see themselves, as victims in need of protection from 'offensive' words and images. It says that we neither want nor need the authorities interfering in what we can say, write, listen to, read or watch. It says that what we do need is the freedom and the confidence to think and decide for ourselves, and the willingness to settle issues in open debate. Popularising that kind of attitude can go a long way towards challenging the stifling climate of the times.

The front page of this issue of *LM*—'Ban nothing, Question everything' serves as a kind of shorthand mission statement of what the magazine is all about. Half of it, you might notice, has been lifted from Marx's motto, so the old boy does still have his uses. And, in these mistrustful people-hating days, when the spectre haunting society seems to be 'stranger danger', another of Marx's answers to his daughters' game of 'Consequences' comes to mind. Asked for his favourite maxim, he replied 'nihil humani a me alienum puto'—nothing that is human is alien to me.

What would have been alien to him, however, was any nonsense about reincarnating the dead.

GENDER-BENDING?

I think Jenny Payne (LM-mail, February) missed the point of my article ('Why try to make boys more like girls?', December/January). The research evidence suggests that trying to challenge gender stereotypes among young children is likely to make little impact: it is exactly because they identify with being a boy or a girl that they tend to be drawn towards these stereotypes; and there is very little that parents or teachers can do about this because of the salience of sex role differences between men and women in society and the complex ways in which children develop.

Earlier theories of socialisation tended to over-simplify the processes whereby children internalise norms, and to assume a certain passivity on the part of the child. In contrast I followed most current research in arguing that children take a remarkably active role in learning about the world around them and about their position in it. When they are young they generally pick up on the most obvious social patterns and stereotypes, and may even adhere to these despite direct experience to the contrary. But as they grow up and learn more about society they begin to assimilate more of its complexities, and can understand for themselves that sex stereotypes are over-simplifications of contradictory reality.

An interesting development today is that women are generally expected to be assertive and confident while men are told that they must not be aggressive and competitive. It is conceivable that the consensus may change to the point where traditional gender stereotypes are entirely undermined. In principle this would not be a bad thing, but if it means that our children grow up rejecting the 'masculine' attributes which drive individuals to take risks or aspire to be the best, then I would rather stick with what we have got and challenge women to be more like men.

WENDY EARLE Acton, London

I do not believe that Jenny Payne's daughter turned into a confident, outspoken young woman because her mother reversed the names and roles of boys and girls in the *Famous Five* stories which she read to her as a child. I feel certain that her assertive personality will have been the result of a reasonably good education, teachers who stimulated her thinking, and opportunities for debate within her peer group and family.

My concern is that trends in society and education today encourage young people of both sexes to become more 'feminine' in their behaviour—inclined to dependency, little ambition, and to view themselves as victims of everything from bullying to chronic fatigue syndrome. That is the real problem, and it cannot be addressed by de-gendering toys.

JENNY CUNNINGHAM Glasgow

CHIPS WITH EVERYTHING

What a relief it was to read Dr Dee Dawson's endorsement of crisps and chips for children in Jennie Bristow's article 'Let them eat cake' (February). Countless 'Healthy Eating for Your Child' leaflets which I received whilst pregnant and during my daughter's first year, all gave the impression that sugar, crisps and chips were a real no-no. Teeth would rot, appetites (for good food) would shrink and bad eating habits would be established for life.

In the technicolour pie-charts of appropriate ratios of different food groups, all the yummy, fatty foods were squashed into a sliver of 'pie', whilst veg and dairy products were huge in comparison. Like any mother wanting to do good by her child, I went about finding 101 ways of making spinach enticing. I was also advised to keep a diary of what my daughter ate—a sure-fire way to make mealtimes hell.

Then in the summer we went on a family holiday to Italy where my friends' children were reared on sweet biscuits for breakfast and the tinned babyfood has sugar and salt added. All three children are healthy and gorgeous, of course. You can guess what I did with the food diary...

ALKA SEHGAL London

THE CASE FOR KIDS

I was disappointed with the response to Ann Furedi's article ('The case for kids', November), which I thought gave some thought-provoking insights into the anxieties endemic in contemporary life. I think it is only too true that these fears ensnare us, particularly in our most intimate lifestyle choices.

The best I can say for the letters you published (LM-mail, February) is that they confirmed just how frightened people can be these days: the first fretting over how much it costs to bring up a child and complaining that the wrong people are still having children too young; the second walling about the increased responsibilities of parenthood and suggesting that potentially the best parents are the ones who decide never to have children. I can reassure your correspondents that such fears are just like the old boogie man you thought was under the bed. Having children around is great fun; the kids (and the parents) are all right.

BERNADETTE WHELAN London

MANUFACTURED OPINION?

I agree with Tony Gilland about the disturbing trend of government and scientific bodies invoking public opinion to justify their own fears about genetic research ('Genes, Greens and Soya Beans', February). At the end of January the Human Genetics Advisory Commission (HGAC) along with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) issued a consultation paper seeking views on the ethics of cloning. 'It is the public who should control science and not the other way round', said HGAC chairman Sir Colin Campbell. Yet the HFEA paper announced it will ban the cloning of human beings from the outset and limit its consultation to the 'controversial' use of cloning technology to treat and avoid disease.

Readers may remember the HFEA from a few years ago, when it conducted a consultation exercise about the use of foetal ovarian tissue for IVF treatment. On that occasion the authority again displayed its not-so-neutral

credentials by raising groundless fears about the 'psychological effect on a child knowing that it was born from an egg derived from a cadaver or an aborted foetus'; and the tone of the public debate was set by the HFEA's senior medic telling the press that 'my reaction to the idea of using foetal tissue is "yuk".'

Medical and public consultation bodies may believe that they are promoting understanding and empowerment, but more often than not they are hiding behind the skirts of public opinion and promoting their own prejudices.

JOHN WEBSTER Leeds

GROWING INTELLIGENCE

We are seeing today the old arguments resurrected and brought forth in another guise. How is intelligence measured? Is there an intelligence quotient that can be measured? Is there an intelligence gene? These are all part of the divisive technique that is celebrated in the hymn about the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate. The current version is the 'clever gene', that is, the gene that is supposed to decide if you are a plonker. And if the supposed divide in intelligence fits in with the real divisions in society, all the better—the one will be used to justify the other.

Once our forebears stood erect on two feet instead of four, it allowed the development of the hand we know as man's. This new hand allowed man to manipulate his environment and encouraged him to work with others, which in turn created the need for sophisticated communication and the development of language and speech. And so man arose as the master and manipulator of nature by his own efforts. Today when mankind is portrayed as some bungling idiot flopping from one disaster to another, it is as well to keep in mind our real capabilities. No limit to our capacity for intellectual development has been reached. Who can compare our intellectual ability today with that of the last century, never mind the last thousand years? Who is to measure something that is developing and has yet to reach a plateau?

DAVE HALLSWORTH Manchester

INSUFFICIENT CONSENSUS

Monica McWilliams (LM-mail, February) says it was a considerable achievement for the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition to have received 7731 votes in May 1996, given that it was founded only six weeks previously. This may be so, but the question I raise in my article ('Look who's talking', November 1997) is whether an organisation with so few votes deserves to be put on a par with mass political parties like the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the Social Democratic and Labour Party.

McWilliams argues that 'sufficiency of consensus' does not give the Women's Coalition a 'veto on the process' (I never said it did), but that it seeks their support as 'one of the eight parties required to reach a majority'. But why should the UUP (over 250 000 votes at the last count) have to seek the support of her group (3024 votes at the last count) to push forward a political proposal? It is just as well we do not have 'sufficiency of consensus' in Britain (yet), since it would seem to involve New Labour or the Tories having to tailor their proposals to take account of the Natural Law Party.

'Sufficiency of consensus' is designed to ensure that the majority pro-Unionist view does not prevail over the 'equally valid' views of nationalists and other minorities. I have always opposed British domination of Ireland, hitherto implemented through Unionism and the gerrymandering of a spurious majority in the artificially-created six-county province of Ulster. But I always thought that the solution was to have more democracy, by getting rid of Partition and letting the majority of Irish people decide how to run their affairs. McWilliams suggests that majoritarianism is itself the problem.

McWilliams accuses me of being a 'dinosaur' while her Coalition is one of 'the new voices heading into the twenty-first century'. At 23 I am no 'dinosaur', but I will defend democracy whether it is being attacked by Unionists, the British government or a clique of politically correct women.

BRENDAN O'NEILL
Edgware, Middlesex



The what's NOT on guide

DERRY CLOSE: When Tony Blair's former head of chambers Derry Irvine called for 'prior restraint' of newspapers which might otherwise be in breach of privacy, the *Daily Telegraph* dubbed him 'Lord Censor' and Number 10, we were told, was keen to distance the PM from his remarks. Shortly afterwards the voice of Number 10, Blair's press secretary Alastair Campbell, censured the 'downmarket and dumbed-down' BBC for giving too much airtime to the extra-marital activity of foreign secretary Robin Cook—the same story which the Lord Chancellor had cited as the sort of news which ought to be screwed by 'prior restraint'. (Singled out by comedian Sean Hughes and quizzed as to whether he has 'ever had sex in the middle of the day in your living room?', the press-gag peer remained silent in his seat in the front row of Islington's Almeida Theatre—a case of 'prior restraint', presumably.) **SHIRTY:** Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran have come under fire for *Mosley* (Channel 4), their portrayal of the British fascist leader. The two scriptwriters are Jewish and were advised that this might help in their bid to dramatise Sir Oswald Mosley's life. The Marks and Gran version made it to the screen—but not without incident. Leading the charge on *Mosley* is the *Daily Mail*—no relation to the paper of the same name which once said 'Hurrah for the blackshirts!'. **PUNCHED:** Wiltshire county council ordered copies of a Punch and Judy book to be withdrawn from libraries. The council acted after parent Paul Kernton complained about the 'sickening' violence of scenes in which Punch tricks a policeman into putting his head in a noose and hangs him, coshes Judy, and bangs their baby's head to get it to sleep. A spokesman for the Police Federation said that the book 'sent completely the wrong message', adding: 'we are constantly having to counter this sort of thing. We recently took action against a video game which awards points for mowing down policemen in a car chase. It just doesn't encourage any respect for law and order.' Given the Home Office's intention to ban replica firearms, presumably children will soon be barred from playing cops'n'robbers. And unless those Peter Rabbit books are withdrawn soon, can we expect a wave of copy-rabbit lettuce heists? **FREE VETTING:** Headlined 'The Sunday Service', an advert in the *County Down Spectator* featured a naked woman sitting on a swing with her arms outstretched as in a crucifixion. Not content with an apology from the Lava Lounge club

night in Bangor, Northern Ireland, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld a complaint of blasphemy and advised the advertisers 'to seek copy advice in future', ie, have their copy vetted before publication. In its monthly report, the ASA claimed that the role it plays is 'an essential part of commercial free speech'. **DARK DAYS:** Bernie Grant MP and the local Council for Racial Equality (CRE) objected to Darkie Day, when the people of Padstow customarily paint themselves black and parade through the Cornish town. CRE chair Eileen Bothery said 'I am not black and it offends me'. Meanwhile Padstow's only black resident was said to be 'bemused by the whirlwind of disapproval'; and black pundit Darcus Howe suggested that Darkie Day was a celebration of the abolition of slavery. **CROSSED:** The Roman Catholic bishop of Salford and the Catholic Union of Mothers (CUM) have objected to the transfer of the Manchester United v Liverpool fixture to 3pm on Good Friday, allegedly at the behest of less-than-heavenly BSkyB, who will broadcast it live. If fans cannot be persuaded to go to church instead of the match, CUM has asked for a two minute silence in memory of the man who was prostrated on the cross but got up and scored three days later. **SENT OFF:** Gateshead council is applying to the Department of Transport for permission to ban ball games on the streets of the borough. Local soccer hero Malcolm MacDonald protested that outlawing street football will 'do untold damage to the North East' and harm 'the whole football pyramid'. Such a ban would have stunted the development of Paul Gascoigne and the brothers Charlton. A spokesman said that even if the transport ministry rejects the application, the council would have recourse to the Road Traffic Act 1980 which 'makes it a specific offence for a person to play football in the street to the annoyance of the road user'. Game over. **OFF LIMITS:** The prime minister has banned 'furious' cabinet ministers from going to France to watch World Cup games. So now they too know what it is like to be barred from their favourite game. **TAKE OFF:** The Association of Chief Police Officers is likely to ask for the legal power to order people to remove hoods and balaclavas. It looks like the days are numbered for the Boyz 'n the Hood. **WE ARE NOT AMUSED:** The entire print run of *PTQ*, the student magazine of Queen's University Belfast, was pulped because it contained a page of Diana jokes.

WE WELCOME READERS' VIEWS AND CRITICISMS

Write to The Editor, LM, BM InformInc, London WC1N 3XX fax (0171) 278 9844.
Letters may be edited for clarity and length

TABOOS

Doctors should be able to examine a patient's vagina without consent forms or chaperones, says medical student Liz Frayn

TRUST ME— I'M A DOCTOR

One of Britain's most high-profile doctors is due before the General Medical Council to answer charges of serious professional misconduct. Dr Kypros Nicolaides, a pioneer in the field of screening for foetal abnormalities, is accused by his patient Jenny Sabin of making 'innuendo-laden' remarks to her and her female companion while carrying out a delicate procedure to save the life of her twin foetuses, suffering from the rare twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome. Sadly, neither baby was saved. Dr Nicolaides claims he was 'trying to lighten the atmosphere'; obviously his attempts misfired.

In the coming months we can expect to hear of more cases like this. 'Appropriate' communication skills and behaviour towards patients is a hot topic in medicine at the moment, and

nowhere more so than in the specialities of obstetrics and gynaecology where there is particular concern that medical students should be aware of the sensitivities of their patients.

In the past potential embarrassment was dealt with by simply ignoring it. The *Carry On* film portrayal of an arrogant consultant marshalling a dozen medical students to peer up a patient's vagina as casually as if they were inspecting her ear, was a fair representation of teaching on many gynae wards. Now things are different.

When we began our obstetrics and gynaecology rotation last term, two new skills had to be learned: firstly, carrying out internal examinations, and secondly getting consent from patients to do these examinations while they are under anaesthetic. This usually involves asking the patient to sign a form giving you their permission to examine them while they are unconscious—a procedure referred to as EUA (Examination Under Anaesthetic).

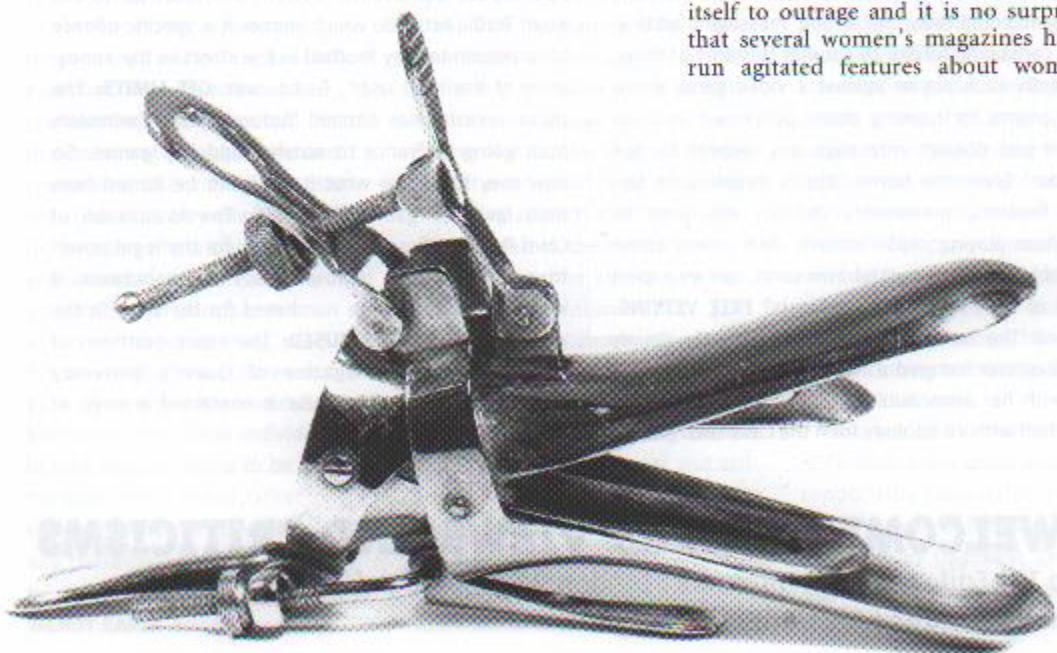
EUA is one of those issues that lends itself to outrage and it is no surprise that several women's magazines have run agitated features about women

examined in this way without their consent. If you have never worked in a hospital it sounds like a horrible affront to a woman's dignity, an invasion of her privacy, which is why most medical schools now insist that no student should examine a patient without consent, worried that women who find out they have been examined might make a fuss.

The feminist pressure group Women in Medicine lobbied for this change after discovering in a 1992 survey of 17 hospitals that only six required written consent, eight relied on verbal consent and three had no formal request procedure. The Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (RCOG) has come around to Women in Medicine's way of thinking, issuing guidelines which insist that 'Fully informed written consent must be obtained from the woman before she comes to the operating theatre...preferably...for a named rather than a generic medical student'.

Medical students do need to learn how to examine women's genitalia. Bi-manual vaginal examination, where the fingers of one hand are inserted to palpate the uterus and tubes via the vagina, and the other hand feels the uterus through the abdomen, is a first-call method of detecting abnormalities. Speculum examinations are essential for assessing the health of the vagina and cervix. And because—just like mouth, eyes and ears—one woman's vagina differs from another (and none feels like the plastic teaching models) until you have felt quite a few, it is impossible to tell what on Earth you are feeling, let alone identify abnormalities. As one of my colleagues has pointed out, 'If they all start saying no, what can you do? You've got to learn somehow'.

Fortunately, women rarely do say no. Male medical students have the most problems. One male friend said: 'The worst thing is when they are all in the pre-day surgery ward, in beds next to



THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY GUIDELINES INCLUDE:

- 'A chaperone should be offered to all patients undergoing intimate examinations...regardless of the gender of the gynaecologist.'
- 'Verbal consent should be obtained prior to all pelvic examinations.'
- 'Induction courses for junior doctors should include training on the appropriate conduct of intimate examinations.'
- 'No remarks of a personal nature should be made during pelvic examination.'
- 'Every effort must be made to ensure that intimate examinations take place in a closed room that cannot be entered while the examination is in progress and that the examination is not interrupted by phone calls, beeps or messages about other patients.'

each other. As soon as one says no, you know the next one will, and then the next'. A more inventive male colleague finds that 'If you ask them in the right way, it's fine. Call it a "pelvic" or "internal" examination—certainly not "vaginal", that's a no-no'. Responses range from the relaxed: 'Don't worry about it, I lost all my dignity when I had my kids!' to the more tentative 'I suppose you need to learn', and occasionally the downright 'no'.

Assuming that women patients are rational, sensible beings—and most are—why should they object to such examinations? Why should a medical student examining your vagina when you are unconscious be worse than him massaging your open heart or putting his hands into your abdomen?

Women who object do so presumably because they are embarrassed about the sexual connotations. This seems a little bizarre given the circumstances in which these procedures take place. Believe me, just as there is nothing erotic about examining lumpy testicles, so there is nothing erotic about bi-manual exams.

To imagine that there may be some impropriety is to distrust doctors. And unfortunately this distrust is more likely to be fuelled than calmed by mandatory consent procedures. To raise the issue of specific written consent for an exam with a woman implies that there might be a reason why she would wish to refuse it. The act of getting consent shows that medical schools are also suspicious of women, and the accusations they might make. This kind of mutual distrust does not provide a constructive basis for learning, or for patient care.

The RCOG's report seems to go out of its way to reinforce a lack of trust. It starts from the premise that 'Vaginal examination and bi-manual palpation of the female internal genitalia are among the most intimate and potentially embarrassing examinations carried out in clinical medicine'.

Embarrassing yes. Intimate no. A man in a white coat, sticking a speculum or a gloved finger into your vagina as you lie legs akimbo on a hospital bed does not constitute intimacy in my book. I suspect asking any self-respecting female patient if you could 'intimately examine' her would result in a slap in the face.

As for embarrassment, it seems to me that the best way to tackle this problem is, in a rather un-90s way, to ignore it. It may not be a very enjoyable procedure, but most women realise that it is necessary, and that doctors do it all the time.

In my experience, most women would rather just get this procedure over with as quickly as possible. The more self-conscious doctors become, the more loaded and embarrassing the situation becomes. Women do not want doctors to even think about impropriety. The RCOG code, however, ensures that the possibility of it will prey on the doctor's mind during the examination.

The RCOG also recommends that: 'A chaperone should be offered to all patients undergoing intimate examinations...regardless of the gender of the gynaecologist.' This was widely reported in the press, so presumably the RCOG regards it as quite a vote-winner. But why should women need a chaperone? Your average gynaecologist may be insensitive and even unpleasant, but does he need a nurse behind the curtains to stop him trying it on when you are in a vulnerable position?

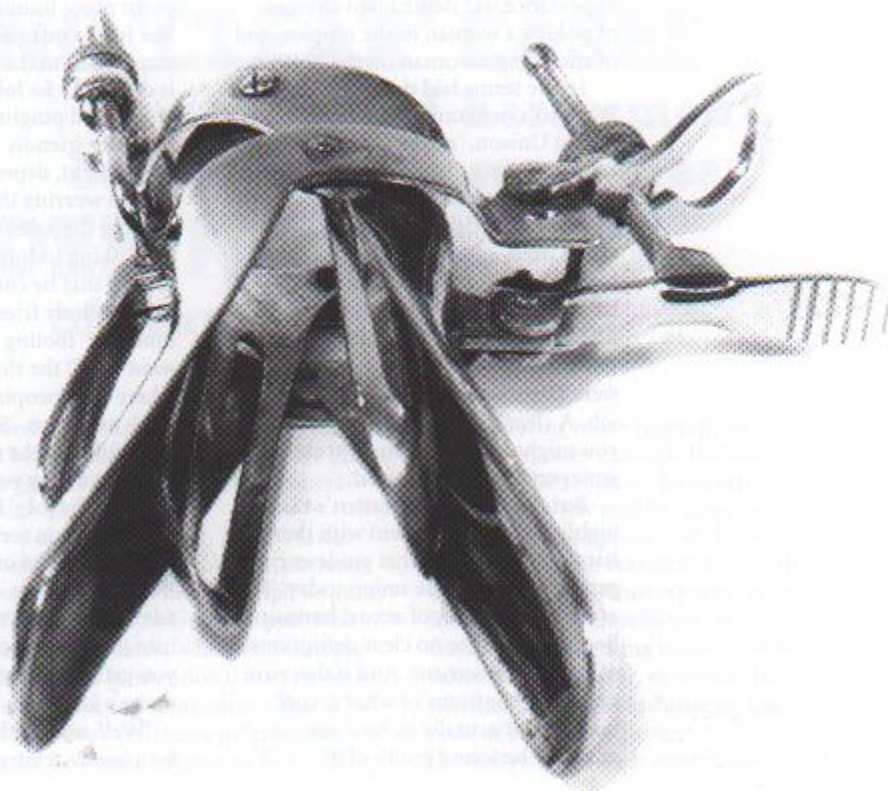
The other side of the coin is of course that the doctor too feels vulnerable:

after all, nowadays, a patient may sue him for trying it on and he needs a witness to prove otherwise. With the presence of a third party, however, a purely medical relationship becomes potentially a complex legal or sexual situation. This hardly seems conducive to trust between doctor and patient.

When I had my first smear test the nurse winked and instructed me to lie back and think of England. Really, I think this kind of reassuring, let's-get-on-with-it attitude would make things easier for women and doctors. On much reflection, I would put my neck on the line and argue that, for adult women undergoing gynaecological procedures, being examined beforehand by a medical student without getting special consent is fair enough.

We examine other bits of them—hernias, broken arms, lumps and bumps—and even assist in their operations, so why not vaginas? After all, from a medical point of view, it is no different. You could protest that from a woman's point of view, it is different. But be reassured; as far as a doctor's concerned, he might as well be looking at your elbow.

The doctor's speculum—intrusive, but hardly intimate



Where does the joke end and the harassment begin? asks Jennie Bristow

A BIT OF HARMLESS OFFICE FUN?

John Wratten, a social worker, is currently involved in a dispute about his redundancy from Kent County Council in 1996. Nothing too unusual about that. But what happened to John Wratten when he first came to blows with the council, two years before he was finally made redundant, should sound a warning to anybody who works in the atmosphere of daily office politics.

In September 1994 a disciplinary hearing within Kent County Council found John Wratten guilty of sexual harassment. He was given a final written warning and redeployed to a different office. Many would say that he got off lightly. The council 'normally regards' sexual harassment as gross misconduct, which can result in summary dismissal without notice or pay in lieu of notice.

There is no doubt that John Wratten did it. In the disciplinary hearing, he admitted to pinching the bra strap of one female employee, touching another female employee above the knee and freely making comments about his female colleagues' dress and appearance. He denied two charges: of poking a woman in the nipples, and of smacking a woman on the bottom.

In the terms laid down by John Wratten's own union, the 1.4 million-strong Unison, 'physical contact, ranging from unnecessary touching through to sexual assault or rape' and 'unwanted or derogatory comments about dress and/or appearance', are highlighted as forms of sexual harassment. John Wratten was a fifty-something male manager, and the women who complained about him were twenty-something and new to the job. A clear case of sexual harassment, you might think: the brute probably got everything he deserved.

But did he? John Wratten's case highlights a real problem with the harassment policies that guide every profession and trade union today. There are no 'clear' cases of sexual harassment, because there are no clear definitions of sexual harassment. And if there are no clear definitions of what sexual harassment actually is, how can anybody be found guilty of it?

The European Union's code of practice on sexual harassment, entitled 'Protecting the Dignity of Women and Men at Work', forms the basis of many policies designed to counteract sexual harassment at work. It states that 'the essential characteristic of sexual harassment is that it is unwanted by the recipient, that it is for each individual to determine what behaviour is acceptable to them and what they regard as offensive'. In other words, the 'essential characteristic' of sexual harassment is precisely the fact that it is not restricted to any specific kind of behaviour.

What counts in harassment policies today is not the behaviour itself, but the way in which this behaviour is interpreted by the person on the receiving end. The code states that 'it is the unwanted nature of the conduct which distinguishes sexual harassment from friendly behaviour, which is welcome and mutual'. 'Working Together to Prevent Harassment', Kent County Council's staff briefing on harassment, puts this point more bluntly: 'What may seem like fun to one person may be quite unpleasant to the person to whom it is directed.' So John Wratten making cracks and pinching bra straps could be either friendly behaviour or sexual harassment, depending on how the person wearing the bra strap and hearing the jokes feels about it.

Talking to John Wratten now, it is clear that he considered his behaviour to be entirely friendly, the kind of innocent 'fooling about' that he says went on all the time in the poky office where four people were expected to work as a team. 'Social work is fairly stressful, and the fooling around bits often go a long way to reducing the stress of the job.' He knows that he is not alone in seeing the importance of light-hearted office relations. 'Funnily enough, I saw a course advertised on introducing humour into the workplace. How pathetic can you get? You have to be told how to make a joke.'

Well, maybe there is good reason for courses telling managers how to



make jokes. Because as John Wratten found out in 1994, what he thought were jokes were interpreted by his junior female colleagues as sexual harassment. He claims that his colleagues 'gave as good as they got. That was what the office was like. Once or twice I pinched one colleague's bra strap, she burst out laughing. She took it as funny, the same way as it was intended'.

We have all been there, with irritating managers whose hands

get everywhere, and to many women having your bra strap snapped is far from hilarious. Today, however, there is a growing tendency not to deal with the problem directly, by telling him where to go, but to turn instead to a management code of conduct to sort out our office relations for us. None of the three women told John Wratten to his face that his behaviour was offensive. The first that he learned about it was when he was suspended, pending the disciplinary hearing.

John is 55 years old now. He started working for the council in 1971, before

offended by something as naive as that.' In any case, he explains, the people in his office teased him about his clothes as well. 'I was well known for being pretty awful with my colours and everything, so if I wore something that matched one woman used to say things like, "who got you dressed this morning?'' The very fact that such banal chat can be elevated to the status of a disciplinary offence should make us pause for thought.

John Wratten's explanation of how he committed the sin of touching a woman above the knee was delivered in a similar kind of way: unapologetic, undramatic but slightly bemused. 'She was having problems with colleagues. One day she came in to me just to have a general moan about things.' At this point in the interview, I had my right leg crossed over my left and John said, sheepishly, 'can I?', and slapped me above my right knee to demonstrate.

John continued: 'I said "come on then, go on in there and show that you can do it, that you mean business". That was how it was done. It certainly had nothing else attached to it from my point of view.' But from the point of view of the woman, there clearly was more than friendly encouragement attached to this gesture.

John Wratten cannot understand how behaviour he thought was reciprocal, a two-way jokey relationship, came to be construed as harassment at a later date. 'It just

As for the women who brought the complaints, nobody can say that they were lying. When the EU code on sexual harassment states that 'it is for each individual to determine what behaviour is acceptable to them and what they regard as offensive', it really means that the complainant's interpretation of events can never be questioned. Even if the women who complained about John's behaviour had played along with it at the time, who is to say that they did not find it offensive; even if they did not mind his behaviour at the time, who is to say that they did not perceive it as 'offensive' at a later date? Once you say 'I find this offensive' the discussion is closed, because who else can say what you find offensive?

When everybody with any clout in the workplace, from the European Union to the trade union, agrees that harassment has nothing to do with what you actually do, this shows how the 1990s workforce is perceived. No longer are we competent adults who can be held responsible for the relationships that we form and the things that we do. Instead we are like children, to be told in no uncertain terms that 'I didn't mean it' is no excuse.

Because it is perfectly possible for anybody to be offended by anything, and because anything can be deemed harassment, Unison's evangelical aim 'to eradicate harassment from the workplace and the union' can never be achieved. Indeed as the definition of harassment becomes wider,

There are
NO 'CLEAR' CASES
 of sexual harassment,
 because there are no clear
DEFINITIONS
 of sexual harassment

sexual harassment policies were invented. And when he gives his version of events that were said to constitute harassment, it is difficult to believe that only gopers engage in this kind of banter with the people in their office.

One of his female colleagues had accused him of teasing her about her clothing. 'She used to wear these long dresses that show an inch or two of petticoat. I just used to say, oh your petticoat's slipping again and things like that. I can't imagine adult people being

doesn't add up.' And your first reaction, talking to him, is that in order for things to get this far somebody somewhere must be lying.

But not necessarily. John Wratten could be telling the truth and nothing but the truth, yet he would still be guilty of harassment. As Unison's policy on harassment states, 'whether or not the harassment is intentional is irrelevant; the key point to remember is that it is offensive'. Whatever John meant to do, he caused offence so he is guilty.

incorporating more types of office behaviour, cases can only increase. What can be achieved, however, is the sacrifice of a few middle aged men like John Wratten to prove that the policy is working, and the creation of a situation of permanent mistrust where everybody looks over their shoulder all the time, fearful that something might have been taken the wrong way, or wondering whether they should whistle up the code of conduct to protect themselves from their workmates. ●



ROY LICHTENSTEIN, UNIFORM, 1964

Philip Stokes calls for a more intelligent attitude to the controversy over photographing children

WHEN INDECENCY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

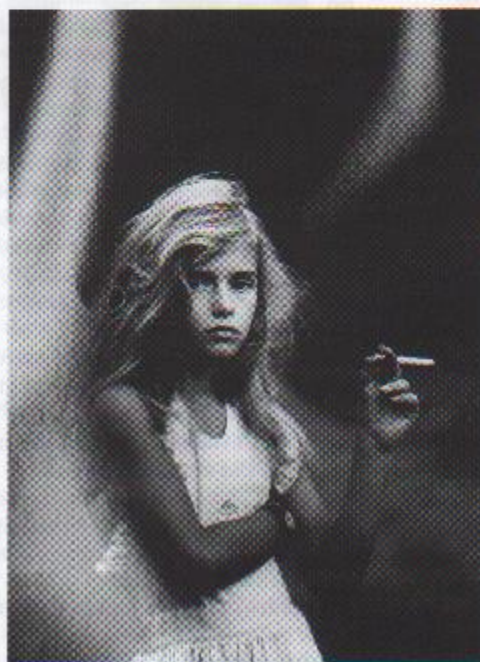
The sporadic commotion in the courts and press over the photographing of children is symbolic of a whole range of problems and conflicts concerning the relationship of the individual to the state today. But that is no comfort to the people who find themselves at the sharp end, visited in their homes by the police, or confronted by an airport customs officer with the look of a triumphant truffle hound, as he leafs through an art book or naturist magazine retrieved from the hand luggage. For it is the officer in charge on the ground who determines the meaning of indecency, and the statutes are silent as to what the indecent might reasonably be taken to be. Neither does the recorded wisdom of Her Majesty's judges offer much illumination.

Such vagueness never deters action, though. With energies more appropriate to the pursuit of crime than the disputation of aesthetic taste, vast quantities of material and effects are confiscated. The experience of Ron Oliver might be an extreme case; but the removal and retention by the police of some 20 000 items of his property, when by their own account they were concerned with only three images, is surreal by any standards.

The average accused person, found in possession of one or two books of photographs, is likely to discover that the authorities are interested only in a couple of images from each of them; but he will be perplexed indeed to discover that somebody else whose possession of the same books has fallen under the scrutiny of another police force, may be charged in connection with quite different images.

Despite this arbitrary interpretation of the law, the authorities often act with a certitude of judgement that is quite wrong where the matter has not yet even come to court. The records of interrogations, especially of the child subjects of photographs themselves, reveal shocking efforts by the interrogators to construct indecencies and promote an atmosphere of obscenity, with the possible effect of creating stigmatised victims where none existed prior to the authorities' intervention.

IN THE CASES UNDER CONSIDERATION here, the images do not show any crime; that is to say, they do not represent injury to or interference with their subjects. If they did, there could be no argument; the image would evidence the event, and the perpetrator could be brought to trial with the photographer joined as accessory. But they do not. Instead, underlying intentions and events preceding and succeeding the making of the photographs in question are inferred, as must be the dispositions and



What are you looking at?

PHOTO: SALLY MANN, CANON GUMBLETT, 1989

activities of any third party who later comes into possession of those images.

For all the care and advanced science applied to the study of physical evidence—the bloodstains, the traces of explosives, the marks upon surfaces—the forensic credibility of photographic speculations is on a level with that of the inquisitions of witchfinders, whether from the seventeenth century or from the much more recent and no less regrettable events in Orkney and elsewhere. Can anybody really be satisfied with the application of the standards of magic and superstition in these areas?

All we may see in a photograph is the configuration of a limited slice of the world as it was in a tiny sliver of time; what we see is all we can truly know. When we speak about that photograph as the representation of an event, it is only because our instinct is to make sense of things through the stories we tell ourselves about them. If we read a story out of a photograph, then, it must be virtually all our own fiction with only the tiniest anchorage to a real event. So we are left with the ironic conclusion that the dire anathematisations of the moralists and enforcers are probably no more than fantasies boiling up from the pressure cookers of their own battened-down libidos. Julia Somerville and her family, with countless others, know all the squalor that can come leaking out of those quarters.

When the law claims to be able to see intention, it does so in the face of the philosophical axiom that we cannot know the mind of another; that all we may know is their behaviour. While the possession of nude photographs of children may be significant in the case of somebody known to be guilty of paedophile acts, it is wholly improper to reverse the argument and assume that another person might be contemplating indecent acts just because they possess such photographs. By that logic, one should jail anybody possessing antiques magazines on the grounds that they will eventually commit burglary.

THE FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND THE mechanisms of representation, compounded by the obscurity of the law, leads to some extraordinary outcomes in the courts. One always hopes that they will be partially redeemed by being comic; but tragedy is never far away and absurdity is universal, as it has been throughout the history of censorship trials (*Lady Chatterley, Oz*). The heretical among us will be forgiven for suggesting that such uses of the law can only undermine the broader legislative and judicial system.

We note too, that such farcical performances are echoed across the world in courts which deal with the non-violent aspects of sexual behaviour, or indeed with any matter of belief or private action that does not involve demonstrable harm to third parties. It seems as impossible to legislate for justice in these areas as it is to conduct the consequent legal processes with either logic or dignity; yet the lesson that the state has no business in the beliefs or private actions of its citizens has thus far proved unlearnable.

In Anglo-American societies deeply scarred by Puritanism, there is an ingrained tendency to forbid others to do that which one dislikes doing—or does not wish to be known as doing—oneself. The tendency to ban things and persecute people, despite having been so historically discredited, is alive and malignant under a UK government which claims social justice as its motor. The fight for an intelligent understanding in the matter of the photography of children is both an aspect of opposing censorship, and a component in the general struggle to reform and so strengthen the legislature and judicial practice of the United Kingdom. ●

Philip Stokes is a photographer and writer, recently retired from teaching photography, and now a Senior Research Fellow of Nottingham Trent University

ANN BRADLEY

Suck on this



Conservative politicians in the USA declared themselves appalled that Bill Clinton appears to have survived the Lewinsky scandal. As *Newsweek* noted, after an initial plummet in the popularity polls, Clinton went on to gain more points than JFK during the Cuban missile crisis or George Bush after the invasion of Iraq. In future, it seems that rather than start a war to deflect from domestic crises, presidential aides will simply need to find a woman willing to claim she has aided the president.

It seems the American public do not much care if their president has been caught with his pants down, nor do they seem very bothered by the idea that he may have told a junior member of staff to lie. Conservatives have blamed this on

wants that? Far better to let matters rest.

But there is more to the collective shrug than that. Could it be that the American public are rather less hysterical than political journalists, commentators and gossip writers imagine? More mature and worldly-wise than are the media pundits themselves, even? Washington may have worked itself into a feeding frenzy at the thought of presidential fellatio followed by presidential lies, but my guess is that most normal people would be at least as shocked by the fuss as by the offences.

Lots of pious journalists have suggested that the president's trustworthiness would be irreparably undermined if he were found to have lied and asked Lewinsky to lie. Where are these people who trust a political leader? Surely everybody

want him to lie to spare her humiliation. There is some truth in the adage that: 'a lie about sex is not the same as a lie about anything else.'

But then we are talking about the USA, and the USA has clung harder to God-fearin' family values than we depraved Europeans. Even their language is different. We talk about 'affairs'—with the implication that sex outside marriage is something that 'happens'. They talk about 'adultery' with all of its biblical implications of sin and damnation. Surely this must make it harder for Americans to accept a president rumoured to engage in 'unnatural sexual practices'?

A colleague in Pittsburgh thinks that America's tradition of Puritanism may partly explain the public indulgence of Bill. His impression was that workmates were relieved to find out that oral sex (still defined as sodomy in some US states) was commonplace. 'Suddenly you could talk about it', he says, 'and you could almost hear some guys thinking: "I always knew I liked it, but I never knew it was normal." The rest were thinking "If it's good enough for the president of the United States...I must talk with Mary-Beth".'

Perhaps fear of enthusiasm for oral sex was why most vitriol spat at Clinton came from that particular type of 'victim' feminist who believes sex is something men do to abuse women. To their credit most women commentators assessed Clinton on the effect of his policies rather than his penis. But you can always rely on the likes of Andrea Dworkin to hit a man when he's down. As she explained to *Guardian* readers: 'Bill Clinton's fixation on oral sex—non-reciprocal oral sex—consistently puts women in states of submission to him. It's the most fetishistic, heartless, cold sexual exchange that one could imagine.'

Dworkin should stop relying on her imagination. A man with his cock in a woman's mouth is in a uniquely vulnerable—even submissive—position. And furthermore, some women—maybe Monica—just love it.

The American public do not care if the president has been caught with his pants down

the 'liberal' value-systems of moral relativism—a sign of our depraved and demoralised times.

Paradoxically, however, there is something conservative in the public shrug at Clinton's carryings on. The tolerance of Bill partly rests on the principle that the devil you know is better than the devil you don't. To many Americans, things don't seem too bad right now—so perhaps it is better to turn a blind eye. Certainly, for Americans who are 'proud to be American', there is—to borrow an expression from commentator Jonathan Alter—'no upside to getting to the bottom of the story'. Impeaching or forcing the resignation of a president who is seen to be otherwise competent risks further undermining the system of government. Who

assumes politicians lie. More than that, we know they do and they know we know they do. And can any journalist really be so naive as to believe that people would trust any president to be truthful, honest and open about sex? Especially about sex on the job? Particularly about having his cock sucked by an unpaid office junior? Be real!

It seems pretty likely that Mr Middle-America privately acknowledges that, if he were in the president's position, it would take the North American equivalent of the Spanish inquisition to force him to admit it within the hearing of the wife—never mind the whole world. It also seems pretty likely that Mrs Middle-America knows that, if Lewinsky was making accusations about her husband, she would

The Guardian won public plaudits for its bold exposés of Tory sleaze. So why is it trying to warn everybody off a freelance journalist's own investigation of the Neil Hamilton affair? asks James Heartfield

CASH, QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Former Tory minister Neil Hamilton may or may not be guilty of taking illicit payments to ask parliamentary questions in the 1980s; I am not particularly concerned either way. What does concern me, however, is the way that public discussion of the issues raised by the case is being curtailed today. An investigative journalist, Jonathan Hunt, has been branded an unethical fantasist and virtually accused of blasphemy, for suggesting that there is no hard evidence that Hamilton did it. Whatever any of us think of Hamilton, the attempt to discredit Jonathan Hunt and warn people off even considering his story is a worrying development. It raises questions about press standards and journalistic freedom that are of far wider importance than the fate of an ex-Tory MP.

Jonathan Hunt has spent the last nine months investigating the *Guardian's* 'cash-for-questions' story, and the subsequent inquiry run by Sir Gordon Downey, the new Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. The Downey inquiry concluded that there was 'compelling evidence' that Neil Hamilton had taken cash bribes from Mohammed Al Fayed to ask questions in the House of Commons. Much of the evidence before Downey was supplied by the *Guardian* newspaper.

Now Jonathan Hunt has produced a lengthy report which concludes that Neil Hamilton should not have been found guilty of the charges brought against him. These charges, says Hunt, were largely concocted by the wealthy businessman Mohammed Al Fayed as part of his personal grudge against Hamilton. They were published by the *Guardian* newspaper as part of its campaign against Conservative government sleaze. And finally they were endorsed by the Downey inquiry, under pressure to prove that the new system of parliamentary regulation worked.

Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger has gone ballistic over Hunt's 107 page report, 'Fayed, the *Guardian* and a Cover-up', denouncing it as 'a work of fiction and malevolent fantasy'. As well as rubbishing Hunt's (modest but respectable) credentials as a journalist, Rusbridger issued an all-purpose warning to any paper which might be tempted to run the story:

'Anyone who is claiming to talk about journalistic ethics who uses that document in support is so far detached from reality that their case is automatically and immediately undermined.' (*UK Press Gazette*, 23 January 1998)

That is a remarkable statement from the editor of a leading national newspaper. It seems that anybody who even questions the *Guardian* line is to be deemed unethical, 'automatically and immediately' putting themselves beyond the pale. Hunt says that he has already been warned of a possible libel action and the publication of damaging, and unfounded, allegations about his previous career in the road haulage business. When I talked to a member of the *Guardian's* sleaze-busting team, David Henke, he was clear: anybody who thinks that the *Guardian* got it wrong over Hamilton must, by definition, have some kind of ulterior motive.

In fact Hunt's main motivation seems to be frustration that nobody will put their prejudices aside and consider the evidence he has gathered. With the *Guardian* bristling defensively, the chances of a rational debate are slim. Whatever the truth or otherwise of Hunt's allegations, nobody has yet even reported the story in the wake of Alan Rusbridger's edict. The *Guardian* dedicated thousands of feet of newsprint to putting its case against Hamilton, yet has so far refused to respond to the questions Jonathan Hunt has raised. The result of all this is that people are being denied the chance to consider all sides of the story.

That kind of selective attitude to the evidence cannot be healthy for public debate on any issue.

It is not hard to understand why the *Guardian* might be upset about Jonathan Hunt's allegations. The exposure of Neil Hamilton as a corrupt politician, bought by Harrods owner Mohammed Al Fayed, was a turning point for the newspaper. Exposing Hamilton's corruption was a key moment in a campaign that culminated in the exposure of Tory minister Jonathan Aitken. The *Guardian's* reputation as the fearless enemy of corruption was made by facing down libel actions from Hamilton and Aitken. Even staunch rivals wearily acknowledge that the *Guardian's* sleaze-busting has made it the paper of the moment.

Those of us with no stake in the Hamilton story, however, are entitled to hear the case for the defence and judge for ourselves, whatever edict Alan Rusbridger might issue. So what is Hunt's story that the *Guardian* says I should not report—and, by implication, that you should not read? In the interests of free speech, here is an outline.

Hunt's argument is that there are important inconsistencies in the evidence against Neil Hamilton. In particular, Hunt alleges that the one serious charge of which Hamilton was found guilty by Downey, that of accepting cash bribes from Mohammed Al Fayed, only surfaced halfway through the sleaze investigation, when Al Fayed turned on his former Tory allies and decided to embellish the case against them.

The story begins in November 1985 when Egyptian millionaire Mohammed Al Fayed employed Ian Greer Associates, a lobbying firm, to help him promote his business interests, at a price of £25 000 a year (just over £2000 a month). Al Fayed had just bought House of Fraser (including Harrods), to the irritation of his long-standing rival Tiny Rowland.

In return Rowland lobbied the Department of Trade and Industry to investigate the Al Fayed brothers' questionable past. An investigation would threaten Mohammed Al Fayed's application for British citizenship. He wanted allies in high places.

One of the MPs that Ian Greer enlisted to help Al Fayed was Neil Hamilton, the abrasive right-winger who had sued *Panorama* in 1983 for implying that he was a fascist. Between November 1985 and May 1989 Hamilton asked nine written parliamentary questions and put down three early day motions, generally supporting Al Fayed against the DTI investigation. Hamilton stayed six nights at Al Fayed's Ritz Hotel in Paris at the millionaire's expense.

Most damaging for Hamilton, Ian Greer Associates had made payments to him of £4000 and £6000 for introducing clients National Nuclear Corporation and US

Tobacco to Greer around the same period. Those payments were not recorded in the register of parliamentary interests (Hunt claims this was in line with the less exacting standards of the register at that time). They were, however, recorded in Ian Greer's accounts—which Hunt points out meant that they could be proved to be legitimate payments and not bribes.

In July 1993, the *Guardian* began investigating Ian Greer Associates. Then editor Peter Preston applied a time-honoured principle of investigative journalism: follow the money. At that time, says Hunt, the *Guardian* was working on the theory that the commission fees paid to MPs for introducing clients to Greer were disguised bribes for asking questions in parliament. In the event, however, as Hunt notes, nobody has been able to prove that those commission payments were bent. Indeed, the Downey inquiry eventually conceded that 'there is no evidence

that Mr Hamilton received cash from Mr Al Fayed indirectly through Mr Greer'.

Yet Jonathan Hunt suggests that it was this allegation of indirect bribery, rather than envelopes of cash from Al Fayed, that the *Guardian* investigation was focused on when two of its journalists, David Henke and John Mullin, interviewed Neil Hamilton on 22 July 1993. The notes of that interview were presented to the Downey inquiry as evidence against Hamilton. The final note read: 'Asked about the brown paper bag, he was by this stage [sic], somewhat agitated and began his increasing level of threats about [libel lawyer] Peter Carter-Ruck.' For Downey, that note was proof that the cash-for-questions allegations about brown envelopes were a part of the *Guardian*'s investigation as early as July 1993.

Jonathan Hunt, however, sees inconsistencies in the evidence. That key sentence, he says, appears in a computer record of

the interview, but not in John Mullin's shorthand notes—it is the only difference between the two. The shorthand notes show only this response from Hamilton: 'never received any payments other than those declared in the Register of Members Interests.' Hunt suggests that this was Hamilton's answer, not to a question about envelopes of cash from Al Fayed, but to the same, rather general, question which the *Guardian* posed to Tim Smith MP, as part of the same investigation: 'Have you ever been paid for any Parliamentary business without registering it?'

Hunt notes that Mullin's shorthand notes were produced as evidence in the 1995 libel trial as well as the 1997 Downey inquiry. However, he points out, the additional computer record of the 1993 interview, with the extra sentence about 'the brown paper bag', was not surrendered to the 1995 ▶

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Guardian

questions and deceived Heseltine about it

cheat: official

Downey on Hamilton

□ The evidence that Mr Hamilton received cash payments directly from Mr Al Fayed in return for lobbying services is compelling; and I so conclude.

□ Mr Hamilton deliberately misled Michael Heseltine about his financial relationship with (the lobbyist) Mr Greer.

□ Mr Hamilton's credibility has suffered



◀ trial, though it appeared before Downey two years later.

The exact record of the 1993 interview matters, according to Hunt, because it can determine whether or not a charge of receiving cash-for-questions was made against Hamilton at that stage. Hunt says that after the interview Hamilton had indeed threatened the *Guardian* with a libel action—but only over the allegations that he had acted improperly in accepting his stay in the Ritz.

According to Hunt, the charge that Hamilton took direct cash-for-questions was only made by Al Fayed a year later, when, in September 1994, the European Court of Human Rights rejected his bid to have the report of the Department of Trade and Industry inquiry into his business activities suppressed. A furious

In October 1994 Al Fayed told the *Guardian* that the money (now increased to £8-10 000 a month) paid to Greer was direct payment for questions asked, and that Hamilton had free shopping at Harrods. Then in December, Hunt notes, Fayed changed his story again in a letter to the Select Committee on Members' Interests, saying that Hamilton was paid £20 000 directly in brown envelopes, as well as £8000 in Harrods gift vouchers.

Hunt records that only days before the 1995 libel trial was due to open did Al Fayed produce witnesses to say that Hamilton had received cash directly—all of whom were loyal employees of Mohammed Al Fayed at the time of the alleged bribes. The statements from these witnesses, says Hunt, are the only direct evidence of Hamilton having taken cash. Jonathan Hunt's report



PHOTO: MICHAEL WALTER

Al Fayed also accused **MICHAEL HOWARD** of taking one and a half **MILLION POUNDS** from Tiny Rowland

Al Fayed immediately turned on his former friends in the Tory party.

Neil Hamilton had just been promoted to a minister at the DTL. Al Fayed later told Brian Hitchen of the *Sunday Express* that he paid £50 000 to Greer, which Greer split between Hamilton and Tim Smith MP. These early accusations may correspond to Al Fayed's own understanding of the relationship with Ian Greer. But as that proved to be insufficient evidence of direct bribery, Hunt alleges, Al Fayed embellished his story further.

raises serious questions about the credibility and consistency of those witnesses' evidence.

Jonathan Hunt's story, then, is essentially this: that the Downey inquiry found Neil Hamilton guilty of taking cash-for-questions largely on the basis of a case prepared by the *Guardian*, which in turn was largely based on the wildly shifting allegations of Mohammed Al Fayed—who had also accused home secretary Michael Howard of taking one and a half million pounds from Tiny Rowland.

Why has Hunt's story not even been reported in the newspapers? Is it because his research is obviously just, as Rusbridger says, a partisan fantasy? Or is it rather that Hunt's allegations simply go too far against the grain of British politics in 1998, when Neil Hamilton is the Tory that everybody loves to hate and the *Guardian* is the newspaper with the spotless reputation for uncovering the truth about Tory corruption?

Did the *Guardian* really have a convincing case against Neil Hamilton, or did it get carried away with its self-appointed role of guarding the nation's morals? People deserve to be treated as mature enough to judge for themselves, on the basis of all the available evidence, rather than being told what is right by newspaper editors or anybody else. You do not have to give a damn about Neil Hamilton to see the importance of that principle. ●

Jonathan Hunt's *Trial by Conspiracy* is published later this year

WHAT DID THE *GUARDIAN* ASK NEIL HAMILTON ON THE TERRACE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON 22 JULY 1993?

According to Jonathan Hunt

The evidence does not prove that the *Guardian* journalists John Mullin and David Henke asked Hamilton whether he had received cash directly from Mohammed Al Fayed—even though Downey assumed that it did. The type-written version of Mullin's notes, that seems to contain a question about receiving cash in brown envelopes, only turned up in public half way through the Downey inquiry some years later.

According to John Mullin

Mullin insists the type-written note was made from shorthand notes that day. So why was it not presented to the 1995 libel trial like every other document? 'I can't comment on that.' Did you ask Neil Hamilton specifically about receiving cash directly from Mohammed Al Fayed? 'We asked Neil Hamilton did he receive any money for asking parliamentary questions on behalf of Mohammed Al Fayed.'

James Heartfield

GOVERNMENT BY SCANDAL

Will Deighton on the threat to democracy behind the Bill Clinton and Robin Cook affairs

The government of the world's greatest superpower can be paralysed by accusations of sexual impropriety against president Bill Clinton, while proceedings are suspended in the Westminster Parliament to consider the sleeping arrangements of foreign secretary Robin Cook. Once upon a time, scandals and sleaze interrupted the ordinary business of politics. Today scandals and sleaze are the political process, only to be interrupted by wars.

The original sexual wrong-doings alleged are in the cases of Mr Cook and President Clinton, trivial. Their Conservative and Republican opponents have sought to lend the charges gravitas by linking them to other accusations of perjury, in the case of the president, or jobbery, in the case of the foreign secretary. But the substance of these scandals is nothing but sexual purulence.

According to the First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton the charges against her husband are part of a right-wing conspiracy against the Democrat president. True, Special Investigator Kenneth Starr was put in place by a Republican Congress and has links with the Republicans. But there is no need to uncover a hidden conspiracy to explain the campaign against Bill Clinton.

The role of the Special Investigator was established in the 'Watergate' era of the seventies, when Republican president Richard Nixon was found to have burgled his opponents' campaign headquarters, kept secret slush-funds to finance the operation and then tried to cover it up. The shock that the president had broken the law made Americans look again at their political system—but not all the changes were for the better. After all Nixon was elected by the people, but brought down by journalists and lawyers—among them a young Hillary Rodham. Many drew the conclusion that the capacity of the president to fool all the people some of the time meant that new legal safeguards were needed against the presidency—hence the enhanced and open-ended role of the Special Investigator.

The Special Investigator has an open brief to investigate any charges of impropriety against the president, with wide-ranging powers to subpoena witnesses, seize evidence and arrange hearings. Because the Special Investigator is not answerable to anybody in particular, he is free to take his investigation wherever it leads.

The Special Investigation into Bill Clinton began in his previous term of office, looking at real estate deals and a law firm in Arkansas. Those investigations proceed with no sign of any conclusion. When Paula Jones accused the president of showing her his cock in a hotel room, Ken Starr simply added this new and unrelated charge to his inquiry. Then Monica Lewinsky's secretly recorded gossip about the president was made public, and the world

waited—with bated breath—while Lewinsky's lawyers negotiated with Starr over her testimony. The latest Republican advertising campaign ends with an alien abduction-like appeal: 'if you think you have been sexually harassed by the president, call 0800-HARASSU.' Clearly this investigation could go on forever.

The consequence of Ken Starr's permanent inquiry into any and all charges against the presidency is a state of permanent scandal. Starr does not have to make any findings to paralyse the presidency. All he has to do is investigate and the media stop reporting anything else. The mere fact that he talked to Monica Lewinsky's lawyers held up the US government for two solid weeks. In effect the Special Investigator has indefinite license to scandalise the presidency.

But Ken Starr has not abused his office. The Special Investigator's office is intended to be like a loaded gun pointing at the presidency, just waiting to be fired. The origin of the special investigation is a distrust of the presidency, but more importantly, a distrust of the process of democratic accountability at the polls. Unlike Kenneth Starr, Bill Clinton was elected, and then re-elected, despite the various allegations of scandal and sleaze made against him. Since this latest set of charges, Clinton's polled approval-rating actually climbed, to an unsailable 70 per cent. But none of that matters to the Special Investigator's office. Its role is to investigate the president's flaws regardless of whether he has the support of the voters. After all, they will say, Nixon was elected, and look at him.

The desire to short-circuit democratic accountability by legal investigation is the flaw at the heart of the Special Investigator's role.

Back in the seventies, radical Democrats were dumbfounded that Nixon had beaten them among working class voters, and, despairing of winning a straight fight, they turned to the law to effect the result the voters had denied them. After Bill Clinton overturned the Republican's 12-year occupation of the Oval Office, the right were similarly disappointed with the voters, and turned to the Special Investigator to do their dirty work for them.

The Special Investigator gives institutional form to the political elite's distrust of the voters. It is not surprising that his office paralyzes elected government—that is what it is supposed to do. What is surprising is that the British Parliament has embraced this US model of regulation. As in the American system, the new parliamentary watchdogs under Sir Gordon Downey and Lord Nolan are powers unto themselves. For the first time since the restoration of the monarchy in 1688, parliament has willingly placed itself under the external authority of an unelected body, with higher powers than those of the elected House of Commons.

The Standards Commission under Lord Nolan has a roving brief to root out corruption. Like all bureaucracies, his has a built-in incentive to discover the disease for which it is the cure. Like the Special Investigator's office in the USA, the Standards Commission is a powerful and all-purpose constraint on government. Like an open invitation to manufacture scandal it waits to start its investigations. Already the Conservatives have started mumbling about 'standards' in the Cook affair. A government that has made intolerance towards sleaze its slogan will find it difficult to fend off demands for a Starr-like investigation.

Despite appearances, Robin Cook is no sleazeball



new
Labour
new
Laws

Plans to give victims more say in sentencing will deal another blow to the concept of equality before the law argues Charlotte Reynolds

WHOSE JUSTICE?

The New Labour government's Crime and Disorder Bill will, for the first time, allow the wishes of the victims to be taken into consideration when sentencing convicted criminals.

Section 67 of the bill allows for the creation of a new statutory body, the Sentencing Advisory Panel. Its role would be to consult police, probation officers and victims before recommending suitable punishments to the Court of Appeal.

Section 54 of the bill seeks to create a non-custodial sentence called a 'reparation order', requiring a young offender to make reparation to the victim of their crime. Before making such an order, the court would obtain and consider a written report on the attitude of the victim towards the proposed punishment.

Jack Straw, the home secretary said of the proposals: 'We are committed to implementing an effective sentencing system for all the main offences to ensure greater consistency.' Greater consistency in sentencing is an admirable goal, but how this will be achieved by allowing the victim more involvement is baffling. Punishing similar crimes similarly is an essential element of justice. But whose justice are we talking about here?

With increased emphasis on the role of the victim, the basis upon which a sentencing decision is made will inevitably become more subjective. It is simply not possible to uphold the notion of consistent and equal treatment of similar crimes if the individual impact of the crime upon the victim, how the victim feels about it, is taken into account when passing sentence.

While the Crime and Disorder Bill is not yet law, the sentiment behind it can be seen at work in Jack Straw's decision at the end of last year, subsequently upheld in the High Court, that the Moor's murderer Myra Hindley should die in jail. A Home Office spokesman stated unambiguously that, in deciding Hindley should

remain in jail despite having served all of her 30 year sentence, Straw had taken into account 'the views of the victims' relatives'. Whether or not Myra Hindley remains in prison is not my concern here. The point is that in decisions relating to important areas of criminal justice public policy is being made in response to the emotional responses of a few, that private feelings are driving public policy.

As ever, the USA is leading the way in the recognition of increased rights for victims in law. Special units are dedicated to assisting victims, on the basis that overworked prosecutors, police and others in the criminal justice system may have to direct their efforts in ways not always consistent with victim needs. One could be forgiven for thinking they were there to ensure a fair and just trial. State legislatures have passed laws like the New Jersey Crime Victim's Bill of Rights, which allow victims to make a statement in person to the court, prior to sentencing, about the impact of the crime on their lives.

What does it say about justice when necessarily subjective and emotional responses are allowed to influence the outcome of court proceedings? It means that crime is being redefined to be less about what a defendant has done in fact, and more about how the alleged victim feels about it. That is a cue for inconsistency in the courts, where the punishment for the same crime can change from case to case according to the victims' response.

Indeed the notion of punishment changes altogether when the focus shifts to the wishes of the victim. Punishment is conventionally about holding individuals responsible for their actions and making them accountable to society for their wrongdoing. It is about saying that it is wrong to kill a person or steal a car and that society will not tolerate it. When the victim is placed at the centre of the sentencing process, however,

punishment is no longer about an individual paying his dues to society, but about paying reparation to the victim for the harm caused. The notion of punishment as a blaming mechanism is diminished and the role of the criminal justice process is reduced to looking after victims.

The proposals on victims and sentencing in the Crime and Disorder Bill may seem modest enough. But they represent a real shift in sentencing policy in the UK, particularly when viewed alongside other new laws which illustrate the move from objective standards to a more subjective approach within sentencing practice.

Take for example the new laws dealing with stalking. Criminal offences are usually defined with reference to two elements. First the *actus reus*, the act itself, and secondly the *mens rea*, the mental element. The mental element requirement relates solely to the state of mind of the defendant. The state of mind of the victim is simply not relevant. Yet in the Protection from Harassment Act, the offence is defined with reference to how the victim felt. It does not matter whether the defendant intended to do anything to harass anybody or not, the only relevant question is how the alleged victim interpreted his actions.

Proposals relating to the feelings of the victim are not the only way in which the approach of the law has become less consistent. Take for example the increased sentence available to the courts, under recent proposals, where an offence is deemed to be racially aggravated. When the criminal justice system concentrates on the characteristics of the victim rather than on what the offender has actually done, it is an inevitable consequence that the perpetrators of similar crimes will be treated unequally. How long will it be before the severity of punishment is dependent on whether the sandwich was stolen from Marks & Spencer or Tesco?



Ceri Dingle thinks the hunting fraternity should stop waffling about pest control and economics and speak up for the thrill of the chase

FOX HUNTING IS FUN

Watching the Beaufort hunt chase foxes across the Badminton estate on a cold Saturday in January, I wasn't offended or outraged. I was envious. We were on foot, alongside farmers, retired fans and families. I remembered my youth, a West Country kid on a cob in a home-made hacking jacket, thundering over ploughed land, wrestling to stay in the saddle with raw hands, freezing feet, flushed face and racing heart. Here they were magnificent in Beaufort blue and gold, 300 gathering for what is a rich man's thrill.

We chatted to the car followers, more up-front and passionate about their love of hunting than the mounted elite. Loving the chase, the car followers had come from as far as Devon for the day. Trail bikes, Landrovers, vans, Escorts, and a Range Rover or two lined the roadside, most sporting the Countryside Alliance March stickers, proclaiming 'listen to us'. Princess Michael of Kent was there, not with Prince Michael, a few noted.

Everybody talked about the Countryside Alliance against Worcester MP Michael Foster's bill to ban hunting, and the big march coming up in London. 'Yurv gorra stand up against this un and get couned', Tom told us. 'Huntin, marvlluss, gets yur blood going.' He is 83, and only snowdrifts on the motorway will keep him away from that march.

I picked up an Alliance leaflet, it didn't do these people or their sport justice. Its tone was horribly defensive, and it sounded like Prince Michael's equerry had written it. Foster's Bill would, it said, 'only serve to drive a further wedge between town and country'. What nonsense. The town has adopted the country, worships all that is green and cherishes rural life. While rural workers are less romantic, recognising country life is a hard slog, it is young people in rural areas who form the militant little bands of hunt saboteurs. Charlie, a farm labourer, agreed that 'these fox luvvers aren't just city folk, theur cumin from the cun-tree'. Neither are hunts entirely rural. I could hear plenty of City banter at the Beaufort, as business people and gentry swapped chat, deals and dates at the meet.

The Countryside Alliance leaflet's next argument was that banning hunting 'would have a detrimental impact on the welfare of wild mammals, restrict the range of pest control methods available and result in the destruction of thousands of horses and hounds'. Anybody would think that hunting was a form of sophisticated pest control for posh people, perhaps sponsored by the RSPCA. Even if a bite on a fox's neck is a swift and more humane death

than a bad shot, snaring or gassing, as pest control, the hunt is hopeless.

As a foot follower it is a laugh watching the fox pop-up in a copse next to you as the hunt tears off in the other direction. My husband (a city boy), who I took with me to witness the Beaufort in action, was shocked to see several foxes whisk by him, while 50 oblivious hounds and 300 riders proceeded the wrong way. He even photographed one sitting in the grass and asked if we should inform the hunt. I explained that the fox is hanging about to give the hunt a chance. I had introduced my husband to the chap known as 'the stopper out' in the

arrangements, solidarity with the workers is a dubious new concern for the fox hunting fraternity, who are after all their employers. In any case, economic arguments against Foster's Bill miss the point. It is the 50 000 hunting horses which generate £200 million of business a year for the feed, saddlery, farriery, livery and veterinary industries. Foster, however, is not attempting to ban horse riding.

People do not hunt in order to maintain hounds, justify livery stables or protect wild mammals. Most of the 215 000 who hunted or followed hounds in 1996 did so because it is a sport, not a job creation scheme.



Beaufort hunts

morning. He blocks up holes to stop the fox 'going to ground' because the chances of catching a fox are so poor.

The West Country is not renowned for sheep or free-range poultry farming and foxes are not known for carrying off cows, so suggesting that foxes are a major pest down there is ridiculous. They are more of a nuisance in the city, ripping open rubbish bags, but nobody has called in the hounds.

The Countryside Alliance also warns that Foster's Bill might leave 14 000 rural workers unemployed. That might be true, but it is not a convincing argument from the hunt lobby. Given the appalling level of rural worker's pay (Charlie is on £8000 a year for a 14 hour day), terrible conditions and medieval tied housing

Foster's Bill is an attack on freedom and fun. I think that hunting is a bold sport worth fighting for. We should refuse to be told how and when we can enjoy ourselves because of the 'rights' of a small and verminous mammal.

My husband thought the whole day was a good laugh, pretty rugged stuff and a great spectacle. He had thought it would be more savage and bloody, with foxes ripped limb from limb and huntsmen baying for blood. He also thought that riding was for 'girlies who like poncing about on horses'. There was none of that. It is rare for the followers to get near the kill and if you pounce about you usually fall off. It is the thrill of the chase, riding over rough terrain in numbers, that counts. My husband likes gory movies, I prefer fox hunting. ●



Even the Christian churches now want to follow the teachings of Diana, patron saint of victims, reports Brendan O'Neill

NEW RELIGION FOR OLD?

My mother lost her voice two years ago after suffering a stroke: she just went into a world of her own and everything we said went straight over her head. But as we were watching Princess Diana's funeral last year mother turned to me and said in a clear voice, "How sad", and then insisted that we send a card to the Queen. It was as if there had been an awakening.

Diane Kabza from Iffield near Brighton believes her 94 year-old mother regained her ability to speak as a result of Princess Diana's 'compassionate spirit'. 'Diana was full of kindness in life', she says, 'and that kindness seems to have lived on after her death'. Like the local newspaper Diane thinks her mother's awakening was a 'Right Royal miracle': 'Diana was the great compassionate healer of our times. She had a wonderful soul which was freed after her death and was able to have an impact on people, including my mother.'

Beth Delaney from Milton Keynes was waiting to sign a book of condolence in St James' Palace when she was visited by the 'risen' Princess. 'It was almost my turn to sign the book', remembers Beth, 'when I started to get goosepimples down my back like there had been a cold breeze. At the bottom of one of the paintings Diana's face appeared. She was smiling so it made me feel much better: all I wrote in the book of condolence was thank you'. Reporting from outside St James' Palace last September, one journalist, Clare Garner, was approached by at least 10 people claiming to have had visions of Diana in the same room on the same painting.

Claims of healings and visions are only the most extreme examples of a religious aura which has been building up around Diana since her death. As with all religions, the Cult of Diana has its rituals, like the lighting of candles, the laying of flowers and the leaving of messages outside Kensington Palace, and the mass displays of public grieving before and during her funeral. Of course there was a fair sprinkling of devout cranks among the worshippers ('Thank God for Jesus Christ, thank God for Diana' read one message on the palace gates), but the new religion gained a hold among a much wider congregation.

Diana's status as a sacred object of worship has since been confirmed, with the Diana Memorial Fund behaving like a Vatican Council, deciding who can and cannot name things

after the Princess and trying to stop people making films about her without permission. Perhaps the emergence of a new religiosity was most clearly demonstrated by Earl Spencer's announcement that he is to build a 'shrine' to his sister at Althorp House. Referred to by many (including those inside the Spencer camp) as a 'Temple to Diana', it was symbolic that the frenzied scramble to buy tickets for the shrine occurred on the same day that Peter Mandelson was embroiled in a row with the bishops over whether Christianity would be prominently featured in the Millennium Dome. In New Britain it seems Jesus is out and Diana is in.

Sure enough, the rise of the new religiosity mirrors the decline of the traditional Christian churches. The newly-published *UK Christian Handbook 1998/99* shows that church membership and attendance is hitting an all-time low. In 1980 all the Christian churches had a combined 'committed membership' of 7 550 000; by 1985 this figure had fallen to 6 980 000; by 1990 it was 6 690 000; and by 1995 it was down to 6 300 000. By the year 2000 it is estimated that it will fall to 5 950 000. If present trends continue, by the turn of the century the Anglican and Catholic churches will have lost more than a quarter of their memberships in just 20 years.

'People do not want to go to church any more and be told how to grieve or how to pray and at which particular shrine', says Reverend Dr John Drane, director of the Centre for Christianity and Contemporary Society at Stirling University. 'They want to make their own shrines and pray in their own way. That is what we saw after Diana's death, people celebrating their own spirituality. For many Diana became a Christ figure, a means through which they could understand the world.'

Drane is the author of *Creating Churches for the Next Century*, a ground-breaking book which addresses 'the paradox between the burgeoning spirituality of the nineties on the one hand and the rapid decline in church attendance on the other'. According to Drane the response to Diana's death illustrates that while spirituality is alive and well the traditional churches are out of touch. 'There was a lot of unjustified euphoria, particularly in the Church of England, that the religious response to the death of Diana heralded a great return to the church. But I think it heralds the ►

'Thou shalt have no other gods before me'—mourners in Hyde Park during Diana's funeral





◀ beginning of an age where people realise they can be spiritual without the church.'

The old-time religion has declined as part of a wider loss of faith in society's traditional values. Churches which relied on the idea that they alone were in possession of The Truth were never going

to prosper in a post-traditional society where relativism holds sway, and there is no real consensus as to what should be considered right or wrong. What Drane calls 'people celebrating their own spirituality' is really a sign of an increasingly individuated society, where the collective institutions of yesteryear, from churches to trade unions, have lost their purchase on people's emotions. Diana is a natural figurehead for the church of self-obsession.

The old church hierarchies have been trying to adapt to the new, alien circumstances for some time by playing down their claim to absolute moral authority. So the Church of England has given up believing in hell as a place of damnation, while the Catholic Church holds 'consultation meetings' with its members to find out what the 'Catholic in the street' really wants. Both churches have latched on to the death of Diana in a desperate attempt to boost their standing by associating themselves with the new religion.

In his New Year message to the nation George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke of how the response to Diana's death pointed the way towards a more 'caring society': 'Here was someone who, though intensely human, and fallible like all of us, expressed kindness. She was, in the deepest sense of the word, a "caring" person. And perhaps that amazing outpouring of grief last September arose partly because we recognised in Diana some of those unfulfilled hopes for a more "caring society".'

Meanwhile Cardinal Basil Hume assured Britain's 5.7 million Catholics that Diana 'is with God'—in case anybody was worried that the Anglican Princess would have to pay her dues in purgatory, as any ordinary Catholic who was self-indulgent, extravagantly rich and unfaithful to their spouse would. More recently the Catholic Church has opened a drop-in 'spiritual centre' which, according to the Catholic newspaper *The Tablet*, can play an invaluable role in the post-Diana age.

The fact that those who once spoke with 'the authority invested in them by God' now have to evoke the spirit of Diana to get their message across is a striking testimony to the changed times. Journalist John Vidal summed it up in an article which 'set an agenda for Saint Diana' months before her death: 'Given the political and moral vacuum, confusion in the churches, reluctance in business and the dreadful absence of international responsibility in Britain today, there is plenty of room for someone, however expensive their clothes, to star in the moral firmament' (*Guardian Weekly*, 26 January 1997). So what is it about Diana that makes her the perfect focus for this new religiosity?

'Diana identified with victims and they identified with her', says Reverend Tony Lloyd, director of the Leprosy Mission.

Dear Sir, Thank you for all the love and caring Princess Diana gave to all those who were in pain.

David, Mother
Bognor Regis



He recalls accompanying Diana on a visit to refugees with leprosy in Zimbabwe. 'Before we knew it she was crouching next to one of the frailest refugees who had been too weak to join the others and who no one else had spotted: it was just Diana and this patient, one woman in pain talking to another woman in pain. Of course neither woman knew a syllable of the other's language but there was some kind of communication between them. We just stood back and watched: it was truly amazing.'

Passing swiftly over Reverend Lloyd's apparent equation of bulimia and leprosy, the notion of Diana as a victim in solidarity with other victims—'one woman in pain talking to another woman in pain'—is a popular image. She is seen as somebody who was as 'fragile' as the rest of us in her life, who has become patron saint of the unfortunate after her death. This is where we can begin to see what is really being worshipped in the new religion.

'People can see something of themselves in Diana and that is important', says Dr Peter Brierley, director of the prestigious think-tank Christian Research and co-editor of the *UK Christian Handbook 1998/99*. 'She wasn't perfect, she had problems like the rest of us. People could identify with many aspects of her life: her divorce, her illness, her loneliness, and in a sense they could take some comfort from seeing this ordinary woman in an extraordinary situation experiencing many of the same problems they experienced.'

Brierley thinks it is significant that people responded differently to the death of Mother Teresa than they did to the death of Diana: 'People could not identify with Mother Teresa who was often described as a "living saint". She seemed flawless in many ways and she had an unstinting and unquestioning faith. Not many people can relate to that. But Diana was flawed, she was only human: she had been through the same experiences and the same pitfalls as the rest of us.'

'People could not identify with
MOTHER TERESA
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 as a "living saint". But
DIANA WAS FLAWED,
 she was only human'

Reverend Donald Reeves, rector of St James' Church in Piccadilly in central London, agrees: 'It was Diana's fragility as a human being which made her so appealing.' Reverend Reeves was one of the first to hold a service in memory of Diana, expecting '30 or 40 people to turn up but in the end there was something like 1500 and the service went on for over three hours. It was like Christmas Day, Good Friday and Easter all rolled into one'. After speaking to his congregation and to mourners on the Mall, Reeves came to the conclusion that it was Diana's self-proclaimed victim status that made her so popular: 'She had so many faults and failings and it is in the midst of that fragility that something rather special is glimpsed.'

The new religion is a worship of victimhood, one which holds up 'fragility' and 'failure' as the common experience that is supposed to hold people together. At a time when society has lost direction and the institutions which cohered it have lost authority, leaders both political and spiritual are desperate for anything that can create the impression of national unity and purpose. They have attached themselves to tragedies like the Dunblane massacre and especially the death of Diana, which provide them with a rare opportunity to speak with authority and one voice on behalf of the nation.

'It was extraordinary watching Diana's funeral', Dr Peter Brierley told me, 'to see Archbishop George Carey leading everybody in prayer. And by everybody I mean 2.4 billion people. When does George Carey ever get to lead so many people in prayer? In a sense he was, at that moment, the High Priest of the nation: he spoke for us all'.

The churches have not only been opportunistic in their response to Diana's death: they have positively embraced the values of the new religion developing around her. According to Reverend Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford, one 'insight to be derived from the impact of Diana's death is that so many people's lives are in a mess, particularly people under 35, and the way to communicate with them is by being vulnerable, by sharing something of our own dilemmas and pain' (*The Tablet*, 20 December 1997). In other words it is about time church leaders admitted that they are just as screwed up as everybody else.

The Christian churches have always considered our spiritless lives to be 'in a mess'. But in the past Christian leaders were confident about their message and their mission, and would try to show us the road to redemption by self-improvement. Those days are long gone: today's churches are more interested in emulating Diana by communicating with us through their own 'vulnerability and pain'. The Anglican Church in particular appears to be more interested in spreading the gospel according to Diana than the gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

There is nothing to defend about the old religions. Educated as a Catholic I know only too well how traditional Christianity views people as degraded and flawed. But I also have a vivid memory of being confirmed by Cardinal Basil Hume when I was 14, welcomed into the church as an 'adult'

capable of choosing between right and wrong. Today, as the Bishop of Oxford points out, Christian leaders are more interested in lowering themselves to what they see as our level, admitting that they feel the same pain as the rest of us. Probably the only equivalent of confirmation in the new religion is to take part in some humiliating public confession, preferably on TV, or to wear your emotions like a badge: to confirm that you too are a victim in the image of Diana.

As an awe-struck teenager I remember Cardinal Basil Hume standing over and above the congregation, instilling his values into the next generation of Catholics, a man with no time for the petty pursuits of the rest of us, like sex, relationships, alcohol, money and so on. He had cut himself off from the real world and set himself the arrogant task of saving humanity from itself. But today Cardinal Hume appears to spend half his time apologising for the misdemeanours of the child abusers and perverts that seem to make up the Catholic priesthood. Gone is the image of the church as a superior institution setting a Godly standard for the rest of us to aspire to. These days Christian leaders are at pains to point out that they are just as bad as, if not worse than, the rest of us. It is a striking illustration of today's degraded view of life to see the old churches virtually giving up on the Christian project of saving humanity, and instead succumbing to the worship of Diana the victim and joining us all to wallow in our alienation and inadequacies.

Since rejecting Catholicism I have seen religion as something which flourishes where society fails, the 'heart in a heartless world' as somebody once called it. Today the most backward of religions is flourishing, one which does not even pretend to have the answers but encourages us to celebrate our flaws and failures. Who will speak out against it? 'I have been worried about some of the response to Diana's death', says Robbi Robson, Chair of the British Humanist Association. 'I don't know why people feel the need to turn it into something religious. Human beings have rites of passage such as birth, marriage and death, and the funeral of Diana should have been seen in that way.'

Robson claims to have a 'practical and rational outlook on life'. 'Humanism is an approach to life based on reason and our common humanity', she says. 'We don't believe in God but in the power of science and reason to make sense of our lives.' But towards the end of our conversation Robson said in hushed tones: 'Not all Humanists believe there is a spiritual dimension, but I do. If there is anything to be said about Diana's death it is the fact that it brought to the surface a deep spiritual bond between people. Diana appeared to have the ability to touch people emotionally when she was alive and her death gave rise to something spiritual.'

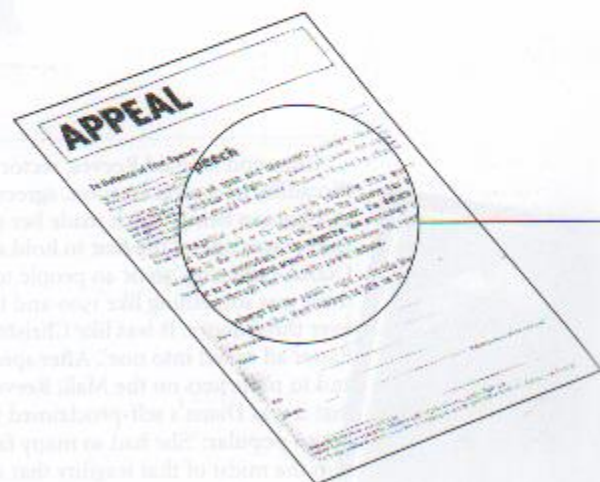
A belief in the 'spirit of Diana' can now unite everybody from the Catholic Church to the non-religious Humanists. Those of us who want more from life than to emulate her victimhood need to develop a vigorous atheism against religions old and new.

FREE SPEECH

LM magazine is being sued for libel by ITN, in a case which threatens to bankrupt the magazine and also raises wider issues about the use of the libel law to censor criticism. As the publishers of *LM*, we have launched an Appeal in Defence of Free Speech. It has already won support from many prominent writers, journalists, academics and other respected individuals.

This is only the start; we will be building more support for the appeal until the case is won.

Helene Guldberg & Claire Fox



Signatories so far include:

Margaret Drabble

Doris Lessing

Dr Lisa Appignanesi

AN Wilson

Matthew Parris

Patrick Hughes

Steven Alan Green

Phillip Knightley

Richard Hoggart

Colm Toibin

Jake Lynch

Michael Holroyd

Fay Weldon

Chris Tame

Professor Johan Galtung

Angela Lambert

Auberon Waugh

Professor Jim

'Libel actions— outdated laws— should not be used to stifle free speech. How can one arm of journalism behave in such a way to another that it jeopardises the very freedom of the profession. My support is all with *LM*'

'A case of historical importance. A win for ITN will be a blow to free speech'

'Journalists who specialise in criticism, should not see themselves above criticism. The "offending article" is responsible, well considered, and makes points ITN would do better to consider than to try to censor'

'As a former reporter for ITN (1973-7) I deplore their bullying tactics in bringing a libel action against *LM*'

LIBEL APPEAL

IN DEFENCE OF FREE SPEECH

We, the undersigned, believe that all open and democratic societies should acknowledge the public's right to read critical and dissenting views. Without this right, the sphere of public debate and expression is dangerously narrowed. No public figure or organisation should be exempt. Nothing should be above criticism.

In February 1997 *LM* magazine published an article criticising ITN's award-winning footage from Trnopolje camp in Bosnia. Throughout Europe and in the United States the debate has become a matter of public interest and has been discussed widely in the media. In the UK, by contrast, the debate has

been stifled because ITN issued a libel writ against the editor and publishers of *LM* magazine.

We encourage others to join us in condemning ITN's decision to act in this manner as a deplorable attack on press freedom. We reject the threat of costly libel action and call on ITN to defend its position through free and open public debate.

ITN has displayed contempt for the public's right to decide the relative merits of two sides of an important argument. We call on all those who value their freedom to join us in demanding the right to make up our own minds.

David Haynes

David Starkey

Christopher Dunkley

Francis King CBE

Paul Theroux

Viv Groskop

Nicholas Spice

Tim Gopsill

Ursula Owen

Blake Morrison

Donu Kogbara

Gill Barnes

Professor Wilhelm Kempf

Jenny Diski

John Berger

Nikos Papa Stergiadis

Geraldine James

William Boyd

Laetitia Sadler

'“Sue not that ye be not sued” is a rule that anyone working in the media ought to follow. That ITN is suing *Living Marxism* is the equivalent of an elephant attempting to trample a fly because it has had the impertinence to alight on its trunk'

'I hate the idea of a powerful and affluent organisation trying to destroy a small independent-minded magazine. The issues raised by *LM* are important ones, and deserve to be heard'

'It's absurd that journalists in ITN should be trying to suppress other journalists who are doing exactly what they are supposed to do'

'Journalists—of all people—should never use the libel laws to attack each other. If you've nothing to hide then debate, argue, challenge, refute and the truth will out. Shame on ITN'

Support the **LM** libel appeal, the **OFF THE FENCE FUND**.

Send donations to BM Off the Fence, London WC1N 3XX

Make cheques payable to: Off The Fence Fund

It was over before it began. At the last minute, Theodore Kaczynski admitted he was the anti-technology Unabomber who terrorised the USA for two decades, killing three and injuring 29 others. His plea bargain averted the death penalty, but he will spend the rest of his life behind bars.

By avoiding trial, the Unabomber left many haunting questions unanswered. But court documents reveal an astonishing fact that did not make the headlines: Kaczynski's anti-technology rage was fed and even inspired by the anti-technology philosophy of environmentalism.

'The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race.' As others have noted, that opening line of the Unabomber's turgid 35 000-word manifesto could easily have come from many an environmentalist organisation's fund-raising appeal.

'Mr Lapham: Your Honour, in a letter to the *New York Times* dated 20 April 1995, the Unabomber stated in part, "We blew up Thomas Mosser last December because he was a Burston-Marsteller [sic] executive. Among other misdeeds, Burston-Marsteller [sic] helped Exxon clean up its public image after the Exxon Valdez incident. But we attacked Burston-Marsteller [sic] less for its specific misdeeds than on general principles. Burston-Marsteller [sic] is about the biggest organisation in the public relations fields. This means that its business is the development of techniques for manipulating people's attitudes. It was for this more than for its actions in specific cases that we sent a bomb to an executive of this company".

'Your Honour, a carbon copy of that letter was found in the defendant's cabin. It is also worth pointing out, Your Honour, that that letter contained

in part, "As for the Mosser bombing"—and I'm quoting now—"our attention was called to Burson-Marsteller by an article that appeared in *Earth First!*, Litha", which is the way of describing the edition of that journal, "June 21st, 1993, page 4". In that document, the letter to *Earth First!*, the defendant states with respect to the mistake about Burson-Marsteller that "to us it makes little difference..."

'The court: Mr Kaczynski, do you agree with the factual representation just made by the government's attorney?
The defendant: Yes, Your Honour.'

The plea bargain concerning the killing of Gil Murray by package bomb in April 1995 disclosed a similar tie-in to correspondence with *Earth First!*:

'Mr Lapham: The package was addressed to William Dennison, the former president of the California

The Unabomber took his cue from the anti-technology rants of the US environmental lobby, suggests Ron Arnold

A DARKER SHADE OF GREEN

More to the point, it is now clear that the Unabomber's last two murder victims—Thomas Mosser of public relations giant Burson-Marsteller and Gilbert Murray of the timber-lobbying California Forestry Association, both of whom died in blasts from Kaczynski's package bombs—were targeted for their supposedly anti-environmental actions. And they were targeted using information Kaczynski got from environmentalist publications.

Consider the following excerpt from the plea bargain hearing transcript in the Unabomber trial in Sacramento, California on 22 January 1998. US Prosecutor Steven Lapham presents the plea agreement to Federal District Court Judge Garland E Burrell Jr. Having detailed how the Unabomber killed Thomas Mosser with a package bomb sent to his home in December 1994, Lapham suggested where Kaczynski had got the idea from:

a number of misstatements, one of which was that Burson-Marsteller had anything to do with the Exxon Valdez cleanup; it did not. Also, Burson-Marsteller was misspelled. The first name, Burson, did not contain a "t".

'The relevance of that is, during a search of the defendant's cabin, searchers also found a copy of the *Earth First! Journal* dated June 21st, 1993, in which the statement was made that Burson-Marsteller did have responsibility for the Exxon Valdez incident, for the cleanup of the image over that incident. Furthermore, in that *Earth First!* article, the name Burson-Marsteller is misspelled in the same fashion it is misspelled in the Unabomber letter.

'Furthermore, during the search of the defendant's cabin, the government found a letter written to *Earth First!*ers. Its title was "Suggestions for *Earth First!*ers from FC". That letter stated

Forestry Association. However, it was opened by Gilbert Murray, the current, at that time, president of the Forestry Association. In a letter to the *New York Times* dated 24 June 1995, the Unabomber declared after the bomb had detonated killing Mr Murray: "We have no regret about the fact that our bomb blew up the wrong man, Gilbert Murray, instead of William Dennison, to whom it was addressed..."

'Your Honour, during a search of the defendant's cabin the government obtained a carbon copy and a hand-written draft of the foregoing letter....The cabin searchers also found a copy of a letter to a radical environmental group known as *Earth First!*, and that letter began: "This is a message from FC. The FBI calls us Unabom. We are the people who recently assassinated the president of the California Forestry Association..."

'The court: Mr. Kaczynski, do you agree with the factual

representation just made by the government's attorney?
The defendant: Yes, Your Honour.'

Earth First! has emphatically denied receiving letters from the Unabomber. But the point is not to convict Earth First! of the Unabomber's crimes, it is to show the relationship of hatred for technology to the willingness to use violence to 'save' nature. Earth First!ers themselves include several convicted anti-technology criminals. In 1989 their best-known co-founder, Dave Foreman, signed a guilty plea of felony conspiracy for giving money and his instruction manual, 'EcoDefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching', to co-conspirators 'to illegally sabotage high voltage electrical transmission towers and lines', and for a 'planned attack on nuclear facilities in the western United States'.

The publications of Earth First! and other anti-technology groups, such as Earth Liberation Front and Animal

from driving spikes into timber to cause sawmill damage, to bombing mining equipment, shooting cattle to bankrupt ranchers, blowing up dams, and other mayhem.

Another Earth First! co-founder, Mike Roselle, wrote in the December/January 1995 issue of *Earth First! Journal*, 'Monkeywrenching is more than just sabotage, and your [sic] goddam right it's revolutionary! This is jihad, pal. There are no innocent bystanders, because in these desperate hours, bystanders are not innocent'. Yet these environmentalists personally have no hope of overthrowing the system they hate, only the desperate hope of speeding its perceived self-destruction. It puts one in mind of Lenin's tract, *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, which berated those romantics who thought revolution would come by throwing bombs at capitalist infrastructure.

Environmental organisations, even

consists in conformity to some standard or norm expressed by the term "nature" or its derivatives'.

The idea is to abolish civilisation. Surprisingly, Sigmund Freud dealt with that issue head-on in *The Future of an Illusion*:

'But how ungrateful, how short-sighted after all, to strive for the abolition of civilisation! What would then remain would be a state of nature, and that would be far harder to bear. It is true that nature would not demand any restrictions of instinct from us, she would let us do as we liked; but she has her own particularly effective method of restricting us. She destroys us—coldly, cruelly, relentlessly, as it seems to us, and possibly through the very things that occasioned our satisfaction.'

It was precisely because of these dangers with which nature threatens us that we came together and created civilisation, which is also, among other

For Unabomber Ted Kaczynski environmentalism was the theory and assassination the practice



According to EARTH FIRST! 'there are no innocent bystanders'

Liberation Front, have for years recommended 'monkeywrenching' of industrial operations—the term came from the title of Edward Abbey's seminal 1974 anti-technology novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*—ranging

those that do not condone violence, flatter themselves as 'progressive' and 'leftist' for wanting to save the planet. However, idealising primitive societies, promoting the re-wilding of existing development, and recommending that we return to the bare subsistence of the Late Neolithic is hardly revolutionary. In fact, environmentalism is so far in the other direction that even the words 'conservative' and 'reactionary' are not adequate. For a better assessment, we must look to the notion of 'primitivism'.

Primitivism, as defined by two influential early anthropologists, Arthur O Lovejoy and George Boas, is 'the belief of men living in a relatively highly evolved and complex cultural condition that a life far simpler and less sophisticated in some or in all respects is a more desirable life'. Primitivism reflects the assumption 'that correctness in opinion and excellence in individual conduct or in the constitution of society

things, intended to make our communal life possible. For the principal task of civilisation, its actual *raison d'être*, is to defend us against nature.'

As Freud concluded in *Civilisation and its Discontents*, 'the evolution of civilisation may therefore be simply described as the struggle for life of the human species'. Yet now, under the influence of its Unabomber syndrome, contemporary society seems willing to entertain the notion of abolishing civilisation, either by imposing a gradual culture of limits or by abruptly eliminating development. Those who are committed to the project of human progress have a great struggle before them.

Ron Arnold is the author of *Ecoterror: The Violent Agenda to Save Nature*, published by Merril Press

If the inflation doesn't get you, say the experts, the deflation will. Phil Mullan asks why they are always looking on the dark side of economic life

ECONOMISTS IN DEPRESSION

These days it seems that every setback in the financial markets is interpreted as a sign of impending economic catastrophe. There appears to be a predisposition to panic, a free-floating pessimism which can attach itself to any economic event. The instinct to worry seems to exist even before a problem emerges.

So, when the London and New York stockmarkets plunged briefly last October, there was much talk of collapsing share prices, of a knock-on crisis in industry, even of a return to the 1930s. Yet the markets quickly stabilised—City prices hit new peaks in February—while the real economy of goods and services continued to grow.

No sooner had the expert predictions of a transatlantic meltdown proved unfounded, however, than the doom-mongers turned their fearful eyes towards Asia. When financial turmoil spread through the Asean countries into Korea and Hong Kong late last year, many authoritative Western voices forecast disaster. They announced the end of the Asian dynamic, predicting that the Asian 'flu' would soon lay low America and Europe. Some even warned of systemic collapse and of a new world slump. (And some still do.)

Certainly, life will be tough for many East Asian people, financial institutions and companies for a year or so. There will be a boom in bankruptcies. But these economies will likely come through a period of shakeout and forced restructuring with an even stronger productive base. No pain, no gain has always been the way in the market economy. But the Western pessimism about the Asian crisis has been grossly exaggerated, not least because the affected economies represent less than four per cent of world output.

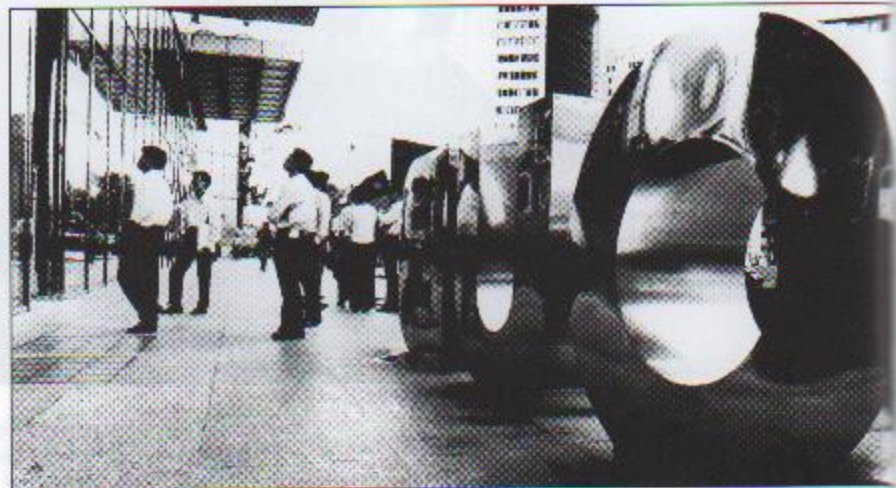
No sooner does the Asian spectre fade a little, than a new focus for Western anxieties emerges. Now it is the fear of deflation—falling prices—which has quickly taken over from its polar opposite—the fear of inflation,

or rising prices. So fast has this transition occurred, that senior economic observers seem not to know whether they are coming or going.

Take Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve. As guardian of the most important central bank in the world, Greenspan has often held forth on the dangers of inflation. However, at the turn of this year, the same Alan Greenspan could be heard warning against the onset of deflation. By the start of February,

1960s, but the prospect for some major synchronised recession and breakdown is slim. If anything the USA and Britain could slip into mild recessions within the next couple of years while Japan, Germany and much of the rest of Western Europe are expanding.

Far from a no-brakes descent into crisis, the most striking feature of recent economic history has been the remarkable record of the major powers in intervening to keep the system stable. From the Third World debt crisis at the



Greenspan had changed his tune again, now arguing that the process of disinflation could be too rapid. Within a few weeks, a respected figure like Greenspan can veer from a fear of rising prices, to a fear of falling prices, to a fear of too fast a fall in the rate of price increases. This fickleness must raise doubts that any of these concerns are grounded in real developments. Prices cannot be rising and falling at the same time.

To date, none of the dire predictions has come true. So how are we to account for the propensity to talk up economic problems and talk down capitalism's prospects?

The world economy is not on the edge of a precipice. The major industrial economies have certainly seen much better days of growth in the 1950s and

turn of the 1980s, to the stockmarket dives in 1987 and 1989, to the Mexican crisis earlier this decade and the latest Asian turmoil, potentially serious shocks to the world economy have been successfully contained.

Capitalism has proved adept at fashioning all sorts of financial and other tools to compensate for the long-term weakness of the productive economy: corporate restructurings, downsizing and cost-cutting operations, mergers and acquisitions, strategic alliances, international capital flows, bonds, derivatives and other financial instruments. These measures have underpinned economies that could no longer rely on their production departments to sustain them.

Armed with this new box of tricks, capitalism has been able to take

advantage of the historic situation it finds itself in today—the first time in almost 200 years that there is no serious political or intellectual challenge to the market. Advanced capitalist economies remain in a depressed state of production. But it is more accurate in these unique circumstances to describe our era as one of contained, or stabilised, depression.

So the widespread fear of impending economic crisis is not a direct reflection of the contemporary prospects for capitalism. Instead, it is symptomatic of an anxiety that informs more and more discussion these days. This mindset has turned many of the old text book assumptions of the capitalist ethic on their heads. For capitalists, risk has become a problem to be limited, rather than an opportunity to be pursued for profit. Risk management is one of the fastest growth areas in business consultancy this decade.

The notion of socially responsible companies has taken over from the goal of profit maximisation. Instead of focusing solely on the bottom line, companies are expected to invest in social audits and ethical codes. 'Caring' has replaced 'ruthless' as the desirable



Gloom and doom at the United Overseas Bank in Singapore

indigestion or a hangover. Meanwhile the merits of 'sustainable development'—aka limited development—have been taken on board at all the major economic gatherings and summits.

All the symptoms of market weakness and failure that in the past

much technological innovation. The East Asian difficulties are blamed upon these countries growing too fast. Inflation is blamed upon too rapid growth in the West. Deflation also is attributed to too rapid growth and an oversupply of goods pushing prices downwards.

Capitalist thought has been turned on its head. Take the issue of the so-called over-production of goods. In the past the answer was seen as boosting demand, by raising people's purchasing power. Today the conventional refrain is to restrict supply, by cutting back on production. Instead of growing out of problems the instinct now is to pull back. Whatever the perceived problem, it seems that limiting growth is the right answer today.

It seems that capitalists have lost faith in their values of growth and profit, undermining the impetus to move the economy and society forwards. Instead we have entered a world in which moderation, restraint and caution are the new watchwords. This makes any 'event'—real or perceived—an occasion for a new outpouring of anxieties.

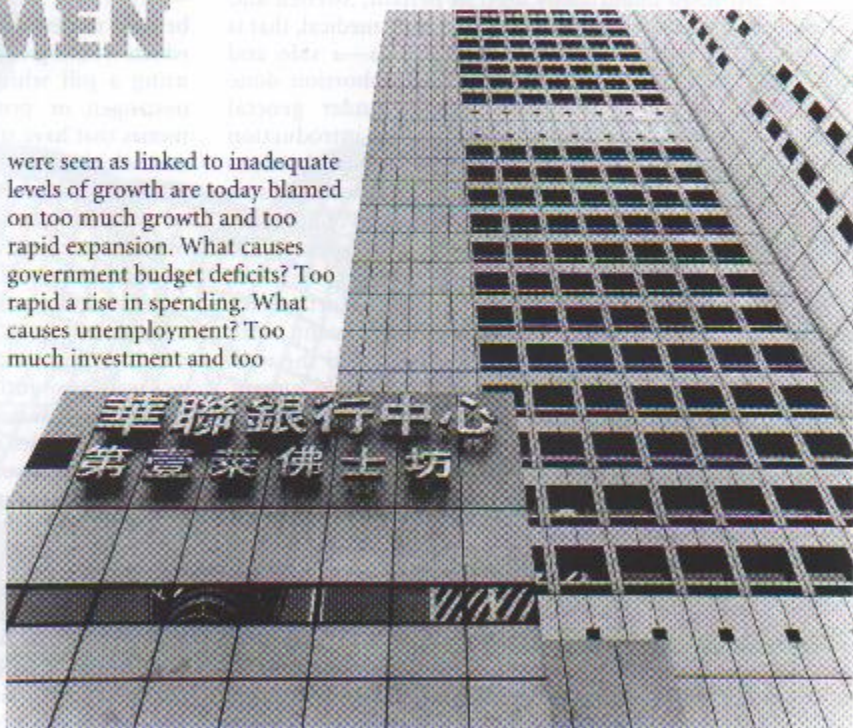
Reorganising society and restructuring the economy around the new culture of limits can provide capitalism with a breathing space, and maybe a lengthy one at that. But it also threatens serious problems somewhere up ahead. After all, how can a system, whose life blood is accumulation and the expansion of value and profit, reconcile itself to a new situation in which expansion and growth are derided, while profit-making is frowned upon as risky, socially irresponsible and even sinful?

'CARING' has replaced 'RUTHLESS' as the desirable label for BUSINESSMEN

label for businessmen. The campaign against Bill Gates and Microsoft, reaching as high as the US Department of Justice, is symptomatic of the low regard for entrepreneurial success. Here is a company that has gone from nothing to being the third or fourth largest in the world in less than two decades, only to find itself vilified from quarters far beyond its market competitors.

Overriding all these recent shifts in capitalist thinking is the notion that economic growth is more of a problem than a prize. In the past, nothing was more important than growth targets and expansion plans. Today economic booms are to be avoided because they are said to always result in busts. This is the mentality that teaches you should never enjoy yourself in case you get

were seen as linked to inadequate levels of growth are today blamed on too much growth and too rapid expansion. What causes government budget deficits? Too rapid a rise in spending. What causes unemployment? Too much investment and too



FUTURES

When would a pharmaceutical corporation ever refuse to market an effective, potentially profitable drug? When it is connected to abortion, reports Kathleen Corkey

RU-486: A BITTER PILL TO SWALLOW

Several recent American studies have shown that, in the words of the United States Institute of Medicine, many people's contraceptive needs 'remain essentially unmet'. With more women putting off raising families, there is a sizeable gap in the reproductive health market as demand grows for new methods of fertility control. Yet one company involved in these studies, Hoechst Marion Roussel, has dropped just such a drug—RU-486 or mifepristone, the abortion pill.

RU-486 blocks the action of progesterone, the hormone responsible for maintaining pregnancy. This prepares the body for a miscarriage which can then be triggered using another drug, a prostaglandin—taken two days later. It was developed 15 years ago by Professor Etienne Baulieu of the pharmaceutical company Roussel-Uclaf, a subsidiary of Hoechst Marion Roussel. RU-486 is currently used in Britain, Sweden and France to carry out early medical, that is drug-induced, abortions—a safe and effective alternative to abortion done by surgical methods under general or local anaesthetic. The introduction of RU-486 makes late medical abortions significantly less painful and reduces side effects like nausea and vomiting.

Professor Allan Templeton of Aberdeen Hospital outlined some of the advantages to medical abortion for women: 'The largest benefit with RU-486 is that it does avoid the risks associated with anaesthesia and surgery. We have found that avoidance of anaesthetic comes high on the list of preferences for women. Women like to be in control of the situation and not feel as if they have "given up" their body to the surgeon. Also the infection rates are lower due to the lack of surgery, which again some women feel quite strongly about.' Professor Templeton now carries out two thirds of abortions using RU-486, prior to that they were all surgical.

If it were not for the Abortion Act, which specifies that abortion must be carried out in a place registered with the Department of Health, women in Britain seeking an abortion in early pregnancy could obtain RU-486 from a doctor and only attend a clinic or hospital to be treated with prostaglandin. It has even been suggested that women could go through the whole process at home, and simply arrange an examination afterwards with their doctor to make sure there were no retained products. A pill, a check-up at the local GP's surgery, and it would all be over without the need for hospital involvement.

RU-486 or mifepristone has other uses as well. Professor Templeton uses it in the management of miscarriage and for inducing labour. Now studies have shown that a low dose of mifepristone is as effective as the current post-coital contraceptive—the 'morning-after pill'—with fewer side effects. It could also be used to develop a 'once-a-week pill', which would give women the choice of using a pill which does not contain oestrogen or progestogen—the hormones that have traditionally been used and which cause side effects in some women. There is also a possibility of using RU-486 to develop a new form of male contraceptive.

Other potential benefits of mifepristone include possible treatment for endometriosis (a long-term, painful condition involving uterine bleeding), as well as future treatments for Cushing's disease, Multiple Sclerosis and HIV. Studies suggest that mifepristone could be used to treat 40 per cent of breast cancer tumours.

Despite all of this good news, however, mifepristone is being underused, and under-researched. It is only available in Britain, Sweden and France and then only when taken under supervision in hospitals and clinics (it is illegally manufactured and distributed in China). Hoechst Marion Roussel never

marketed RU-486 with the enthusiasm or investment normally lavished on a potentially profitable drug. As a consequence, in 1996 the revenue from the product was just \$3.4 million. In April 1997 Hoechst Marion Roussel dropped RU-486, and handed the patent rights over to the smaller Excelgyn Laboratoires.

Why did a normally profit-hungry corporation like Hoechst Marion Roussel pass up the opportunity to make a lot of money out of RU-486? The only plausible answer is that its board was afraid of the moral stigma attached to abortion, and put its sensitivities before the interests of patients and shareholders alike.

From the first, Roussel-Uclaf laid down strict criteria for the licensing of RU-486, and these were taken on by Hoechst Marion Roussel. Abortion not only had to be legal in the country concerned, but the right to abortion had to be accepted there by public, political and medical opinion. There had to be a strict medical follow-up of every patient as a part of the clinical protocol; the manufacturers prided themselves on being able to trace every pill produced.

Finally, the company decreed that there had to be a request from the national authorities that RU-486 should be licensed. This was especially significant. It meant that Roussel-Uclaf itself would not apply for a licence, but



would leave it to the government concerned. In countries where abortion was a political issue, the authorities often chose not to license a new drug that might prove contentious. And in countries where abortion was not an issue, governments often chose not to risk starting the debate. The fact that nobody was promoting RU-486 meant that the public were unaware of the new techniques available. As a result, many women were denied the choice of a safe, non-surgical abortion.

When mifepristone was introduced in France in 1989, anti-abortionists made death threats against the staff of Roussel-Uclaf, who immediately stopped distribution and tried to stop production. The French minister of health and social affairs commendably ordered them to restart distribution of

the drug, arguing that it was no longer the property of Roussel-Uclaf but was rather 'the moral property of women'. Roussel-Uclaf reinstated RU-486 in France (at that time the only market). However, as the drug was not promoted in any way, doctors were slow to introduce it. Today French medical staff remain reluctant to use this 'new' method, and it is still less well-used than other methods, even in France.

When RU-486 was approved in Britain in 1991 it also sparked anti-abortion protests, and threats to boycott other Hoechst and Roussel-Uclaf products. However, there was no widespread public reaction against RU-486. In fact the influence of those opposed to the abortion pill has consistently been exaggerated. In France, too, despite the threats, the anti-abortion response to RU-486 proved insignificant. Yet it had a disproportionate effect on Roussel-Uclaf, enough to make them end their involvement with the product.

The company stated that it was discontinuing sales of RU-486 because of a 'complete reassessment' of its 'priorities and portfolios'. Behind the corporate speak, regardless of the ineffective boycotts, the company wished to steer clear of a controversial issue like abortion.

The company which now holds the patent for RU-486, Excelgyn is small but determined. Headed by Dr Edouard Sakiz, (president of Roussel-Uclaf at the time of the original RU-486 trials and a 1994 recipient of the US Feminist Majority Foundation's Feminist of the Year), it will concentrate solely on the

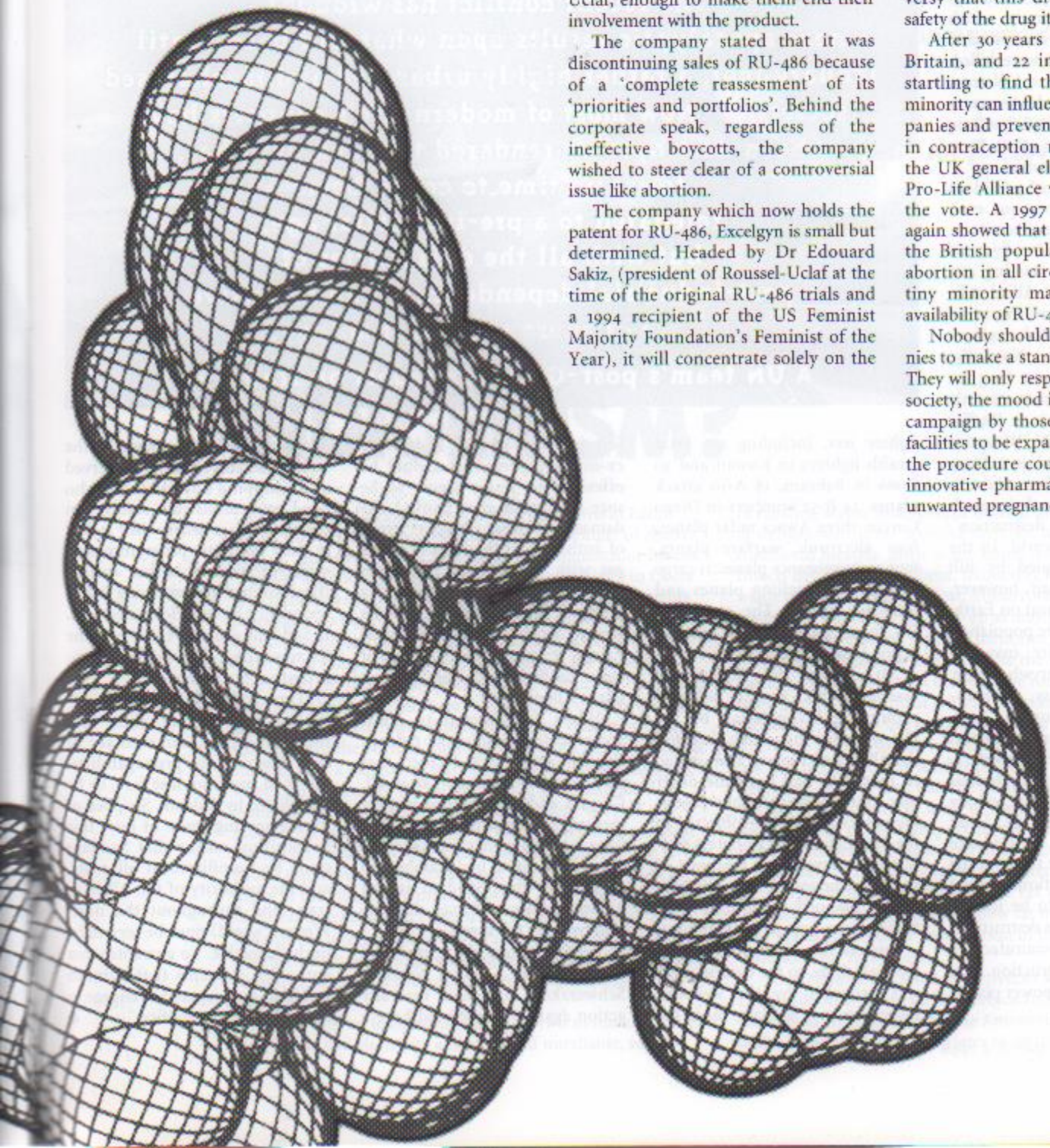
manufacture, marketing, distribution and development of RU-486.

Excelgyn is committed to research projects into labour induction and post-coital contraception, which were halted by Hoechst. The company also supports increased availability of RU-486. It has plans to request a licence for distribution in other European countries. However, the strict criteria for licensing and distribution used by Hoechst Marion Roussel will still apply. The head of medicine, research and development, Dr Regine Sitruk-Ware, explained that 'due to the controversy surrounding the drug, it needs to be delivered to the patient as safely as possible, in a strictly controlled environment'.

Why is there a need for such tight control of mifepristone? Far more dangerous drugs are subject to far less control. As Dr Sitruk-Ware says, it is all about the political and moral controversy that this drug attracts, not the safety of the drug itself.

After 30 years of legal abortion in Britain, and 22 in France, it is quite startling to find that a small 'pro-life' minority can influence major drug companies and prevent new developments in contraception reaching women. In the UK general election last year, the Pro-Life Alliance won two per cent of the vote. A 1997 Mori opinion poll again showed that only two per cent of the British population disapprove of abortion in all circumstances. Yet this tiny minority manage to retard the availability of RU-486.

Nobody should expect drug companies to make a stand for women's rights. They will only respond to the climate in society, the mood in the marketplace. A campaign by those who want abortion facilities to be expanded to de-stigmatise the procedure could open the way for innovative pharmaceutical solutions to unwanted pregnancies. ●



Will Deighton on what's really behind the latest Gulf crisis

A THREAT TO WHOM?

For the past seven years Iraq has been subject to a regime imposed by the United Nations Security Council. A UN blockade on Iraqi oil sales—its principal export—has left the country desperately short of money to buy food and medicine, so creating an entirely man-made famine. Much of Iraq's threadbare welfare services are operated by officials of the United Nations Children's Fund. Its industry was wrecked by the Allied bombings in the 1991 Gulf War, in which 250 000 bombs were dropped and up to 180 000 Iraqis were killed. Shortly after the war, a UN team headed by UN under-secretary Martti Ahtisaari reported that 'Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age'.

The government of president Saddam Hussein does not even have control over Iraqi territory. Allied forces operate a 'no-fly zone' over Northern Iraq, barring any flights by Iraqi aircraft. Allied military personnel have been ensconced in autonomous Kurdish regions. Troops from Turkey, a Nato ally, have invaded northern Iraq on numerous occasions, most recently in February to create a 'buffer zone'. A team of UN 'Weapons Inspectors', mostly former military personnel, demand free access to every Iraqi building in their search for 'weapons of mass destruction'.

That is the real world. In the fantasy world occupied by Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, however, Iraq is the greatest threat on Earth, poised to kill the entire population of the planet before invading Israel, Kuwait and everywhere else. To justify this fantasy, the spin-doctors in Washington and London have magicked up 'evidence' of new kinds of germ warfare, some of which, like the mysterious 'Agent 15', are so new, that nobody has ever heard of them. Look closely, however, and the evidence falls apart. Indeed the target of the proposed military actions against Iraq turns out not to be identifiable 'weapons of mass destruction', but the capacity to manufacture weapons of mass destruction. You know: roads, electric power plants, factories, railways.

There are weapons of mass destruction in the Persian Gulf: by mid-February there were two aircraft carriers with 112 tactical aircraft and 46 other planes, two cruisers, five destroyers, two guided missile frigates, two attack submarines, one fast combat support ship and two mine counter-measure ships. And that is just the US Navy. The US airforce has 126

Iraqis have given the weapons inspectors access to almost every part of the country they have concentrated their efforts on those areas that they are not allowed into: the presidential palaces.

The very idea that Iraq should have presidential palaces strikes Washington and Whitehall as sinister. The fact that the forcible investigation of these by a team of

clear objective. But the US-UK strategy towards Iraq can have no clear and final objective. Each humiliation that Washington heaps upon Saddam—from the no-fly zone, through the sanctions to the UN weapons inspectorate—fails to satisfy the restless compulsion to punish Iraq. Indeed no outcome, up to and including the overthrow of Saddam, could satisfy Clinton. That is because the Gulf policy does not arise out of anything that is happening in Iraq, but out of developments within the Western camp.

For the last seven and a half years, the conflict between Iraq and the Allies has been driven by the need of American presidents and other Western leaders to

'The recent conflict has wrought near apocalyptic results upon what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanised and mechanised society. Now most of modern life's supports have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology.'

A UN team's post-Gulf War report on Iraq, 1991

fighter jets, including six F-117 stealth fighters in Kuwait and 30 F-16s in Bahrain, 18 A-10 attack planes, 14 B-52 bombers in Diego Garcia, three Awacs radar planes, four electronic warfare planes, four reconnaissance planes, 11 cargo planes, 30 refuelling planes and four helicopters. The combined US forces in the Gulf number 21 900 (www.cdi.org).

Of course, the USA could assemble this arsenal without prompting investigation by the UN weapons inspectors, because the Allies won the war against Iraq in 1991. If it had been the other way round perhaps Iraqi weapons inspectors would have objected to the \$265 billion that Congress dedicated to developing weapons of mass destruction in 1998—making a total planned spending of \$1.6 trillion from now to the year 2002.

Just as the Allies are running the Gulf show, so the current crisis was provoked by the weapons inspectors, not Saddam. Since the

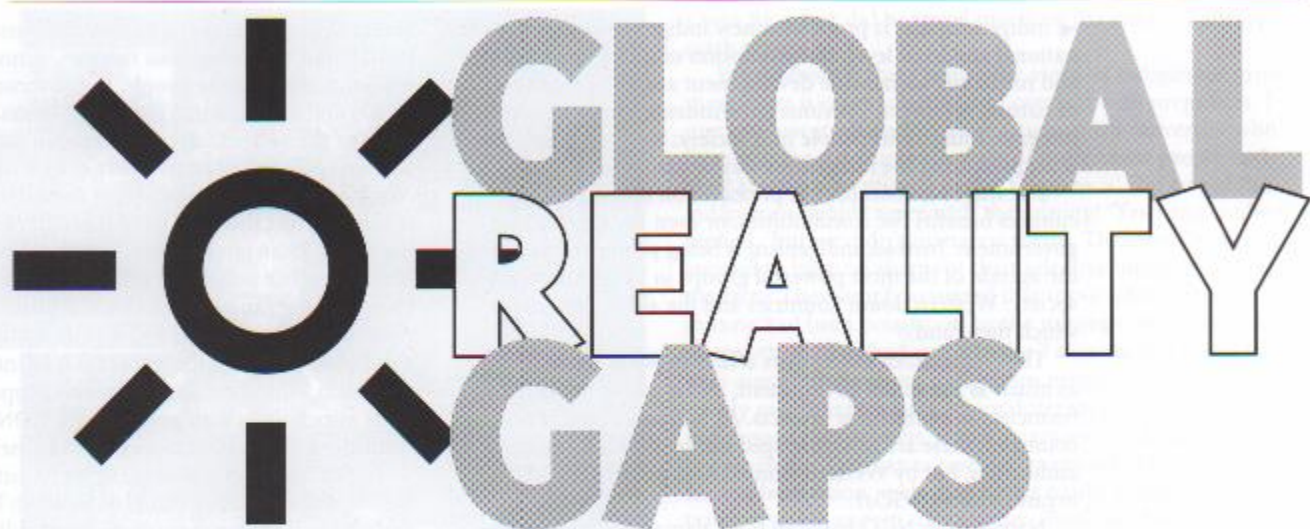
former US marines and other ex-military personnel should be offensive to Iraqis seems to be sure-fire proof that behind the damask wallpaper are secret stores of anthrax and the sinister nerve gas with the sun-tan oil name, Agent 15. Imagine the scene if a group of Japanese Naval Officers were to demand access to St James' Palace to search for a stock of nerve gas beneath the late Princess Diana's floor.

When Iraq agreed to allow access to the presidential palaces, the US authorities decided that was not good enough after all. Clinton and his weapons inspectors will not be satisfied until they have a video camera installed in the presidential bedchamber to make sure that Saddam is not hiding a weapon of mass destruction between the sheets.

Commentators like retired Gulf War supremo General Norman Schwarzkopf have said that any action against Iraq should have a

demonstrate their authority in the world. Saddam Hussein has served as a whipping boy for those who need to demonstrate resolve on the world stage where they lack it in their domestic programmes. A series of military strikes against Iraq have had an unnerving correspondence to American elections. If Saddam did not exist, or if he fell tomorrow, they would have to invent a replacement.

Time and again the real meaning of the conflict slips into the semi-official commentary of the Washington propagandists: the West must not lose face, or be humiliated by Saddam. Stripped of its self-serving sense of hurt this proposition means that Saddam must be humiliated at all costs, and the authority of the Allies in Iraq (and throughout the non-Western world) must be seen to be unchallengeable. To guarantee that authority, it seems that Clinton and Blair are prepared to engage in a bloody human sacrifice. ●



GLOBAL REALITY GAPS

Sustainable development, indigenous lifestyles, micro-credit and non-governmental organisations look great in text books and policy documents, but what do these concepts mean to the people on the receiving end in Africa, Asia and Latin America? *LM* reporters scratch away some of the gloss

Kathleen Richardson found nothing romantic about life with the Bri Bri Indians of the Talamanca Reserves, Costa Rica

ENDOGENOUS INDIGENISM?

Christopher Columbus, once a great hero in Latin America, is now demonised as the bringer of chaos and destruction. In place of the conquistador heroes are 'indigenous' heroes like Pablu Presbere in Costa Rica or Santos Marka Tula of Bolivia. In the West, the rights of indigenous people seem to be championed by every fashion-conscious celebrity. I went to Costa Rica in Central America to sample some indigenous culture for myself.

The Bri Bri Indians of Costa Rica live out in the Talamanca Reserves. The way to get there on public transport is via two decrepit US school buses. Discarded, illegal vehicles are often sold south of the border, where people would rather take their chances with a dangerous bus than walk miles from village to village. In contrast to the racial 'melting pot' I had just left behind in the capital, San Jose, the passengers were all indigenous people, their faces and bodies covered in parasitic scars from a mosquito bite called Papalamoyo. This bite is fatal if not treated immediately, but it is difficult to treat, as many of the villages are miles from any clinic and the bus service is unreliable and expensive. As the vehicle rattled towards the interior, the spine-jolting pain of wheels crashing on the rocky roads knocked the passengers in all directions. Nobody complained because, as they explained, what could they do?

I lived with an indigenous family for two months. Luckily, their house had electricity and a basic, if unreliable, supply

of running water. Most people washed in the river; supporters of indigenous culture applaud them for maintaining a traditional lifestyle. Most of the house roofs are made of vines. Insects live and nest in them, frequently falling out onto whatever or whoever is below. These roofs, made with traditional materials, are held-up as another example of indigenous culture. Nobody mentions the bugs.

Wherever you look in a place like the Talamanca Reserve, there is a glaring contrast between the romantic image of indigenism I was familiar with from home and indigenism the reality. Indians live in the poorest parts of Latin America. There are around 30 000 indigenous people in Costa Rica, just one per cent of the total population. They live in eight 'reserves', areas of land that the government demarcated in the late 1970s, located in some of the harshest regions of Costa Rica. Schools, roads, transportation and access to running water are either badly managed or non-existent.

It is hard to imagine anybody wishing to celebrate the living conditions in the reserves. Yet a new bill under discussion in Costa Rica shows how far official policy is now geared around the preservation of these 'autonomous' conditions.

The Consulta Nacional del Proyecto de Ley para el Desarrollo Autonomo de los Pueblos Indigenos (National Consultation on the Law for the Autonomous Development of the Indigenous People) relates to all features of ►

◀ indigenous life. It proposes a new indigenous council at the national and local level, the promotion of indigenous culture and medicine, sustainable development and the protection of natural resources. Previous governments passed laws to integrate indigenous people into society. Now the emphasis is on preserving the indigenous way of life.

But why? Not because the preservation of indigenous cultures benefits the communities, or even the Costa Rican government. Instead, indigenism is being promoted to suit the agenda of the most powerful groups in Latin American society: Western donor countries and the aid organisations which they fund.

The Netherlands determines affairs in parts of Costa Rica as much as the actual government, and is one of the biggest financiers of indigenous projects. As in many Third World countries, these are now managed not by the Costa Rican authorities, but by Western-funded non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Namasol, an NGO based in the Talamanca's main village Suretka, is typical of the organisations now running the show. It is supposed to be an indigenous NGO. But Namasol is funded directly by the Dutch Embassy, and has links with a number of other influential international institutions. It was a little strange to listen to Namasol workers talk about the wonders of indigenous culture while sitting in their air-conditioned office with a fax machine on the desk and two modern trucks parked outside.

Namasol's work is organised around various themes—environmentalism, rights, cultural revival, encouraging indigenous women's participation: in fact, all the key issues that you would find on a fashionable political agenda in the Netherlands, the USA or Britain. While in the Talamanca I worked with Namasol on a project investigating indigenous rights, and realised how much power the internationally-funded 'indigenous' projects really wield.

Namasol has acted as an intermediary between the Costa Rican government and the indigenous people of the Talamanca in the National Consultation on the Law for the Autonomous Development of the Indigenous People.

Namasol played a central part in the consultations organised throughout the indigenous reserves, acting as the official mediator between the people, the government, the university, NGOs and international agencies. Namasol speaks as the voice of the indigenous community in the development of national policy. But from where does it derive its legitimacy? Not from the indigenous people themselves, who played no role in electing this NGO to a position of power. Not from the Costa Rican government, either. A few yards from the Namasol office is the only officially funded Costa Rican indigenous organisation, CONAI (Comision Nacional de Asuntos Indigenas). CONAI was set up in the 1970s with a mandate to ensure the integration of indigenous people via health, education and 'help with property'. Today, because of its associations with government, CONAI is a discredited institution due to be scrapped under a new bill.

In fact Namasol seems to derive its authority from the Dutch Embassy which funds it. So when NGOs like Namasol demand that indigenous people want cultural autonomy, a revival of traditions and sustainable development, whose concerns are they expressing?

Reinaldo Gonzalez Jefe of Namasol complained to me that 'in the schools the children are taught about things like elephants and planes. There are no elephants here only in Africa, and they do not know a plane'. He thinks 'indigenous education should be set in its context', meaning that children should restrict their knowledge to aspects of indigenous life like the river, things 'which they know and are important to them'.

This is the direction which indigenous NGOs want to take in Costa Rica. Whatever education is available to those in more developed regions, the new generation of indigenous Costa Ricans will be starved of the kind of knowledge that allows them to broaden their horizons. Gonzalez himself has benefited from access to a world beyond the reserves: in his family house there were two televisions and a stereo. But in the name of 'indigenism' these things could be denied to Costa Rica's poorest communities.

Other officials I talked to lived one life themselves



Micro-credit schemes may be popular with British development agencies, but how much can they help the poor in Africa? Bruno Waterfield reports from Ghana

'GOD'S GIFT' TO GHANA?

Not so long ago, development projects viewed industrialisation and the modernisation of agriculture as the way to raise living standards in undeveloped areas like Northern Ghana. Today, such large-scale development projects are deeply unfashionable. When I visited the offices of Action Aid, a British-based non-governmental organisation working in the Tamale region, project co-ordinator Ismail Lansah told me that it was better to help a farmer get a bullock plough or some chickens (their manure can be used as fertiliser) than for him to get into debt with tractors and chemical fertilisers.

The notion that gradual, small-scale development is the best way to help the poor of Northern Ghana is the basis for a micro-credit scheme piloted by Action Aid in the region. By last summer the scheme involved 510 people organised in 17 groups of roughly 30 members. Unlike banks, micro-credit schemes do not demand collateral: the 'collateral' is group

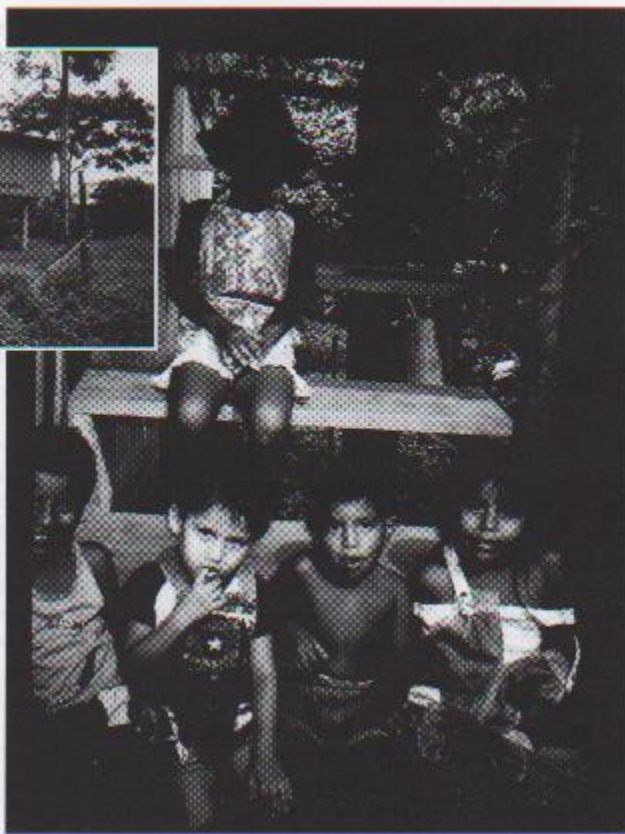
membership. The groups meet every six days, administering repayments and deciding who gets what loan.

All group members must save 500 cedi (roughly 15p at August 1997 prices) per week as well as paying back their loan, which varies between 50 000-200 000 cedi (£15-£60). Everybody in the group receives a loan which is charged at commercial interest rates—40+ per cent a year. Action Aid insists on this, because as Ismail put it, 'for the scheme to be sustainable people must face realities'. The surplus generated by the credit scheme goes back into a 'kitty', to fund more loans. Most loans are used to buy utensils to process corn, cigarettes and matches for trade, food to process for trade, or tools for primary producers.

The philosophy behind micro-credit appears sensible. To survive, the poor rely on subsistence farming and small-scale trading, which just about sustains them but no more than that. With the help of a small loan, the argument



Talamanca's 'Indigenous' bank isn't doing much for these children, Costa Rica



and preached the virtues of another life for the indigenous communities. Erik Van der Sleen, Head of the Education Department at the Dutch Embassy in San Jose, explained to me that 'we used to think that people in Latin America wanted development, but they don't want development like we have it. They want to be able to choose for themselves, they want a non-material development'. Of course Van der Sleen rarely relied on public transport when travelling in

Costa Rica, nor did he travel much on the roads ('I always catch planes').

What research there is into the views of indigenous groups themselves is often selective and overlaid with prejudices. I met two law students from a prestigious US university who were making a documentary about indigenous people and their reactions to mining in the Talamanca. Did any of the indigenous people agree with the mining? 'Yes', one student replied, 'but we didn't interview them'. These two men seemed to have no shame at their selective interpretation of the facts. They simply assumed that those who supported mining had been bought off by the mining companies. Like many others, they had come to the Talamanca to prove their own assumptions about indigenous people.

My own research gave a very different idea of what indigenous people want. In my interviews with indigenous people in the Talamanca reserves, many articulated a desire for modernisation, including better roads, a decent transportation system, clean water, more and better schools and clinics. Namasol usually came last in people's list of priorities. There was a big gap between the powerful NGO and the people it purports to represent. The resources the people want and need were often not those demanded by Namasol or supported by its benefactor, the Dutch government.

In order to get the modern goods they are denied, the inhabitants of the Talamanca reserves simply use their indigenous status to barter for support and resources. A colleague of mine who studied traditional diet in a nearby village of Coroma, commented that the family never ate traditional food and bought everything from the local shop. A few days later I was watching a programme made for Japanese television, and saw the same family showing how indigenous people live in the Talamanca complete with traditional diet and songs—which my colleague never heard in all the time she spent there. Yet these fraudulent TV images of indigenism in Central America are the stuff policy is made of, while the reality of everyday life in the reserves is something only the romanticised indigenous groups are forced to put up with. ●

'Empowered', but still impoverished: the Wumpani Women's Group in Ward E, Northern Ghana



goes, they can invest to make a small but significant increase in their income.

When I visited the Wumpani (God's Gift) Women's Group, one of Action Aid's micro-credit projects in Ward E, an urban area of Tamale, I began to have my doubts. Micro-credit seems to bring only the most marginal improvement in the income of its debtors, but in order to gain this improvement those involved in the project have to hand over what little independence they have to the supervision of a Western-based NGO.

Ward E was basically a shanty town—mud huts, open sewers and no evidence of electricity. Even though we were an hour late, the women involved in the project were waiting for us in a 'meeting hall', a large round hut with wooden pillars holding up the roof. The group had been going since October 1996 and had been about to disband when Action Aid's intervention saved it. None of the women spoke English, which was a sign of Northern Ghana's under-development compared with the rest of the country. But the group's secretary was a man, and he did speak English. He showed me the accounts.

The total assets held by the group were 615 892 cedi (£186) with, by my calculation, somewhere between another one and two million cedi (£300-£600) given out in loans. There were 30 women in the group. Of the 18 we met, 4 traded produce direct from farmers, 13 processed produce to sell—many made groundnut oil, some traded in cooked fish—and one traded in a processed commodity, soap. Had the scheme made them better off?

Fati, a trader in fried fish, said her loan had enabled her to buy cooking utensils and more stock. She now spent more ►



◀ time trading and the loan had increased her weekly income to some 5000 cedi (£1.50). She had not yet started to pay back her loan. Even in Ghana, 5000 cedi is not a good weekly wage: income per head is supposed to be more like £250 a year, roughly £5 a week. After paying her dues to the group and loan repayments, Fati would be left with an income of about £1 a week. There has been a marginal improvement in her circumstances. But her living standards are essentially the same as they were before the loan, with little prospect of nearing even Ghanaian averages.

Where Fati's life has changed is that she must now account for herself to a group overseen by a British-based NGO. This NGO does not only demand repayment: it demands that its debtors behave in a certain way. Just before the women sang us a traditional song to wish us well before leaving the project, I looked at the file holding the minutes of the group's meetings. They were in English. They could not be read, let alone understood, by any of the women to which the group is supposed to belong.

One of the early sets of minutes laid out the 'values' of the group: 'Respect each other's views. No shouting. Do not underestimate illiterate members. Remember this is group work. You have to be tolerant and be patient and accommodate issues, we should not impose our views on others.' I wondered where those dinner party values originated from; surely not from the African women who have to live by them, but from the etiquette of British-based charities.

Before I visited the Wumpani Women's Group, Ismail told me that Ghanaian women had practical skills that no university could teach. He told me a story about how, during a financial scandal of the 1970s, banknotes became temporarily worthless in Ghana. A white collar type like Ismail had to go and borrow money from a woman selling kerosene who was so poor that she only dealt in coins, which were still recognised as currency. According to Ismail, the moral of this parable is that 'there is more wisdom in a woman who can feed her family on several hundred cedi per day than a university educated man'.

Action Aid's micro-credit schemes take this humbling dictum as their starting point. But in my reading, Ismail's story confirmed how little Action Aid thinks it is possible to raise the living standards of Tamale's poor, and how short it is selling the men and women in its credit schemes. It may indeed take wisdom to feed a family on a few pence a day, but university-educated white-collar workers with banknotes have the opportunity of a life beyond mere survival. Maybe those who preach the virtues of sustainable development should join the Wumpani Women's Group credit scheme, and then ask themselves if this really is the best the Ghanaian poor can hope for.

Bruno Waterfield spent a month in Ghana working with a charity. These are his personal views

ORDERS FROM ABOVE

by Para Teare

Message from:
Whitley Bay, Newcastle
Port received: Ekumfi-Atakwa,
Southern Ghana
Communicator: Professor John
Knapton (alias Nana Odapagyan
Ekumfi the First)
Content of message: 'I Nana
Odapagyan Ekumfi the First,
hereby forbid the marrying of
any girl, until her education
is completed.'

Kwesi Andam, a professor of engineering in Ghana, drives into the village of Ekumfi-Atakwa. As everybody runs out to meet him he delivers their chief's orders: that girls in this village can no longer marry until their education is completed. Says who? A white, middle-aged man living 3500 miles away. With the click of a mouse, professor John Knapton of Newcastle University can lay down the law to 520 people in Ekumfi-Atakwa. The villagers have made him an honorary chief, and as he told me, 'you do not question the chief. I could order heads to be cut off if people disobey my ruling'. He was smiling, but it was

technically true. My mind flashed back to what my African friend from Sierra Leone once said to me: 'Chiefs are chosen by the people, thus becoming the people's God.'



Nana Odapagyan Ekumfi the First (John Knapton)

Knapton's extraordinary powers derive from the fact that, 20 years ago, he taught Kwesi Andam, a student from Ekumfi-Atakwa. He kept in touch with Kwesi, now a professor in Accra, and helped him collect money to build a library and donate clockwork radios to each home in the village. In a community of mud huts built on a hill, without running water or electricity, the people of Ekumfi-Atakwa were sufficiently grateful for his efforts to make professor John Knapton an honorary chief.

In a community where basic

resources are obviously so precious, how does Knapton think that outlawing a traditional cultural practice can make a difference to the quality of people's lives? Knapton, after all,

admits that resources are needed for the people of Ekumfi-Atakwa to live in decency and comfort. 'Nearly all the young people want to escape from this village. Everyone wants to be like Kwesi. They all want to own a car.' He and Kwesi are currently raising a quarter of a million pounds to build a secondary school. This, he argues, will provide education for all the children in Ekumfi-Atakwa, and education is the key to escaping from poverty.

But what seems to rankle with John Knapton is that, whether there is a school for them or not, girls are usually married off

young. Imposing a rule that girls and boys should be educated equally is effortless and a lot cheaper than providing resources. When villagers oppose this attack on their way of life, Knapton dismisses them as men who are now deprived of having sex with young girls. As he says, anybody who opposes can raise the issue at the District Council, and the villagers can even deselect him next year: although Knapton knows that this never happens.

Professor Knapton thinks his ruling will further girls' education, and who can deny that this is a laudable goal? I can. I think this intervention into Ekumfi-Atakwa is less about making a tangible improvement to these people's lives than it is about making himself feel good. It is one thing to provide resources to build a school, and quite another to impose moral codes upon a country that is not your own.

What right does John Knapton have to tell these people at what age they can get married? If Nana Odapagyan Ekumfi the First really wants to do something for 'his' people, shouldn't he be challenging the age-old prejudice that villagers in the Third World should always do as the white man says?

Para Teare is coordinator of Genderwatch

DR MICHAEL FITZPATRICK

Exterminate the filthy smokers



● A key test of New Labour's commitment to public health approaches. Are prime minister Tony Blair and public health minister Tessa Jowell ready to take the hard choice to tackle the killer tobacco, the greatest single cause of premature death in Britain? Or are they going to take the soft option, as they did last year in exempting Formula One racing from the ban on tobacco sponsorship of major sporting events?

The facts are clear. Smoking kills 120 000 people in Britain every year, 3.5 million world-wide. The tobacco barons, dubbed the 'merchants of death' and 'corporate killers' by Sandy Macara chairman of the British Medical Association last year, are making vast profits out

A recent French study reckons that passive smoking kills 22 000 people in Europe every year (20 000 from heart disease, 2000 from lung cancer).

Now is the time for concerted action against the genocide! A major cancer research foundation recently calculated that between 1950 and 2000, the death toll in Britain will amount to six million. The perpetrators of the tobacco holocaust should be brought before an international tribunal, along the lines of the Nuremberg trials, or the hearings currently in progress in The Hague over war crimes in Bosnia.

Those, like RJ Reynolds, manufacturer of Camels, which targeted its propaganda on adolescents as young as 14, should be indicted together with Philip Morris,

be invited to attend special centres for counselling, including offers of ongoing anti-dependency group work and nicotine replacement therapy. Those who default should have a microchip tattooed on their forehead so that members of the public can easily recognise them and take immediate evasive action to minimise the health risk to themselves and their families. Statistics show that the committed smoker is also inclined to use cigarettes to importune children and women into other forms of illicit activity—involving alcohol, drugs, sex, crime.

The public has already endorsed some important initiatives against smokers, driving them out of homes, workplaces, public transport and other public places. It is now time for the government to take the campaign a step further. The boot camps opened by the previous government to deliver a 'short sharp shock' to delinquent youth did not prove successful. But they are ready to be reopened—on a much larger scale—in a drive to re-educate the nation's smokers. Recalcitrant smokers could be driven in trucks from the inner city estates where they are concentrated to these camps in remote rural areas. In Cambodia in the 1970s, Pol Pot, a pioneer of the new public health, used this approach to achieve a dramatic reduction in mortality from smoking.

It is fortunate that the new government has shown that it is capable of the sort of tough thinking necessary to devise a final solution to the tobacco problem. No doubt there will remain a hard core of those so corrupted by tobacco, its profits and its toxins, that they will refuse to give it up. Filthy habit, filthy people—they will have to be exterminated. The camps can then make room for all the other deviants whose behaviour is designated a major problem of public health—those who are overweight and not inclined towards exercise, those who drink more than the prescribed number of units of alcohol and take illicit drugs. Disposal will be a problem though—incineration might lead to an increased level of particulate pollution of the atmosphere and constitute a threat to public health. ●

It is now time for the government to take a step further

of the creation of disease. As health minister Frank Dobson told a Royal College of Nursing conference last year, they need to recruit more than 300 new smokers every day to replace the ones killed off by smoking.

In pursuit of new customers for cigarettes, the advertising agencies skillfully and cynically exploit the most vulnerable sections of society—children, women, people in Third World countries. To young people they offer fantasies of being cool and in control, to girls an image of slimness and sophistication, to the poor of the South a vision of Western chic.

Smokers are both victims and perpetrators of the tobacco slaughter. While they die of coronary heart disease, lung cancer and a dozen other diseases linked to smoking, the smoke they inflict on others—environmental tobacco smoke—also takes a heavy toll. According to some highly acclaimed epidemiological surveys, passive inhalation of environmental tobacco smoke may be even more dangerous than actively smoking between five and 10 cigarettes a day!

which claimed that passive smoking was no more dangerous than eating biscuits. They should be joined by their academic apologists who have repeatedly denied that nicotine is an addictive drug. Like the leaders of the Bosnian Serbs, they should all be hunted down and brought to justice. Those who bleat about civil liberties should ask themselves—what do the tobacco barons care about the human rights of their victims?

Developing countries, which, according to a recent editorial in the *British Medical Journal*, lack 'skills in tobacco control' and are 'vulnerable' to the tobacco corporations' 'aggressive marketing' tactics, need special protection. The model form of intervention here is the Gulf War task force, whose humanitarian brief could be extended to targeting tobacco sales outlets while encouraging popular health promotion programmes.

But what about smokers themselves? Here the New Labour approach should be not to blame them for their nasty habits, but to offer an opportunity to overcome them. Every smoker should

a l t . c u l t u r e . p o p

BIG BASS = MAN

Mercury-award winning Roni Size spoke to *dj Rebo* about drum 'n'bass beats and breaking into the bigtime

2 8 November 1997: milling around outside London's Astoria Theatre are 200 lost souls who could not get tickets. I'm inside, feeling fortunate. Enter Reprazent in boxers' robes, flushed with confidence and a brand new custom-made sound system. For two hours, mainman Roni Size, djs Krust and Die, vocalist Onaltee and their backing musicians rip the venue apart with bass-heavy breakbeats and live drums, keyboards and acoustic bass. When their trademark tune 'Brown Paper Bag' kicks in, the crowd goes ape.

Last September the Reprazent collective snatched the prestigious Mercury music award with their debut album *New Forms*. Their win boosted the fortunes of the hip-but-hitherto-ailing Talkin' Loud label, and wrong-footed the indie-obsessed music press. Roni was not ready for it either. 'They read our name out wrong so I didn't believe it at first', he recalls. 'It was only when our tour manager jumped on top of me, screaming and kissing me, that's when I realised that we'd won.'

A year ago I wrote in *LM* that 'drum'n'bass is the sound that could re-energise the music scene, but so far the industry has been too scared to run with it'. ('Uncool Britannia', April

1997). Six months later the industry and an image-hungry media seized upon Roni as the acceptable face of drum'n'bass. (Reprazent were even invited to score a soundtrack for Armani). Roni is 'flava' of the year but he has kept his head: 'If our success with the Mercury awards means we can make a little more cash then fine. Then we can invest in more equipment, programming rooms, build more studios — just make sure the resources around us are in place so we can make more music.'

Roni has mixed feelings about being spotlighted alongside Tricky, Massive Attack and Portishead as part of the 'Bristol sound'. For him, Bristol is 'not a hot bed of musical talent, it's a hot bed of frustration. I've lived all my life there and of course it's exciting — the sound systems, the diversity of cultures and everything. But it's also pretty tough for a lot of people'.

The young Roni was 'pretty tough' himself, kicked out of school for throwing a chair at a teacher. With time on his hands, he got involved in a local music club, the Basement Project, where he learned to how to program drums and produce records. The project eventually took Roni on as a teacher, and in a gesture

applied it in the live arena, retaining a warmth and vibrancy that harder-edged drum'n'bass often lacks.

What's next? Krust has his own solo project coming out soon, and Talkin' Loud are already lining up 4 Hero to take the same route as Reprazent. Having heard a demo of the LP, I think they may well get there. The Reprazent crew are collaborating with American artists like rappers Redman and Bahamadia, and it will be interesting to see how drum'n'bass is received Stateside. Meanwhile Roni is besotted by a new gadget called a Beam Dimension, which connects to his sampler and enables him to trigger beats and vary pitches by waving his hand through a beam of light. Gleeftly he announces 'I'm not even touching anything but I'm playing music'.

of thanks he handed the Mercury prize cheque for £25,000 straight over to the Basement. But the real turning point for Roni was a trip to the Glastonbury festival: 'I went to Glastonbury a few years ago and there was a site there called the Experimental Field. That's where me, Krust and Die first met. To me Glastonbury set it all off.' Glastonbury showed Roni that sparey music had a place for heavy bass, and he has been mixing them together ever since.

There are other drum'n'bass dons like Alex Reece, Photek or Bukem, but Roni and Reprazent have managed to do something which the others have not: they worked their magic in the studio and then successfully

Signs of the times

'Indications are that a small group of Zambian soldiers had too much to drink on Monday night and decided to take over the government'

Spokesman for the Zambian government explaining the failed military coup d'etat

'Nothing in Mr Magoo should be interpreted as an accurate portrayal of blindness or poor eyesight'

Credits for forthcoming film version of the famously myopic cartoon character

alt.culture . biking

NOT BAD ENOUGH?

No other bike causes such polarisation as the Harley Davidson. Some bikers love them, the rest of us hate 'em. In order to 'know my enemy', I visited the Art of the Harley show which is part of the year of American culture at the Barbican Centre in London. In pursuit of rugged individualism, Harley fans are often as keen on customising as they are about the machines themselves. Accordingly, this exhibition focuses on customisation. Not just a motley collection of factory bikes with bits bolted on, these machines have been stretched, chopped and raked beyond recognition. A case in point is the 'Two Bad',

'This could well become one of the cult videos of all time'
Iain Dale, owner of Politicos bookshop, which is selling a compilation of 40 years of party political broadcasts

'What these cards do is open the doors to communication'
Rachel Bolton of Hallmark greetings cards, explaining the thinking behind its new suicide range, which is available in the States and the company is considering introducing into the UK. She added that the card was 'very much in tune with the times'.

'A typical Viz reader would be a natural recruit. Part of our theme is that New Labour has no sense of humour. Their instinct is to ban everything.'
A Young Conservatives spokesman floats the idea of advertising in Viz magazine

PHOTO: DIETER REEMAN



seen in *Easy Rider*. Traditional biker styles dominate the customised paintwork on display. Videos and posters of classic Harleys (in *The Wild One*, for example) form the backdrop to the bikes; and the final room in the show turns out to be a shopping area where you can buy into bike lore by spending industrial amounts of money on various Harley-branded products.

No performance figures were given, but these bikes are more for pose than performance. Staged at the Barbican, the show is close to Harley's clientele—City rich kids. These machines are beautiful to look at, but give me a gut-wrenching Japanese sports bike any day.

Roy Croeland rides a Honda VFR 750, with a Fireblade on the shopping list. The Art of the Harley is at the Barbican, London EC1 until 28 April

alt.culture . film

SPEILBERG'S EDUTAINMENT

If you want to send a message, call Western Union.' If only Steven Spielberg had been reminded of Sam Goldwyn's aphorism before making *Amistad*, the true story of mutiny aboard a slave ship in 1839 and the mutineers' attempt to be legally recognised not as slaves but as free-born Africans. It might just have stopped him from making a dull film.

PHOTO: ANDREW COOPER/DREAM WORKS PICTURES



alt.culture . cooking

I have been pony trekking once in my life and I am in no rush to repeat the experience.

The horse bolted, I clung on, and I have never been so scared in my life—or so happy to get to the pub. Not just any pub. The Walnut Tree in Llandowri Skirrid, three miles north-east of Aber-gavenny, was once an ordinary tavern, but for the last 35 years it has ranked as one of the best restaurants in Britain, gaining the same rating in the 1998 *Good Food Guide* as Raymond Blanc's Manoir aux Quat' Saisons. Although I have yet to visit M Blanc's manor (I am still saving up), I cannot imagine arriving there covered in horse-hair, red-nosed and shivering with cold, and being let in. But the informality of The Walnut Tree is a welcome relief from the pomposity with which wonderful food is so often served. This white-washed inn with its outside toilets is as relaxed as they come. Although there is a slightly more formal dining room with tablecloths and linen napkins, the best fun is

Compared with Spielberg's other historical dramas, *Amistad* is simplistic. In *Empire of the Sun* (1987), the boy protagonist identifies with his Japanese captors; in *Schindler's List* (1993) the lead role is highly ambivalent. But in *Amistad* the characters are literally black and white, and the moral lines are so obvious as to undermine the story-telling which is usually Spielberg's forte.

Toby Marshall teaches media studies

TREKKING TO THE WALNUT TREE

to be had in the bistro where the proximity of the tables and the excellence of the wine mean that you are unlikely to leave without having made new friends. The food, however, is serious stuff. Franco Taruschio, chef and co-owner with his wife Ann, uses the freshest ingredients with an emphasis on seafood and game. Our spring lunch included a dozen oysters with chill vinaigrette, home-salted cod ravioli with tomato sauce; Vincisgrassi, an eighteenth century pasta dish with prosciutto, porcini and truffle oil; and brodetto, a fish stew from Franco's birthplace in the Marche region of Italy.

As if any further excuse were necessary to make the trip to Wales this month, 1 March is of course St David's day. I will be going by car along the B4521, not on horseback.

The Walnut Tree, £60-70 for two with wine (T 01873 852797)

© 1998 **Neil Heidar** is a chef

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Signs of the times

And talking of cut videos, a house in the South East was raided for videos of Squish movies, which feature small animals such as hamsters, mice and chickens, being stamped to death by women wearing high-heeled shoes. In another, a blonde called 'Michelle' speaks of her hatred for worms, snails and insects, and crushes them underfoot.

The American manufacturer says that he only squishes pet shop animals that are part of the food chain of another animal, although he claims that in Germany there is 'no limit' to the size of the animals involved. But he insists that his 38 respectable British customers prefer the smaller creatures. As far as we are aware, none of his customers is a son of a cabinet minister.

WATCHING THE DETECTIVES

In an extract from his new book, *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score*, Gary Armstrong monitors police surveillance of the Sheffield United supporters known as 'the Blades'

A basic problem for police was that they frequently arrived at hooligan incidents just as they were ending, and therefore could not catch Blades 'at it'. However, they realised that if they could capture the occasions of disorder and conflict on celluloid, then they would have evidence to make serious charges stick.

Thus from the mid-1980s police began to scrutinise and photograph Blades' movements, both inside and outside the ground—sometimes overtly, but much of the time covertly. Some of the technology used was obvious and advertised, and was paid for by private enterprise, as when Sheffield United were given a £25 000 grant by the Football Trust to install 15 CCTV cam-

eras. In 1989 the Football Trust donated £30 000 to South Yorkshire Police to purchase mobile video cameras to monitor fans. They then paid for self-congratulatory adverts in the club programme over the next nine years that told

comings and goings of Blades, the obvious aim being to build up a dossier and hopefully capture them in flagrante. Much work went into this, and by the 1990s there were some 350 mugshots of Blade suspects held in one Sheffield police station, some taken whilst the individual was under arrest, and the rest a product of covert surveillance cameras in the streets or at vantage points in the Bramall Lane ground.

Surveillance was subsequently combined with intelligence-gathering to become the leading mantra of police targeting from the mid-1980s. From 1987 onwards the move to combine surveillance, intelligence-gathering and targeting saw payments to inform becoming part of the techniques of control.

Blades in police custody for various matters would be offered cash for information, with inducements ranging from £25 100 as the norm. Another incentive offered was to reduce some possible charge a Blade faced, by 'having a word with an officer in

PHOTO: DAVE COWLEY

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TOO HARD ON MICROSOFT

great product but because Windows plus chip-manufacturers Intel constitute a whole economy. Its big user-base means that small software houses will write specialist applications for Windows, safe in the knowledge that there will be enough customers. Meanwhile big houses will use Windows to publish important software cheaply. And for these reasons more end-users will naturally choose Windows. This is a case of 'product lock-in' (cf the growth curve of VHS videos).

Bill Gates loves this loop and his managers are doing everything they can to enhance it. But they could not have stopped it even if they had wanted to. Microsoft is not in charge: the maths of the marketplace is. Nor has Microsoft ever done anything spectacularly clever. If you float a dozen paper boats down river, and only one of them makes it to the sea, there is no secret about how it got there. It is just the one boat that made it; and Bill Gates is that boat.

'Evil' Microsoft has been slated for trying to dominate the internet with its new browser, but Gates knows he has to carve out a big chunk of the Internet because his business is such a size that it will deflate if he is not always into the next big thing. Gates is not the Devil: he does not have the eyebrows for it. He likes simple things: prestige, access to celebrities, and a genteel place to shit—just like any middle-ranking businessman from Solihull.

Nigel Burke is a dissident technologist



SW here do you want to go today?' asks Microsoft's advertising campaign. 'None of your fucking business' is a common reply. Bill Gates is a global hate figure. But what has this apparently moistureless fellow done to deserve such odium that game-hackers have taken the leaked-floors of his new mansion and put them into the Doom game engine, so that you can virtually prowl his dwelling and blow him away with the weapon of your choice?

Microsoft's product is not all that good, of course. Windows NT is the only Microsoft operating system that serious companies will trust to run their critical software, and it took donkey's years to get it right. But Windows, even Windows 95, is perfectly adequate for desktop applications. It delivers wonderful value for money, not because Windows is a

number of smaller companies going it alone. It is understandable that competitors like Sun and Netscape would campaign against their much larger rival. But anti-Microsoft

in my business (the provision of web-content) it is very trendy to be anti-Microsoft. The artistically-inclined insist on using Apple products rather than Microsoft's

Before the police are called in, animal lovers might be interested to hear that the RSPCA and the National Canine Defence league have stopped supplying animals for training as police dogs, following investigations into allegations that a dog died from being kicked by a police officer. Whether the dog or the policeman was being trained is not clear.

'I don't like football as much as I used to because the game has been tailored for the wine-bar fraternity. The culture's been gradually eradicated'
The artist and self-confessed 'soccer nut' formerly known as Nigel Kennedy (now plain 'Kennedy')

of the good work the cameras had done. [Football] Trust posters that spoke of the potential of the technology were also displayed at the ground.

Despite the all-encompassing nature of this electronic scanning the police escalated the surveillance, and Blades watched as from 1989 to 1994 three officers (or civilian personnel) operated a camera from a TV gantry. From 1991 they in turn were supplemented by three plainclothes men who located themselves opposite this camera in a cordoned-off part of the John Street stand, with yet another camera on a tripod. We might ask: what wild and unimaginable villainy was this overkill intended to prevent? For as the account shows, hooligan activity was negligible; and as with the increasing use of police helicopters to control football crowds, we might ask what is the cost of this technology, and what is the ultimate aim of it all?

Later again, the FIO [football intelligence officer] would be seen on match-days with a small hand-held camcorder held to his eye as he videoed anybody he considered dubious and later spoke their names into a dictaphone. Other mobile surveillance cameras were placed in premises in the city centre and London Road premises (both commercial and residential). These were requisitioned by police to gain vantage points to record the charge of the case' or the custody sergeant. This held out the possibility of a 'binding over' instead of perhaps, a prison sentence or fine, or might well reduce a charge of supplying drugs to one of possession.

No doubt some took the bait, and many in custody were urged to put names to pictures, for the police wanted data on those they had photographed for their intelligence systems. The problem with this was that many Blades were only known to each other by nickname; but even this was sufficient for police purposes, as they sought to fill out their dossiers with 'street-names' and other information, such as 'drug user/dealer', 'new member', 'leader'.

The combination of police intelligence and surveillance enables a process of demonology. Surveillance apparatus ranks and differentiates because, whilst photography has no identity, it is invested with power relations. Like Foucault's prisoners, those watched are the object of information never a subject for communication. Blades had no opportunity to dispute what was held against them, and the police did not wish to hear that their intelligence was wrong.

Gary Armstrong lectures in criminology and sociology at Reading University

Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score is published by Berg £14.95 pbk

a i t . c u l t u r e . d e s i g n

I shared my first flat in Glasgow with two guys from Maryhill. The first drunken night I heard about their friend Sid, a punk who blew his brains out with a handgun. Sid will be turning in his grave when he hears about Destroy, the exhibition of punk graphic design now showing to the cappuccino clientele of the Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank. Or maybe he did know where punk would end up, and that's why he shot himself.



It is entirely appropriate that punk should now be on show in the premier art institutions in the land, because it began in the art schools in the first place. No Goldsmith's, no Malcolm McLaren, no Sex Pistols. The idea that 'anyone felt they could be designers', as claimed by the curators of Destroy, is as empty as the suggestion that anyone from the dole queue could form a three-chord band and swindle the world with rock'n'roll. The iconoclastic designers of the period, such as Jamie Reid, Malcolm Garrett and Neville Brody—all exhibited here—went to art school where they learned what rules to break. But 25 years later, rule-breaking is the rule, and the urge to 'destroy' is cosy rather than creative.

Alex Cameron designs LM
Destroy is on at the Royal Festival Hall until 16 March

FROM SHOCK TO SCHLOCK

(what will they do now that Microsoft has put money into Apple?), and some people refuse point-blank to download Internet Explorer 4. Meanwhile the American courts are clogged up with anti-Gates litigation and consumer rights hero Ralph Nader organised a conference specifically to put Microsoft on the spot. Has Microsoft done anything to deserve all this?

Microsoft brought the best minds of the young computer generation to work in its Seattle plant. It continues to buy into smaller companies whenever they come up with good ideas. It has been responsible for the development of low cost, high performance software, which is making the Internet part of everyday life. Moreover, the concentration of resources and brain power which Microsoft is able to bring to bear is more likely to lead to technological breakthroughs than any

sentiment is much broader than that. As Nader pointed out in his letter to Microsoft chairman Bill Gates last year, scholars, commentators, writers, public officials and many customers are anti-Microsoft. I think this widespread hostility is not because of anything that Microsoft has done but is fuelled by a general distrust of wealth and power.

Microsoft offends against the Small is Beautiful ethic which dominates today. Instead of being humble about its success, in the manner of the Mother Teresa soundalikes who now seem to run corporations like Virgin and CNN, Gates is unapologetically expansionist. Because he is successful, rich and clever, he is considered evil. I too aspire to be all of these things. To paraphrase Gates when asked to describe his greatest fear, the 'evil' I abhor is mediocrity.

Rob Killick is CEO of Cyberia Online

a i t . c u l t u r e . a r t

LES IS MORE

On the train to Newcastle where he taught art, Les Coleman started sketching his students—or, more accurately, he sketched their excuses, evasions and alibis for poor work. The result was *Meet the Art Students*, which began as an exhibition and is now available as a book from Arc Publications. What do his students think? 'They like them', says Les, 'but they never think it's about them'.

Coleman's drawings and aphorisms are high philosophy and low cunning. His great talent is unthinking, stripping ideas and associations down to their absurd elements.

The accompanying text to the 1996 exhibition of *Meet the Art Students* explained that the drawings are 'set against a background of increased student numbers and staff cuts', adding 'they reflect not only...student psychology and habits but also the new approach to management within further education'. Or it would have said that, if the management of St Martin's College of Art had not objected to such 'inflammatory' stuff. The text was exhibited blacked out in the manner of a censored letter; so it's not just the students' excuses that get exposed in Coleman's work.

James Hearthield
Meet the Art Students, Arc Publications, £4.95 (T 01706 812338) Coleman's drawings sometimes appear in *Point* magazine.

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READING

BETWEEN THE LINES

The Iron Curtain is long gone; so how come the division between Western and Eastern Europe appears greater than ever, asks VANESSA PUPAVAC

WHY IS THERE STILL AN EASTERN EUROPE?

DIVIDED EUROPE: THE NEW DOMINATION OF THE EAST

Adam Burgess
Pluto, £13.99 pbk

VALUES AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN POSTCOMMUNIST EUROPE

William L Miller,
Stephen White,
Paul Heywood
Macmillan, £60 hbk

INVENTING EASTERN EUROPE: THE MAP OF CIVILIZATION ON THE MIND OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

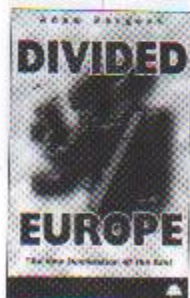
Larry Wolff
Stanford University Press,
Stanford, £15.99 pbk

IMAGINING THE BALKANS

Maria Todorova
Oxford
University Press,
£17.99 pbk

WHY EASTERN EUROPE? WHY, NEARLY A DECADE after the dramatic pictures of the Berlin Wall being pulled down, is Europe still divided into a West and an East? Communism has fallen, the Cold War is over, the Soviet Army has withdrawn, and the new regimes pursue market economics and hold multi-party elections like the rest of Europe—but the concept of 'Eastern Europe' persists. Though Eastern Europe is in Europe, it is still considered not altogether European, as if it were the Orient of Europe.

Images of the region conjure up pictures of violent and irrational peoples caught up in ancient myths and feuds; people not quite like us, sometimes exotic, more often barbaric. During the Cold War it seemed that the peoples of Eastern Europe were only waiting to be able to rid themselves of Soviet oppression to take their rightful place in Europe. Since 1989 that view has been forgotten. Instead, cultural differences are offered as an explanation for continuing problems in Eastern Europe. Today when there is no longer an Iron Curtain, culture



has emerged as an apparently permanent barrier between East and West.

The ideological contest of 1917-89 has been supplanted by what Samuel Huntington defined as the 'clash of civilisations' (*Foreign Affairs*, summer 1993). The official ideology today is that the West is menaced by dangerous alien cultures from the East.

The persistence of the East-West divide has been accepted by most commentators, so it is refreshing to read books that do not take this division for granted. The books reviewed here examine the validity of that division. From various perspectives, Burgess, Miller, Todorova and Wolff all challenge the predominantly negative view of Eastern Europe and the idea that it is inherently different from Western Europe.

These authors locate Eastern Europe in the European context. Miller, White and Heywood compare values in Eastern Europe with those in Britain. Burgess parallels the phenomena of ethnic nationalism in Eastern Europe with the escalation of regional movements ▶

FOR TODOROVA, 'IT WOULD DO MUCH BETTER IF THE YUGOSLAV, NOT BALKAN, CRISIS CEASED TO BE EXPLAINED IN TERMS OF BALKAN GHOSTS, ANCIENT BALKAN ENMITIES, PRIMORDIAL BALKAN CULTURAL PATTERNS AND PROVERBIAL BALKAN TURMOIL'

◀ in the rest of Europe: the Catalonians and Basques in Spain, the Lombardy League in Italy, Scottish nationalism in Britain etc.

In *Divided Europe: The New Domination of the East*, Adam Burgess considers how an East-West division is employed as a framework to understand European affairs, arguing that this approach assumes what should be explained. Starting with the question of why Eastern Europe is such an enduring concept, Burgess offers a provocative and compelling study of the persistence of divisions in Europe.

EVENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE ARE GENERALLY discussed separately, but Eastern Europe cannot be understood outside its relationship with the rest of Europe. To examine Eastern Europe out of context, Burgess argues, mystifies the region, making events appear to be driven by irrational forces. Developments in Eastern Europe cannot be understood in isolation: 'Eastern Europe has been continually made and remade by external influences—to the extent that those forces native to the region have played a distinctly secondary role.' (p4) Ignoring the role of external forces means that tensions in the region tend to be blamed on the intolerant culture of the peoples of Eastern Europe.

In particular, Burgess and Maria Todorova, in her *Imagining the Balkans*, highlight the way that ethnicity and history are perceived as having a peculiar power in Eastern Europe. Violent conflict is treated as an inherent characteristic of the culture of the region. By contrast, the Holocaust is often seen as an aberration or even blamed on Germany's Eastern European culture (*Imagining the Balkans*, p137).

Seeking to deconstruct the usual stereotype of Eastern Europe, Burgess, Todorova and Wolff argue that our perceptions of Eastern Europe are seen through the prism of Western Europe. Much of the writing on Eastern Europe, they contend, tells us more about political attitudes in Western Europe than in the East. Whether a state was seen as Eastern was not primarily a question of geography, but of the state's political distance from Moscow. For example, both Burgess and Todorova cite how during the Cold War no differentiation was made between the Western-oriented Balkan states and the rest of Europe. Yugoslavia and Romania (despite its ruthless dictator) were both favourably regarded in the West because they took an independent line from Moscow. Greece and Turkey were not considered part of the East at all but part of the West and strongholds of democracy in the Cold War, despite the chequered history of their own democratic institutions.

As suggested by the titles the theme of Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe* and Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*, is that the concepts of Eastern Europe and the

Balkans are constructed in the West. Wolff sees the origins of the concept of Eastern Europe in the Enlightenment:

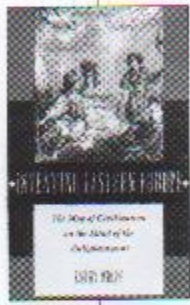
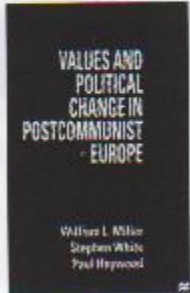
'It was Western Europe that invented Eastern Europe as its complementary other half in the eighteenth century, the age of Enlightenment...the Enlightenment, with its intellectual centres in Western Europe, that cultivated and appropriated to itself the new notion of "civilisation",...and civilisation discovered its complement, within the same continent, in shadowed lands of backwardness, even barbarism.' (p4).

Wolff's attack on the Enlightenment for oppressing Eastern Europe might strike a chord with post-modernists, but it is difficult to sustain. Wolff even goes so far as to link the mental mapping of Eastern Europe with the physical mapping of Europe by military conquest of Napoleon's army, the focus of his attack being Enlightenment rationality. But he makes the mistake of conflating Enlightenment thought with the actions of Western states.

After all, it was the Enlightenment that introduced the idea of equality to European thought. The idea of a universal human nature meant that the divisions between people became regarded as less important, arising from mere differences of custom instead of being rooted in nature. Indeed it was Enlightenment ideals, such as the rights of man and national self-determination, that became the rallying cry of nineteenth century East European movements demanding their right to be freed from foreign domination.

Maria Todorova, a Bulgarian historian, does not condemn Western thought per se in her excellent critique of 'Balkanism'. Rather her objection is that the West does not judge the East by the same standards as it judges itself. She condemns the way that Eastern Europeans are treated as irrational beings, trapped in history—for example, the way that the Yugoslav war is discussed in terms of ancient feuds: 'It seems as if the mountaineers of the seventeenth century have re-entered the political stage of the late twentieth unmarked by any change.' (p137) For Todorova, 'It would do much better if the Yugoslav, not Balkan, crisis ceased to be explained in terms of Balkan ghosts, ancient Balkan enmities, primordial Balkan cultural patterns and proverbial Balkan turmoil, and instead was approached with the same rational criteria that the West reserves for itself' (p186).

It is interesting seeing the results when the East is judged by the same criteria as the West, but rare that research on Eastern Europe is approached rationally. What is striking is the lack of empirical work on the region. Eastern Europe is prejudged negatively without any serious evidence having been gathered. Though Eastern Europe is condemned for failing to uphold



BURGESS DOCUMENTS THE DOUBLE STANDARDS IN THE TREATMENT OF WEST AND EAST. HE OBSERVES THAT WESTERN STATES THEMSELVES OFTEN FAIL TO MEET THE DEMOCRATIC CRITERIA THEY ARE SETTING FOR EASTERN STATES

liberal norms, the Western researchers appear not to heed the maxim innocent until proven guilty. William Miller, Stephen White, and Paul Heywood's extensive survey of *Values and Political Change in Postcommunist Europe* provides a welcome contrast. Much has been written about the lack of a democratic culture in Eastern Europe, yet few studies have been conducted to find out what East Europeans actually think. This survey of Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic is one of the few attempts to do just that.

MILLER, WHITE AND HEYWOOD INTERVIEWED 7350 citizens and 504 members of parliament to find out their political values. The starting point for their research was how Western analysis of Eastern Europe frequently refers to dividing lines on the map of Europe: between Eastern and Western Europe; Eastern Europe and Russia; Catholic and Orthodox cultures; Europe and Asia and so on. They wanted to investigate to what extent these much cited lines marked real boundaries of political culture (p6). The results of their survey revealed these alleged cultural divisions to be unimportant: 'Within the FSU/ECE [Former Soviet Union/East Central Europe] the lines of division that have excited so many theorists and historians seem remarkably faint in terms of contemporary political values.' (p28)

The thesis developed by the Westerner Samuel Huntington did not appear to be borne out by the views of Easterners: 'The "clash of civilisations" line between Catholic and Orthodox Europe proved a complete irrelevance....And the divide at the Urals, between Europe and Asia, revealed no significant value differences at all.' Even more pertinently, when postcommunist values were compared with those of the West, there were more similarities than discrepancies: 'the differences between political values in the FSU/ECE and an old established democracy like Britain were not that great.' (p28)

In contrast to the image of Eastern Europe as intolerant towards minorities, some of the results even suggested that Eastern Europe was more relaxed about ethnic differences. For example, they found that, the 'impulse towards cultural conformity was as strong in Britain as in the FSU/ECE', and, 'The British were even less willing to support Muslim schools than people in the FSU or ECE were willing to support teaching in languages other than the state language' (p395).

Adam Burgess suggests that the Western concern with 'democratising' Eastern Europe is often misplaced, a point confirmed in *Values and Political Change in Postcommunist Europe*. The survey results call into question the presupposition that the population of Eastern Europe lacks democratic values. The authors' conclusion was unequivocal; the peoples of Eastern Europe express democratic values comparable to those in Western Europe: 'in terms of democratic consolidation

in the FSU/ECE, political values in the early 1990s were part of the solution, not part of the problem. There was no evidence that the people of the FSU/ECE were not yet ready for democracy.'

Burgess documents the double standards in the treatment of the West and East. He observes that Western states themselves often fail to meet the democratic criteria that they are setting for Eastern states as prerequisites for membership of European institutions. The evidence of the former Communist states meeting the West's own democratic standards raises the question as to why obstacles are being put in the way of their joining European institutions. With the demise of Communism all Eastern European states have been seeking closer ties with Western markets and trying to demonstrate that they belong within Europe.

Cold Warriors argued that only Communism prevented Eastern Europe from being integrated into the free West. But that never quite happened. The idea of some kind of cultural or value deficiency in the East is a way of explaining the problem away. It is not a weakness in the market, say apologists for the West, but a weakness in the East that accounts for the persisting divide.

ACCORDING TO WOLFE, 'THE RECOURSE TO expert advice and economic assistance from abroad will certainly be construed as the ultimate vindication of our own economic success and the backwardness of Eastern Europe' (p9). The discourse of Europe has become as much about exclusion as it is about unity and inclusion. Indeed 'more-Western-than-thou' is a game that even Eastern Europeans have been taught. In the dual process of European integration and exclusion from Europe, each nation in Eastern Europe is seeking to prove its European credentials by denouncing the Easternness of their neighbours:

'East Germans are "eastern" for the West Germans, Poles are "eastern" to the East Germans, Russians are "eastern" to the Poles.... A Serb is an "easterner" to a Slovene, but a Bosnian would be an "easterner" to the Serb although geographically situated to the west; the same applies to the Albanians who, situated in the western Balkans, are perceived as easternmost by the rest of the Balkan nations.' (*Imagining the Balkans*, p58)

Special pleading is being made for at least some of the Eastern European states to be admitted, as Todorova notes: 'Central Europeanness became a device entitling its participants to a share of privileges.' (p156) For example, President Vaclav Havel argues for the inclusion of stable Central European states, which he says are part of Western tradition, to act as a bulwark against the unstable Balkans and states of the Russian Federation which do not fall within that tradition: ►



◀ 'If...Nato is to remain functional, it cannot suddenly open its doors to anyone at all...The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia—and Austria and Slovenia as well—clearly belong to the western sphere of European civilisation. They espouse its values and draw on the same traditions....Moreover, the contiguous and stable Central European belt borders both on the traditionally agitated Balkans and on the great Eurasian area....' (Vaclav Havel, 'New Democracies for Old Europe', *New York Times*, 17 October 1993)

Our perceptions of the East have been confirmed by the war in former Yugoslavia. The Balkans have become 'synonymous with barbarism, dehumanisation, destruction of civilisation' (*Imagining the Balkans*, p36). The conduct of war in the Balkans is described as particularly savage, although the casualty figures do not bear this out. Todorova challenges Western perceptions of its own, presumably civilised wars citing how, in the Gulf War, 'In 17 days, American technology managed to kill, in what Jean Baudrillard claimed was merely a television event, at least half the casualties incurred by all sides during the two Balkan wars'. Even more tellingly, she adds that 'With the ease with which American journalists dispense accusations of genocide in Bosnia, where the reported casualty figures vary anywhere between 25 000 and 250 000, it is curious to know how they designate the over three million dead Vietnamese' (pp6-7).

Discussing the barbarity of the East helps the West to convince itself of the superiority of its own values, particularly at a time when those values are being called into question at home. Burgess' conclusion is that it is the West's own need for a sense of moral mission lacking at the end of the Cold War that is being projected onto its relations with Eastern Europe. Moreover, Burgess and Todorova describe the discourse on Eastern Europe as a new, more acceptable form of racial politics. As Todorova puts it, 'Balkanism became, in time, a convenient substitute for the emotional discharge that orientalism provided' (p188). ●

Vanessa Pupavac lectures in East European Politics at the University of Nottingham

READ ON READ ON READ ON READ ON READ ON

ONE WORLD, READY OR NOT

William Greider, *Penguin*, £20 hbk/£9.99 pbk

A recent edition of the *New Yorker* magazine carried an article singing the praises of Karl Marx, the forgotten prophet of market collapse, monopoly and social inequality. Now here comes William Greider of *Rolling Stone* magazine, with a book that argues 'the gross conditions that inspired Karl Marx's original critique of

capitalism in the nineteenth century are present and flourishing again' (p39).

Greider is a great writer. His descriptions of the new capitalism in China, Malaysia and Eastern Europe have echoes of Engels' of Manchester, London and Liverpool in the *Condition of the English Working Classes*. But the nod to Marx in his book, as in the *New Yorker*, is for all the wrong reasons. Marx is remembered here only as a Jeremiah, singing the woes of industrialisation and financial trickery. His rehabilitation is more a sign of the morbidity of today's capitalist outlook, than a resurgence of opposition to capitalism.

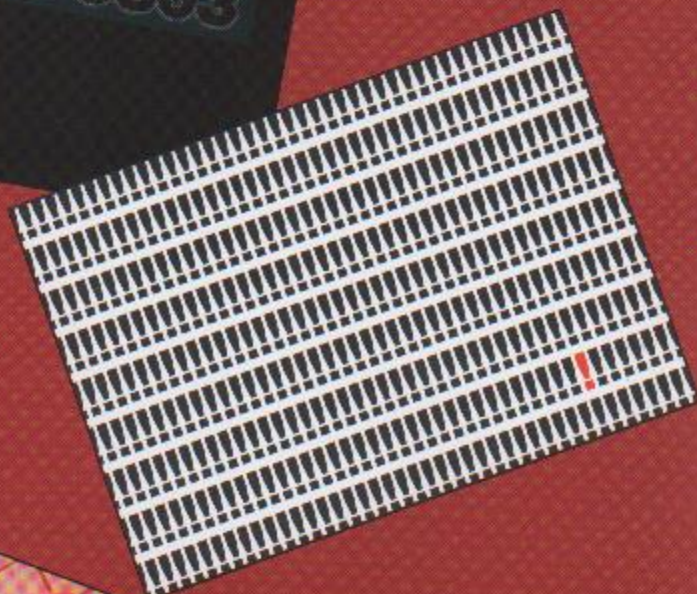
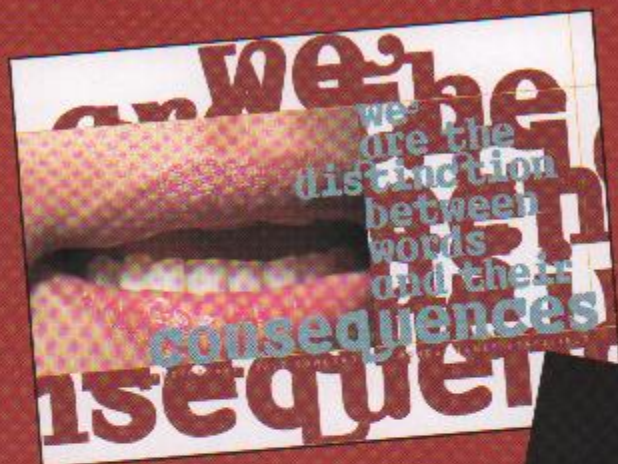
According to Greider there are three big problems the economy faces, overproduction of goods that cannot find a market, the flight of capital in pursuit of low wages, forcing wages down, and the 'rentier regime' of the financial markets, bleeding the productive sector dry. In all three respects, he is wrong.

'Overproduction' only looks like a problem from the US perspective, faced with competition from Asia. Greider thinks that too many cars are being produced, a prejudice that would chime with many environmentalists today. But in absolute terms there are not enough cars, when only one in every 680 has a car in China. What looks like a problem of oversupply is actually a problem of the uncompetitiveness of US goods. Greider's promotion of a subsidised USA as a 'buyer of last resort' only suggests that he wants the rest of the world to pay for US consumption.

Similarly, the idea of capital flight lowering wages seems to fit the facts. But no matter how low the wages in the Former Soviet Union, or Africa—that in itself will not attract capital. Indeed most capital moves from one of the leading countries to another, rather than out into the rest of the world. In fact the reasons that capital crosses borders are more to do with the difficulty in investing it at home than any pull factors. But lurking behind Greider's complaint is the proposal that the USA imposes economic sanctions against Asian competitors—on the grounds that they pay low wages. Socialist reasoning, capitalist solution.

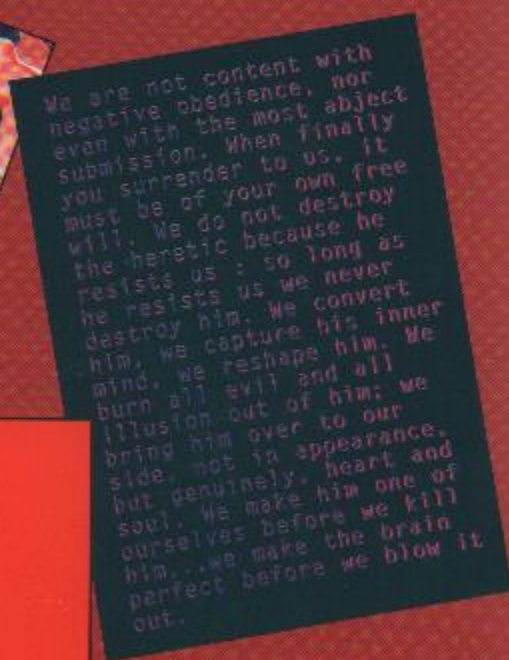
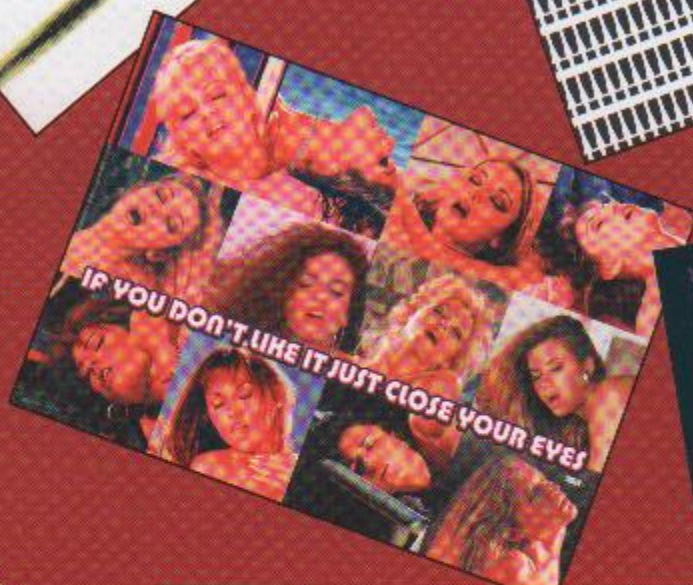
Greider gives a racy account of the 'rentier regime' of a financial sector that holds down industrial growth to redirect resources into speculative investments. His documentation of the inverse relation between growing stockmarket prices and productive investment exposes the apologists of Wall Street and the City of London. But it never occurs to him that it is not the markets that are responsible for low growth, but the lack of investment that is fuelling speculation. As ever, Greider sees the problem of capitalism as too much—too much produced, too much going on in East Asia, too much profiteering on the stock exchange—when the real problem is much too little oomph.

James Heartfield



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