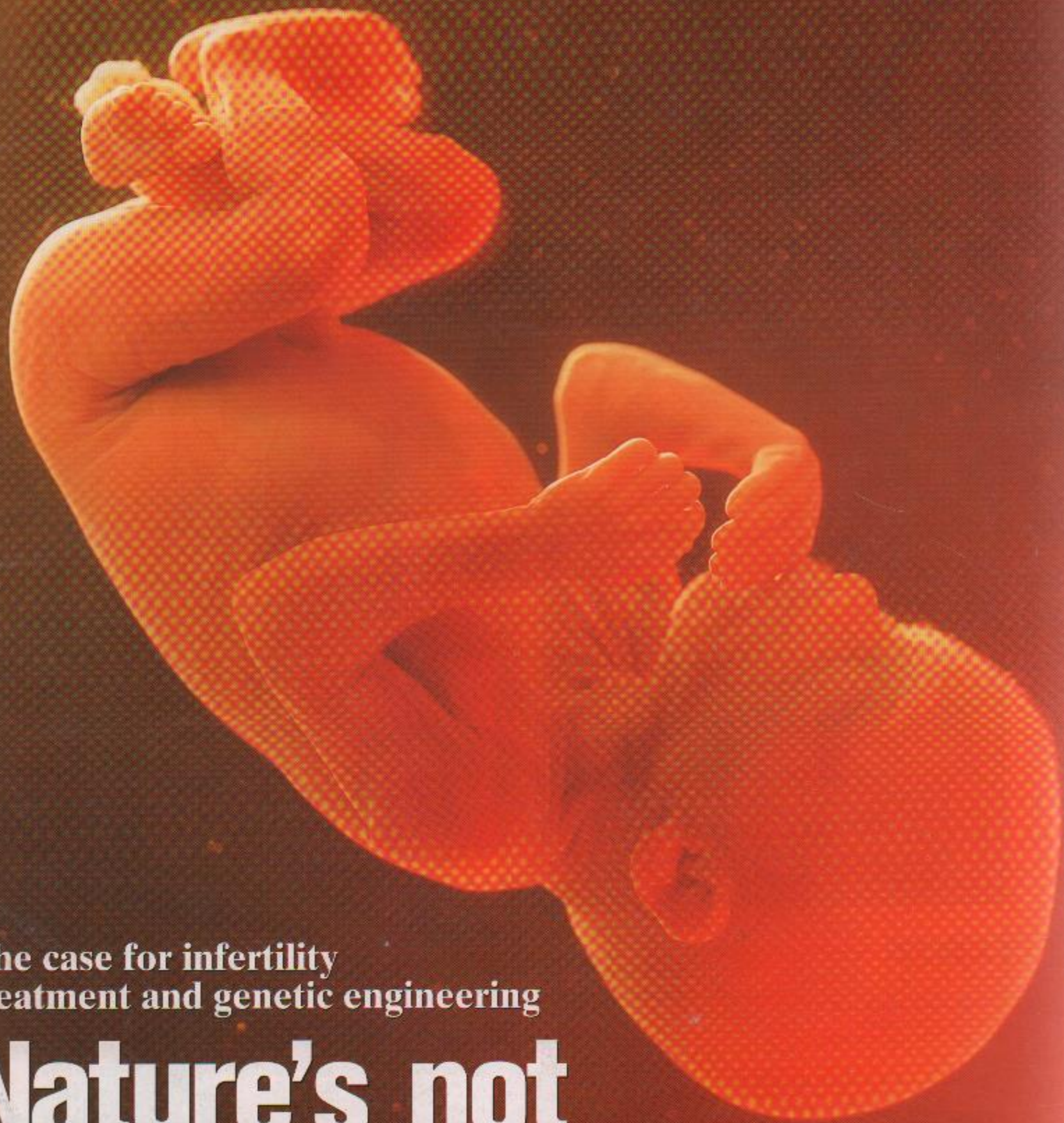


LIVING MARXISM

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WAR**



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The case for infertility
treatment and genetic engineering

Nature's not good enough

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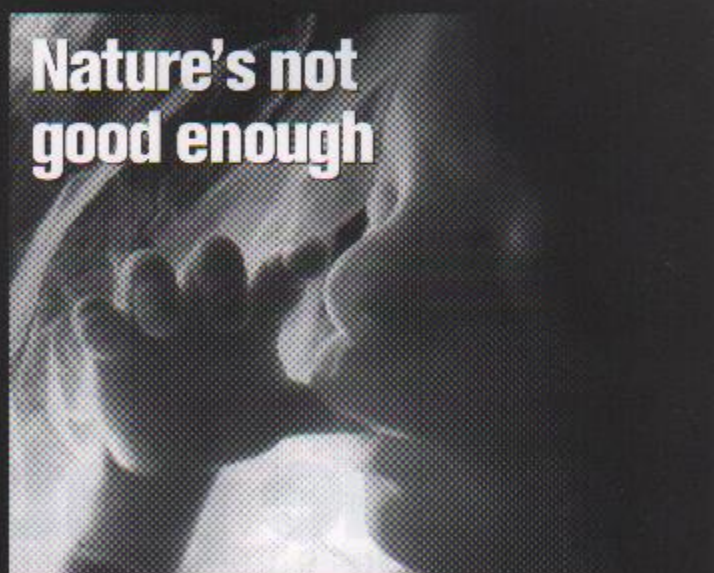
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COVER PHOTO: JAMES STEVENS/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

Nature's not good enough



This month *Living Marxism* focuses on the renewed controversies about infertility treatment and genetic engineering, and puts the case for interfering with nature at every opportunity in order to improve the human condition.

No controls on infertility treatment p24

The official regulatory body, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, is debating whether eggs from human embryos and other ovarian tissue should be used in infertility treatment and research. *Living Marxism* science editor John Gillott gives the HFEA a resounding 'yes'.

Carry on, Doctor p26

Vicky Richardson talked to Dr John Gosden of Edinburgh University medical school, whose research has made him a target of the new scare about using eggs and ovarian tissue from embryos.

Taboos: Sterile concerns p28

Why is so much fuss made about the new reproductive technologies anyway? Ann Bradley finds it has less to do with medical matters than with the social status of the family.

Progress: Designer genes p32

Those opposed to interfering with nature often hold up genetic engineering as the ultimate Frankenstein-style horror. John Gillott sees it as a great way to improve upon the shortcomings of natural evolution.

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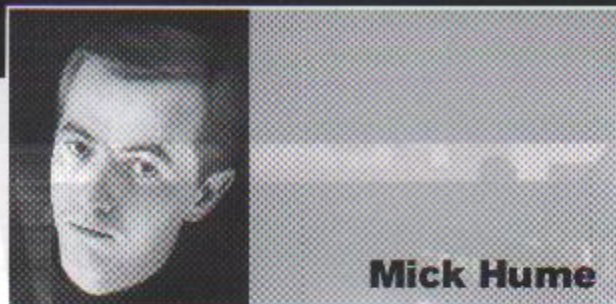
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Mick Hume

The heroic General and the pathetic Major

Living Marxism has argued for some time that a big problem of our time is the *moral rehabilitation of imperialism*. If you want some idea of what that means, and why it is so dangerous, look at the story of the General and the Major government.

On Friday 4 March, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, the commander of the United Nations Protection Force (Unprofor), issued a demand for more troops to be sent to Bosnia from Britain and other peacekeeping countries. 'We are at a very, very fragile, sensitive time', General Rose pleaded to the sympathetic ears of the international media.

Being 'sensitive' is not a quality traditionally associated with a British military commander. Indeed the fragile General Rose himself has a long history of playing a leading role in Britain's dirty foreign wars, from the deserts of Oman to the backstreets of Northern Ireland and the bogs of the Falklands. Presumably he picked up some tips on sensitivity during his busy time as commander of the cut-throat SAS.

But never mind all that unpleasantness. The media coverage of the March events conveyed the conviction that this Rose smells as sweet as he sounds. The General was universally depicted as a sincere and caring humanitarian with a love of fine watercolours, dedicated to doing good in Bosnia and around the world, and appealing to governments to join his crusade for peace.

The near-canonisation of General Rose symbolised the way in which the image of British and Western militarism has been recast in recent years. Western soldiers

such as Rose are now routinely described as if they were uniformed international social workers, rather than professional men of violence and trained killers. Their job, it seems, is no longer to make war, but to keep the peace and feed the hungry in Bosnia or Somalia; the fact that their task still involves occupying other people's countries and shooting at those who protest is considered beside the point.

There is a new consensus about the place, one which accepts and encourages Western intervention around the world as a moral mission. As we have pointed out before in relation to many of the world's troublespots, the consequences of this pro-intervention mood for those on the receiving end are disastrous; elsewhere in this issue, Joan Phillips reports on how the West's latest 'peace' initiative in Bosnia is leading to creeping UN colonialism.

But there are also some important domestic consequences of the moral rehabilitation of imperialism, some ways in which this trend can affect political events in Britain itself. It is these factors which explain why the British and other Western governments are so keen to promote figures like General Rose today, and why they are prepared to mount major foreign interventions even when, as in Bosnia, there appears to be no direct benefits for them.

To grasp what's really going on here, simply compare the images of General Rose and prime minister John Major. There stands the heroic General, bestriding Bosnia, telling off the Serbs, a genuine British leader seeking to put the world to

rights. And here we have the pathetic Major, up to his scrawny neck in scandals about everything from sex to arms sales, ridiculed even by the Tory press, humiliated by the ruler of lowly Malaysia. If you were a member of the establishment, which one would you want to advertise as a symbol of British authority?

This is not just a British thing. None of the scandal-plagued governments of major nations like the USA, France, Germany and Japan has much public authority today. Their inability to deal with the economic slump, or to offer any worthwhile vision of the future, has reduced politicians and statesmen everywhere to corrupt figures of contempt in the eyes of their electorates. Staging adventures on the international stage, starring untarnished actors like General Rose, appears to offer the authorities their best hope of regaining some credibility today.

For instance, British cabinet ministers have been warned not to tour the country during the forthcoming election campaigns because their unpopularity in the cities which their policies have ravaged is likely to lead to protests and lost votes. How much better, then, for the Major government to turn the public's attention away from its closure of London hospitals and chancellor Kenneth Clarke's grubby demand for more taxes, and focus instead on Britain's life-saving mission in Sarajevo and General Rose's high-minded plea for more troops.

Defence secretary Malcolm Rifkind responded to that plea with the announcement that he was sending 900 additional troops to aid General Rose. The British authorities certainly did not want to

become more deeply involved in military terms. But the seriousness of its other problems meant that Major's government could not resist the opportunity to look important in Bosnia.

In parliament, Tory MPs tried to put their squalid in-fighting aside and bask in the glory reflecting off General Rose. Rifkind praised his 'remarkable achievements' in the former Yugoslavia. Backbench rebel Winston Churchill lauded Rose for doing a 'superb job' by 'demonstrating that the Serbs are not 12-feet tall and that a bit of courage goes a long way'. Another Tory MP, Dr Charles Goodson-Wickes, spoke of 'our having the best peacekeeping troops in the world', led by 'a general who has been conspicuous in his ability to get things done in that tragic region'.

At a time when the general impression is that government ministers are gutless pygmies, conspicuous in their inability to get anything done, the fact that a British leader can attract such public praise is a priceless asset for the authorities. The lending of some much-needed legitimacy to the institutions of the state is one domestic pay-off from the moral rehabilitation of imperialism.

Yet the ineffective Tories could not have managed this trick on their own. A key role in the moral rehabilitation of imperialism has been played by the official opposition parties.

Liberal and left-wing voices which once protested against the presence of American troops in Vietnam have now complained about the absence of Western troops in Bosnia. They have led the demands for more intervention, depicting British troops as a force for civilisation and peace. They have built up the image of General Rose as a kind of New Man

among military commanders. They have, in short, provided the language for a new age of militarism, putting the case for colonial-style interference in the affairs of other peoples to be carried out with nineties-style sensitivity.

The opposition parties' parliamentary response to Rifkind's announcement of more troops for Bosnia was typical of today; a time when the liberal *Independent* newspaper is more likely to call for Nato air-strikes than the Tory *Telegraph*, and when Labour MPs who once winced at Thatcher's gung-ho Falklands War have become more enthusiastic militarists than many Tory backwoodsmen.

The only complaint Labour defence spokesman David Clark had about Rifkind's decision to send extra troops into Bosnia was that the government had kept General Rose waiting for three weeks since his initial request for reinforcements. Liberal spokesman Menzies Campbell had no complaints at all about the military intervention, since the Tories were now doing what his leader, Paddy Ashdown, had demanded on countless occasions. From the left, Tony Benn and the maverick Labour MP Tam Dalyell did highlight their concern; not over the invasion of Bosnia by British troops you understand, but the possibility that they might be joined by Turkish soldiers.

The overall message from the opposition parties was summed up by Labour MP Andrew Faulds, who congratulated Rifkind, Major and foreign secretary Douglas Hurd 'for having managed to borrow a bit of backbone from somewhere' in sending the troops to Bosnia. Such intended put-downs are really bonus points for the government, since they endorse the impression that Major's spineless team

has become resolute overnight. For a government which needs to borrow all of the backbone it can get, sending a few hundred troops to General Rose is a relatively cheap way to look commanding.

The rehabilitation of imperialism has serious implications for us as well as for the peoples of a place like Bosnia. The displays of public admiration and support for such a statesmanlike figure as General Rose can give a new lease of life to an otherwise uninspiring system of government. The indirect effect is to boost the authority of all British statesmen—that is, of the same discredited politicians and officials who are responsible for the social and economic problems which blight our lives.

The pro-intervention climate whipped up by the General's admirers is already making it easier for the state to extend its authoritarian control over British society, as well as interfering abroad. Typically, while the opposition parties have been preoccupied with demanding firmer action in Bosnia, there has been no serious debate about recent initiatives which give the authorities even more power to set up computerised data systems and surveillance cameras, and to arm more police on the streets of Britain.

It remains to be seen whether General Rose can do much to save John Major's government. But it is certain that we need to do all we can to expose what's behind the rehabilitation of imperialism. The day after Rose made his March appeal for more troops, the Campaign Against Militarism staged its 1500-strong conference at Wembley. Perfect timing; but, as the great man himself might say, further reinforcements are needed if we are to build on this success and secure a lasting peace.

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

The right to be offensive

Earlier this year, *Living Marxism* published our declaration on 'The right to be offensive—a challenge to these uncritical times', and asked for responses. Here we print two contrasting views from Lady Howe, chair of the Broadcasting Standards Council, and the artist Patrick Hughes. Others are welcome.

You issue a challenge to the times which you consider to be uncritical, suggesting that the only right course to follow in such a situation is to be offensive, with an unrestricted right to be so. I suggest to you in turn that the circumstances, if any, in which it is legitimate to make a practice of offensiveness must be judged in relation to the medium used.

Television and radio come into the home, for the most part without hindrance from the moment the set is switched on. They address an audience which varies widely in, for example, its age, its experience, its knowledge. The right to offend cannot be exercised in isolation from those facts. Nor, I suspect, would anyone wishing to make a truthful and sensible point, other than one appealing directly to his or her friends and practically nobody else, wish to do so. The majority, one suspects, still believe that there are few, if any, occasions on which offensiveness can sensibly be preferred to reason. **Lady Howe**, Broadcasting Standards Council, London

There always will be people who have the capacity to offend the conventional view. I don't think it will ever change, but you are absolutely right to attempt to preserve the right to be offensive.

I remember the time, 30 years ago, when Lenny Bruce was thrown out of the country by Peter Brook's father, Henry Brook, home secretary and MP for Hampstead. I can remember when you bought a copy of *Rubber News* and it was mimeographed, stapled. Now there's *Skin Two*, colour and 144 pages. Today there is a wider variety of things you can do. Every year more books are published, more people go to college, more sleep in doorways, and more people have their nipples pierced. All those millions who used to go to football are now dressed in leather with pierced nipples. It's conventional to be a pervert.

But you always have to fight. I think it's gross Mrs Shitehouse has been almost canonised and sucked up to. The National Viewers' and Listeners' Association had a membership of two—Mr and Mrs Whitehouse. I think she's a monster. So many left-wing groups are so conventional. But we mustn't be defensive about the right to be offensive.

Patrick Hughes London

Therapy?

Much of Beth Adams' article ('The counselling con', March), was a useful critique of the counselling game, if a little oversimplified. However whilst I agree with much of it, I don't believe that a good chat always suffices when individuals' lives are really screwed up.

Personally I think the main problem with counselling is that it begins with a major power imbalance. The therapist is powerful and all-knowing and the client has a problem and needs help. This question of power and how it is used is the real problem. Counselling has also become a middle class quasi-religious movement and is sold with evangelical zeal, 'personal growth' being the door to enlightenment.

So whilst many counsellors sit like noddies reflecting back our feelings and directing our thoughts/emotions in a subtle way called 'non-directive' therapy, that doesn't mean that all skilled help is bad. Help by experienced and skilled professionals can enable individuals to move from crippling positions. It seems strange to deny experience and skills being useful with psychological problems when these attributes are beneficial in every other aspect of our lives.

So Beth, yes, counselling is a con when used as a panacea for all ills and as a social tool for conditioning thought, but that doesn't mean that all psychological help is bad or oppressive. It can be liberating and helpful if used selectively and pragmatically. And if one day you feel that you, like many other people, have been through the mill and need a bit more help, give me a bell and I'll try to be a little more challenging and helpful than your dog.

Simon Western, nod-free therapist, Chester

Beth Adams' article 'The counselling con', was in itself a con: misrepresentative, misleading, trivialising and inaccurate. The article was misrepresentative in treating 'counselling' as one homogeneous entity, which it is not. It was misleading in that the distinction Adams drew between counselling and psychotherapy, 'or psychoanalysis' (!) is not generally accepted. It was trivialising in that, for example, Adams posed a false polarity between the appointment of medical practitioners and that of counsellors in order to ridicule the effectiveness of counselling. It was full of inaccuracies: for example, the British Association of Counselling (BAC) does not in fact require BAC-accredited counsellors to have been in therapy, although some of us would argue that this should be a requirement. In short the article was just the sort of ill-thought, ill-judged, prejudicial polemic which gives Marxism, let alone *Living Marxism*, a bad name.

Adams seems to ignore the extensive

and critical literature, both from within psychology and from critical theory, on the nature and purpose of counselling, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. Some forms of psychotherapy, such as the radical psychiatry tradition within Transactional Analysis and Social Action Psychotherapy, precisely do encourage the externalisation of what are seen initially as internal problems.

What Adams and others ignore is individuals' genuine experience of distress, not all of which can be wiped away with a political hankie: 'there, there, it doesn't matter what you feel, draw a line under it, don't think about it, and get on with the struggle.' It has become fashionable, even politically correct, to knock therapy. Issues of abuse, alienation, anomie, dependence and despair are too serious to be taken—and dismissed—lightly.

Keith Tudor Sheffield

I feel 'The counselling con' fails to address important issues. It does not look at why people feel the need for counselling, or at psychological disturbance and mental illness. It talks of trauma but fails to put it into any context, ie, childhood trauma, problems within the family, or wider social issues. It shows no understanding of the human being having an emotional dimension and therefore problems are reduced to economic and social problems alone. Obviously counselling does not offer solutions to economic problems but does this make it invalid?

You often talk of the importance of human consciousness, but fail to incorporate the notion that this is based on not just reason, but on emotion, on feeling. I particularly dislike the way in which you advocate 'common sense' which in my experience usually means backward and repressive ideas learned from your parents—and yet you claim to be in favour of progress.

I feel your discontent with counselling has more to do with it being the realm of the middle class neurotic (hence the Woody Allen picture) than with any reasoned debate. Working class people don't really have this dilemma anyway, as counselling can be very expensive (£25 to £50 per hour). They are forced to rely on that 'good old-fashioned chat', if they are lucky enough to have someone willing to listen. This does not mean it is necessarily the best option.

Heather McEvoy Avon

Support support groups

Frank Furedi ('PC—the philosophy of low expectations', December) puts forward the idea that intervention at the level of individual conduct does not improve (social) matters. It is clear that any form of intervention at this

level, be it private or public, does not solve deep-rooted social problems. However, Füredi fails to look at the fact that intervention can help at an individual level. He condemns 'the new religion of support' because he claims it suggests that human beings cannot cope on their own. Füredi provides no alternative, except for the need to encourage people to exercise their own initiative.

I feel that undoubtedly many people need aid—whether we call this support or help is irrelevant. Battered women who have no financial backing and cannot leave their husbands, welcome the help provided by a refuge.

Füredi's criticism of support groups undermines the great job that some are doing by forming collectives with anti-isolationist ideologies. Collectives can produce substantial changes in the lives of individuals and lobby for limited social change. Women's Aid Gibraltar, for example, managed to get a Domestic Violence Act enacted. Without doubt this step does not solve the social problem of domestic violence but some individuals will benefit.

Sam Golt Gibraltar

What's in a nation?

Paul Williams (letters, February) claims that Eire and Ulster should not be considered one country because 'there is no rational, scientific method to determine which groups of people can be defined as nations, or what territory a nation can claim as its own'. His attitude demonstrates the frustrating inability of many socialists to come to terms with nationalism, and the reality that we live in a world of nation states.

Given that this situation shows little sign of changing in the immediate future, socialists must establish some criteria for defining what constitutes a nation, rather than mouthing such platitudes as 'nationalism cannot play a progressive role in the 1990s'.

May I suggest one fundamental principle which we should adhere to? All peoples have the right to oppose imperialism, the intervention of one nation in the affairs of another with the sole aim of furthering the interests of the aggressor.

Perhaps people like Mr Williams have been taken in by the rhetoric of the proponents of 'peace' in the Six Counties. They would do well to remember that, even if Britain has now no selfish, strategic or economic interests in Ireland, it did once, and that is the only reason why we have war there today.

Stephen Doherty Coatbridge, Scotland

Who's afraid of Zhirinovsky?

Laurence Webb's analysis of Vladimir Zhirinovsky (letters, March) may have been tarnished by his belief that the *Guardian* provided the best commentary. Things look rather different when one does not have to rely on Jonathan Steele's view of events.

Firstly, Zhirinovsky did not run 'the most intelligent campaign'. The remarkable similarities between Zhirinovsky's campaign and everyone else's are more striking. Like them, he does not oppose the constitution, or market reforms, or the presidency of Boris Yeltsin. Are his policies cunning, dynamic and tinged with fascist undertones? Hardly. He ran an entirely dull campaign with no new issues or economic solutions at all, punctuated by the occasional foolish posturing on TV and outlandishly unbelievable statements to gullible Western journalists.

It raises an interesting question: how does a nobody become a somebody in Russian politics? Say you've got something better than the atom bomb and you're prepared to use it, and Western journos come running. As recent Russian commentary suggests, Zhirinovsky's only merit at the ballot box was his total lack of connection with the perceived political establishment.

The point is surely this: the only individual with the power to act undemocratically entirely within the law is Yeltsin himself. This does not make him a quasi-Stalinist/fascist, but it will enable him to rule in the authoritarian manner which the Western powers can hardly be said to disapprove of.

Gillian Reid Glasgow

'Try asking a Russian if (s)he'd rather have Uncle Joe back', quips Laurence Webb (letters, March). The irony is that this smart sign-off line demonstrates how out of touch Webb is with

developments in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

In the recent elections, millions of Russians *did* vote for a return to the Stalinist past. Many of Zhirinovsky's supporters displayed a similar affection for times gone by. In Eastern Europe, Stalinist parties have already been returned to power.

This is the singular achievement of the introduction of the market into the former Soviet Union. In the space of five years, it has made millions yearn for the return of Stalinist repression. Some triumph for capitalism!

Jimmy Stanton Co Durham

Disability and society

In their reply to Michael Fitzpatrick's 'Handicapped or oppressed?' (December), the censorious Misses Muir and Miller 'were thoroughly disgusted...how such ignorant people...were even granted the right to breathe, never mind being allowed to voice an opinion'. William Rees-Mogg, The Broadcasting Standards Council, and the BNP await the two with open arms.

They go on: 'it is society that disables, not a disease'. A muscular sclerosis sufferer, living alone on a hypothetical desert island, might disagree. There is no society to do any disabling, yet somehow her chances of survival are slim.

With their brand of political correctness, Misses M & M try to obscure the issue of disability with verbal niceties. This does nothing to help the unfortunate. For society to help effectively requires recognition that some are less able than others, and the resources to make good the difference.

Ian H Marcus Hampstead, London

Crisis tendency

In an era of crisis, the tendency towards an over-accumulation of silly-sized lettering and illustrations, big empty spaces, and shorter articles is reasserting itself in the pages of *Living Marxism*. I wonder if the modifying counter-tendencies are sufficient to hold off a complete textual breakdown?

D Sheppard Hemel Hempstead

We welcome readers' views and criticisms.

Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or fax them on (071) 278 9844

Is a plague of computer pornography menacing British children? Only in the virtual reality world invented by pro-censorship politicians and journalists, reckons Andrew Calcutt

There was a man and a woman and they were doing it on a bed with loads of pink and orange cushions around them. The couple were sort of jiggling up and down. I thought it looked a bit naff really. The man had a stupid haircut and a moustache. It was more funny than rude or dirty.'

Interviewed by the *Daily Telegraph*, a schoolboy from Kent described his first experience of pornography on computer disk. This 15-year old showed more maturity about computer porn than the most senior politicians and journalists in Britain.

Over a year ago, John Major instructed the Home Office to protect the young and vulnerable from the threat of computer pornography. Home secretary Michael Howard's Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill includes measures which reflect the prime minister's concern. Many public figures want still tougher action.

'Technology's HIV'

The parliamentary select committee for home affairs recently published a report calling for further legislation to deal with the 'new horror' of computer porn. Labour MP Frank Cook declared that 'computer pornography is tantamount to the injection of heroin into a child's school milk'. Top censor, James Ferman, director of the British Board of Film Classification, also likened computer pornography to 'the international trade in drugs'.

The media has been quick to pick up on the computer porn panic. In the *Daily Telegraph*, Elizabeth Grice asked, 'are your children watching computer porn behind the bedroom door?', and denounced 'technology's HIV, a law-resistant disease that so far has no effective check'. ITV's *Cook Report* told 'a story which will frighten any parent, or, indeed, any partners of a home computer addict'. Even the original 'cyberpunk', William Gibson, has warned of 'X-rated cyberspace' and expressed his own 'parental concern'.

The pro-censorship lobbyists hold that Britain is facing an epidemic of computer porn: technology is fast outstripping legislation, and computer-literate youngsters are taking advantage of their parents' lack of familiarity with consoles and CD-ROMs. A sensible reading of the evidence, however, shows that computer-porn hype is fast outstripping reality. Unscrupulous scaremongers are exploiting the ancient fear of 'corrupting the youth', and cashing in on more recent misgivings about new technology.

No evidence

In calling for preventive measures against computer porn, many commentators have cited the February 1994 report by the parliamentary select committee. How strange then, that this report provides no proof of any epidemic. But it does contain many instances of hearsay and rumour which have been interpreted as fact.

Chris Newell, director of casework for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), told the committee that out of 1000 pornography cases referred to the CPS since 1991, only 11 involved computer pornography. Committee chairman Sir Ivan Lawrence noted 'there is some vagueness about the prevalence of computer pornography'. But Christine Stewart concluded on behalf of the Home Office: 'although we do not have hard evidence, I think instinctively one would think it is likely to increase as a problem.'

The committee warned of paedophiles using computers to lure unsuspecting children into their clutches. But witnesses were again unable to provide the required information. 'I am not in a position', said Newell for the CPS, 'to be able to say whether computer pornography is used to any significant extent to achieve that end'. A memo from HM Customs and Excise suggested otherwise: 'we have found no evidence to suggest that material was intended for children, either directly or indirectly.'

Police officers from Manchester and London submitted that computer porn disks are being swapped at school. To judge from the committee's response, you would think that a tidal wave of pornography was swamping the nation's playgrounds. Yet the committee's own deliberations suggest a much more prosaic state of affairs.

'We have not, I am afraid, got any figures of the number of cases in which children have had access to such material', said Christine Stewart of the Home Office. At this point, Sir Ivan Lawrence chipped in: 'It is quite obvious that this is not happening on a very large scale at the moment.' He had no intention, however, of letting a lack of facts interfere with a good panic, adding 'but if you are right about it, it could catch on'.

The committee received a memorandum from the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts which included a telling illustration of the discrepancy between the rumour and reality of playground porn:

'...the alleged widespread circulation of computer pornography disks at a Dunstable (Bedfordshire) school. A senior Luton police officer was interviewed on television...boast[ing] about their haul of 754 "pornographic disks...[breaking] a porn-ring". It now transpires however that all 754 of the seized disks have turned out to be "clean" and have had to be returned to their owners.'

This revelation appeared in one of the documents which the committee chose not to publish as part of its report. It can be viewed, by appointment only, at the public record office in the House of Lords. But the published report does refer to an 'apparently quite significant case...in the Bedfordshire area', maintaining the false impression that the Dunstable case proves the prevalence of computer porn. In fact, it shows the prevalence of the computer porn myth, and the willingness of the ►

Exposed: computer porn scandal in commons





The scanners may even have lifted their images from the *Observer*, rather than an overpriced copy of Madonna's book *Sex*

authorities to spread false rumours which advance their case for censorship.

Many politicians and journalists have endorsed the 'deep and widespread concern' expressed to the committee by Vicki Merchant, harassment officer at the University of Central Lancashire, convenor of the first national conference on computer porn, and collator of the first survey of computer porn in schools. But Merchant's own preliminary findings do little to substantiate her grim foreboding:

'Many infant and primary school heads, especially in very small and remote schools, said that they had not heard of computer pornography...until they received the questionnaire.

'Some respondents, whilst not aware of computer pornography in their own school, cite other schools where they believe it exists.

'Others point out that their own ignorance of its presence does not mean that it is not, in fact, present.

'Many respondents say that pupils with home computers are aware of computer pornography and "know someone who has a disk".'

To anyone not already disposed to the notion of a computer porn epidemic, Merchant's preliminary findings suggest that rumours of mass porn-swapping at school have been gathering strength as they circulate from one staff room and playground to another. Yet the *Sunday Times* treated this gossip as incontrovertible fact: 'explicit computer porn plagues 50 per cent of schools.'

It would be very odd if there were no instances of computer porn changing hands at school. The committee members who announced that 'it is essential that school playgrounds do not become trading places for pornography' only revealed themselves as the kind of goody-goody pupils who never went behind the bike-sheds.

The likelihood is that adolescent boys are swapping disks which contain

pictures of nude girls. In one of the few documented cases of adolescent involvement in computer porn, a 17-year old from Brighton sold disks which included nude pictures of Madonna. The *Observer* quoted computer fanzine *Virus News International* to the effect that children were scanning pictures of Madonna's book *Sex*. Only a few months previously, the *Observer's* short-lived large-format magazine had prided itself on being the first British publication to print pictures from the self-same book. The scanners may even have lifted their images from the *Observer*, rather than an overpriced copy of *Sex*. But wherever the youthful pornographers obtained their material, it's hardly likely to have brought on depravity and moral blindness.

Page 3

The home affairs select committee also registered its concern that juveniles have free access to pornographic bulletin boards—electronic files from which well-equipped computer-users can download information and images via telephone lines. Committee members chose not to publish memoranda which suggested that this, if it happens at all, is a very rare occurrence.

'The image of a child using pocket money equipment to acquire large computer files from anywhere in the world is just fantasy....It is the general experience of CommUnity that illegal pornographic material—as opposed to "Page 3" pictures—is not commonly found and is quite hard to obtain from UK bulletin boards.' (Submission by the Computer Communicators Association, 'whose chairman/convenor is himself a policeman')

'In the normal run of events, one image will be transmitted at a time from one computer to one other computer. An analogy might be someone setting out to acquire a copy of a magazine such as *Men Only* by specifically requesting one image at

a time. Generally speaking the ability to view files before transmission is absent...there is no immediate threat of large numbers of images being transmitted to many sites.' (Submission by solicitor David Lewis Swarbrick)

In its submission to the committee, the University of Greenwich advised that 'the main entry point into the UK for UseNet messages is the University of Kent at Canterbury, whose policy is not to pass on messages in conferences that are overtly pornographic'. Feminists Against Censorship noted that the *Cook Report* had given a false impression of children having easy access to pornographic bulletin boards based outside Britain. Bulletin board-operator Keith Jackson submitted: 'That the tabloid media is managing to develop a shock! horror! mentality towards electronic communications demonstrates only the public's techno-fear. In the sixties it was motorcyclists and, more recently, football fans who received the journalists' vitriol. Now they have found a new target.' Of these memoranda only the one from the University of Greenwich was considered worthy of publication in the select committee report.

Child abuse

The pro-censorship lobby makes repeated allegations of a triangular relationship between paedophiles, computer porn and vulnerable children. Although there is no evidence of computer technology being used in Britain to entrap youngsters in paedophile activities, much attention has been paid to a single case in which computer-imaging was used to graft a photograph of a child's head on to the representation of a naked woman's body. Legislation currently before parliament will outlaw such 'pseudo-photographs', and 'protect' the child, whose picture was taken from a mail-order catalogue.

In her submission to the select committee, author and academic Susan Edwards—'engaged in a research project at the Obscene



Publications Branch [Metropolitan Police]—let slip the real motivation behind repeated references to paedophiles: 'the privacy argument can be defeated by appealing to the public policy of protecting the young.' By conjuring up the paedophile bogeyman, the authorities are facilitating the passage of a new generation of laws and regulations to give the state extensive control over computers and associated technology.

Police access

Under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill now before parliament, possession of an indecent 'pseudo-photograph' will be a criminal offence. In future, premises may be searched and evidence seized on the say-so of a police inspector, rather than a magistrate's warrant. And anybody caught sending messages deemed offensive or indecent will face up to three months in prison. The home secretary has also announced measures to strengthen the Obscene Publications Act, making it an offence to transmit obscene material between computers. Meanwhile the women's committee of the European parliament is considering legislation against computer images which exploit children and young people.

The home affairs select committee recommended further legislation. It proposed that alleged computer pornographers forfeit their equipment, which should be used to trace other offenders. The committee also wants to dispense with the meagre safeguards of the Computer Misuse Act 1990, which prevents law enforcement officers from entering certain

bulletin boards without a warrant.

'If a police officer comes across a bulletin board which says police officers are not permitted to enter the system', said committee chairman Sir Ivan Lawrence, 'there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that what is going on is undesirable if not illegal'.

The committee recommended that the police should enjoy open access on the grounds that existing restrictions jeopardise investigations and hinder prosecutions. The CPS representative informed the committee that there was no experience of prosecutions obstructed in this way. But the committee ploughed on regardless, recommending that use of passwords to obstruct police entry should be regarded as 'aggravating...any offence that results in a conviction', with subsequent 'enhancement' of penalties.

Unauthorised software

The committee's recommendations amount to a license for the authorities to peer and probe into anyone's computer files in search of anything which the police and the likes of Sir Ivan Lawrence consider 'undesirable'. They form part of a general pattern for regulating and regimenting anything and everything today.

In addition to MPs and the police, many professional bodies and trade associations are introducing measures on the pretext of dealing with computer porn. The Video Standards Council has made an agreement with the European Leisure Software Publishers Association (ELSPA) which 'will ensure that ELSPA members adopt

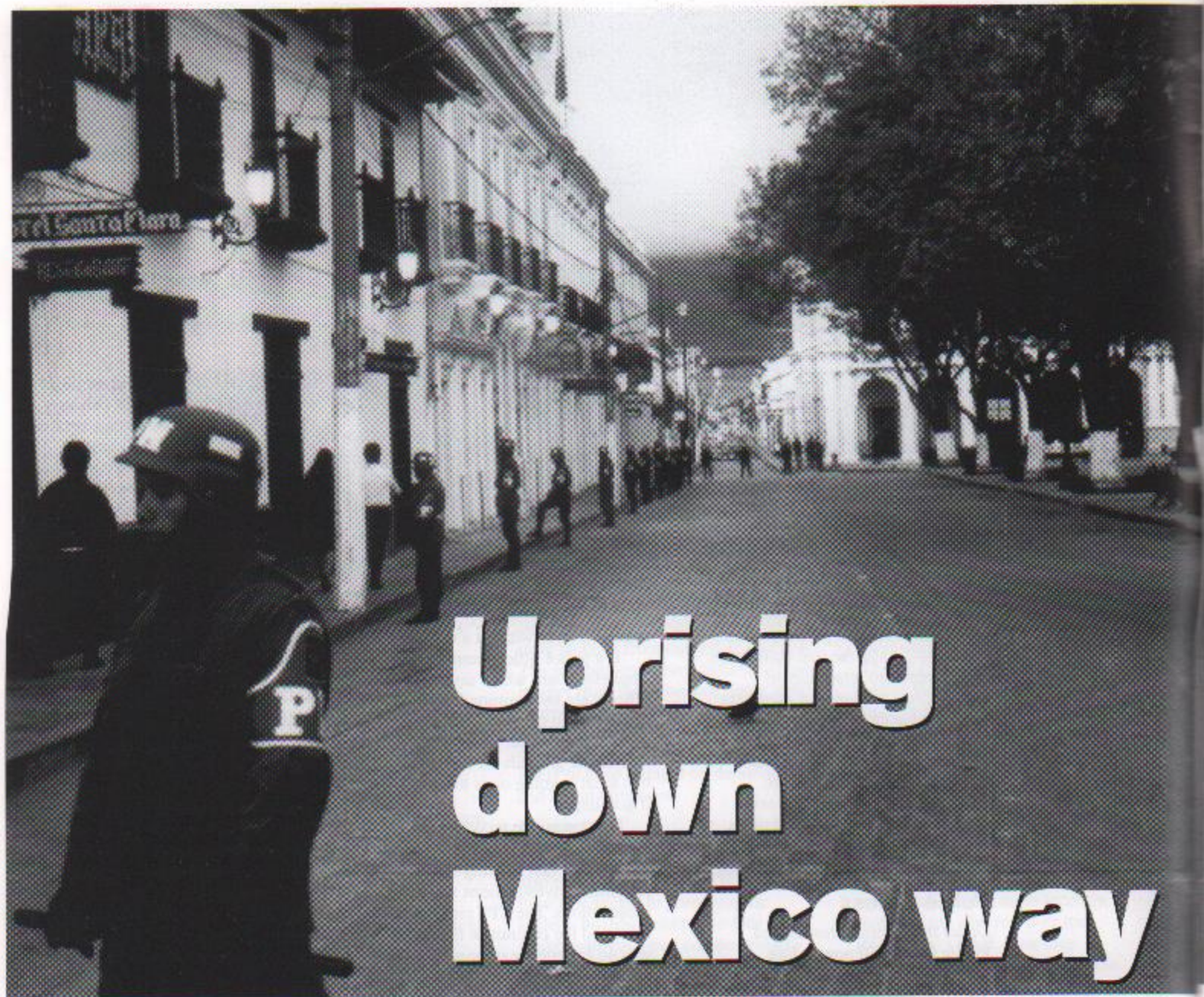
standards which go far beyond those which the law requires'. In February 1994 an industry-wide ratings system was introduced for video games. The Institute of Data Processing Management recommends 'that the use of *any* unauthorised software' on corporate or college computers be made a disciplinary offence: 'This enables immediate action without waiting for the courts to decide what is, or is not, pornographic.' Keying in an 'undesirable' image could cost you your job—or your place at college.

Computer ethics

The British Computer Society advises teachers to consider banning all disks from being brought into schools, to liaise more closely with police and to teach pupils 'computer ethics'. The British Board of Film Classification suggests that children should be compulsorily issued with an ID-card, to be produced before gaining access to all age-restricted video works.

Noting that 'much discussion on computer pornography is tainted by unsubstantiated assertion', professor Richard E Susskind from the Centre for Law, Computers and Technology at the University of Strathclyde nevertheless suggested to the select committee that 'parents introduce an "open door" policy...such that monitors always remain visible from outside the doors of rooms within which they are situated'. The *Sun* wants parents to 'make children show you what's on *every* computer disk they've got'.

The new laws and recommendations on computer porn amount to a surveillance system which allows the state to regulate the activities of every computer user and video game player. Children are to be screened by parents, teachers and police; adults will be checked by employers, local authority officials and police. The culture of conformity is coming to a terminal near you; and if cyberspace was ever the final frontier, the authorities are already in the process of closing it down. ●



Uprising down Mexico way

It's quiet in San Cristobal now, after the town's invasion by Zapatista insurgents on New Year's Day. But, as Ben Brack reports, Mexico will not be the same again

Subcomandante Marcos, leader of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), has already become a popular hero in Mexico: you'll find Marcos t-shirts, Marcos pens, Marcos socks, Marcos ashtrays and balaclavas with EZLN emblazoned across them. The 'Zapatistas' are named after Emiliano Zapata, the legendary peasant leader of the Mexican Revolution. And if a mystique surrounds the name of Zapata, a cult is fast developing around Marcos. The papers are full of psychological profiles, romantic stories and speculation about Marcos'

true identity, which remains shrouded in secrecy. You'll even find a brand of condoms called 'Alzados' (literally, 'the risen ones') with the familiar symbol of the masked man on the packet.

Even the Tzotzil Indian handicrafts for the tourists have undergone a transformation. The straw dolls in indigenous costumes now come kitted out with balaclavas and assault rifles. 'This one is called Marcos', one girl told me proudly.

Last year, the government denied the existence of guerrillas in the state of Chiapas. During the negotiations with the USA on the North American

Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) it operated a total press blackout, even as the guerrillas were taxing the local highways and firing on army patrols. But on 1 January, the very day that Nafta came into effect, the Chiapas revolt came crashing on to the world's television screens.

The Zapatista insurgents made a dramatic entrance into San Cristobal and three other major towns; Ocosingo, Altamirano and Las Margaritas. They destroyed heaps of office machinery and drifts of government papers—the symbols of years of frustration over land claims. The tourists, who had arrived with Greenpeace t-shirts and liberal concern for native peoples, thought this was taking indigenous culture too far. They fled in droves. One of the insurgents spray-painted the sarcastic message on the wall of the San Cristobal town hall: 'There are no guerrillas.'



PHOTOS: BETH BRADY

There is no mystery about the causes of the revolt. Chiapas is the poorest state in the Mexican Union. A third of its people are illiterate and the same number are severely undernourished. Almost half its households have no running water, and three quarters earn less than US\$260 a year. Diseases caused by malnutrition have increased by 641 per cent in the past decade.

Western liberals have attributed the Chiapas revolt to '500 years' of oppression of the indigenous people (as have some of the Zapatistas' own declarations). But history is a poor guide to current events. In reality, the revolt was caused by modern developments.

Many in the West romanticise the 'indigenous lifestyle' but the people of the Chiapas region want access to the same facilities, services and rights as other Mexicans. I visited the village of Chamula, where thousands of Tzotzil Indians live in extreme poverty. In the main square, hundreds of women and children sit in traditional costume in the fierce heat, waiting to sell handicrafts to the tourists for pitiful sums. The last thing they want is to stay marginalised from Mexican society. 'I don't want live in a museum', one of the women told me.

Nafta was supposed to mark Mexico's entry into the first world. Instead, as Chiapas learned, Nafta only

confirmed what international capitalism offers most Mexicans: third world status and a third world standard of living.

The immediate spur to the revolt was the economic measures which the government forced through as part of the debt rescheduling and the Nafta negotiation packages. The International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment programmes and trade policies dictated by Gatt have ruined Mexico's small farmers. The government has slashed protection of staple products like maize, wheat and beans: prices have fallen 40 per cent in the past decade. The price of coffee, a traditional crop of the small peasant, has fallen from \$140 for a 100lb to just \$60 over that period.

At the same time, the government has pushed through changes that allow the break-up and sale of communal *ejido* lands, making it easier for the big agri-businesses to move in and harder for the *ejido* farms to obtain credit and resources. The Nafta agreement with the USA will further undermine the farmers' position. Small wonder the signing of the treaty set off the Chiapas revolt.

Land has always been the biggest issue in Chiapas. The rich cattle ranchers and agri-businesses control the fertile lowlands. But up in the barren highlands of the Altos region of Chiapas, millions of poor peasants

try to scrape a subsistence in the eroded landscape. As I travelled from Tuxtla Gutierrez to San Cristobal I saw villages perched on the steep rocky escarpments above us, surrounded by abandoned and lifeless plots of dust.

The poorest of these poor farmers are the Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Chol and Tojolobal Indians. These peasants are often forced to perform unpaid labour to stay on their land. The landlord's hired guns and the local politicians—the *caciques*—routinely murder dozens of these people every year.

Since the eighties, hundreds of thousands of highland peasants have left or been expelled from their land and driven into the remote Lacandon forest. Communities from all the indigenous tribes have tried to carve out land from the forest without the benefit of roads, electricity, hospitals sanitation or machinery for ploughing the stony land. Without basic amenities, people die from diseases, injuries and even insect bites. A journey to the nearest town often takes days.

Here in the forest, the Indian communities are the bedrock of support for the Zapatistas. In this region, they control 15 000 square kilometres of territory. I visited San Miguel, the nearest guerrilla-controlled village to the town of Ocosingo—now the site of a massive Mexican army encampment.

Army control does not extend far beyond the Ocosingo checkpoints ►

(Left)
The military police
cordon around
negotiations
between the
Mexican
government
and the EZLN
(Right)
Subcomandante
Marcos talks
to the world's
press



and the main highways in this region. The trip to San Miguel took several hours over barely passable mud tracks. We reached our first Zapatista roadblock some 100 metres outside San Miguel. These guerrillas checked our credentials and searched us. They

Widespread support for the EZLN shook the government to the core

looked ill-fed and ill-equipped—one man wore a plastic orange bowl on his head to keep off the fierce heat.

People in this Tzeltal village have never voted—if they tried to visit a polling station, they'd be turned away. But every election, this Zapatista region mysteriously returns pro-government candidates. The villagers complain that they have to pay taxes on everything, including electricity that does not exist and a road that does not extend to the village. They are not allowed to build new roofs on their houses because it contravenes local environmental regulations. And they routinely sell their labour to the local landlord for around five Mexican new pesos (or \$1.50) a day.

New age revolution

A quarter of the Mexican army was despatched to Chiapas to put down the January uprising; at least 500 people were killed in heavy fighting. The real death toll will never be known. The Mexican airforce strafed and bombed Indian villages, often using US helicopters ostensibly provided to combat drug trafficking. At least 60 000 people fled their homes in terror, some even crossing the border to Guatemala—a shocking about-turn on the usual direction of refugees.

At a time when other guerrilla groups were giving up on armed resistance, the Zapatista revolt has variously been called an anachronism, the first 'post-Cold War revolution' or even the first 'New Age revolution'. What is certain is that the uprising and the reaction it caused do not fit the traditional pattern of Mexican politics.

The repression of the Zapatista movement caused uproar throughout Mexico. Opposition parties condemned the Institutional Revolutionary Party

(PRI) government. Over 100 000 people demonstrated in Mexico City. PRI ministers, who had initially blamed 'extremists' and Guatemalan guerrilla groups for the revolt, quickly adopted a more conciliatory line.

Widespread support for the EZLN shook the PRI government to the core. Where most of central America is used to coups and uprisings, Mexico has long been the most stable country in the region. Government has been monopolized by the PRI for the past 60 years, through a combination of corruption, patronage and nationalist posturing.

Popular protests

The PRI's nationalist opposition to US domination has always been more rhetorical than real. But the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement with Washington has buried the Mexican elite's anti-US credentials for good, and left the government facing a crisis of authority. The combination of economic and political turmoil explains why the Chiapas revolt won such support from many sections of Mexican society not noted for their sympathy with the Indians—and why the PRI proved unable to resist the popular protests.

The government quickly declared an amnesty, pulled its troops back to the main towns and offered negotiations. The interior minister and former Chiapas governor Patrocinio Gonzales Garrido, who had denied the existence of the guerrillas, was fired and replaced by the liberal former head of Mexico's human rights commission, Jorge Carpizo. The government initiated a programme of public works. Even president Carlos Salinas de Gortari admitted that in Chiapas, 'the opportunities aren't very tangible for many people'.

Broken promises

During the highly charged negotiations in San Cristobal's colonial cathedral, government representatives were forced through the humiliating ritual of bargaining with armed representatives of the EZLN, their indigenous features visible through the holes of their ski-masks. Outside, a cordon of military police, ringed by another circle of people from charities, churches and NGOs stood guard. Another army of journalists and politicians gathered in the hotels vacated by the tourists. After a fortnight's talks, the government offered a 34-point plan, 'Commitments for a Just Peace in Chiapas', which promised sweeping economic and legal reforms in the region.

The villagers in San Miguel were extremely proud to have 'frightened' the government. In the days following 1 January, the Mexican airforce had

strafed the village, then the army rolled in with armoured cars and small tanks. The villagers withdrew into the surrounding forest until the army moved on.

Now they wait nervously for the next developments. One Zapatista was convinced he would receive 'new land, new house', a phrase he repeated again and again in Spanish. But generally, people were extremely cynical about the government's proclaimed concessions after the long years of broken promises. A villager, beating a large pile of *frijoles* (beans) on the government-built basketball court said, 'we have a basketball court but no water or medical post, thanks to Solidarity' (the massive government charity programme started in the late eighties).

Bitter joke

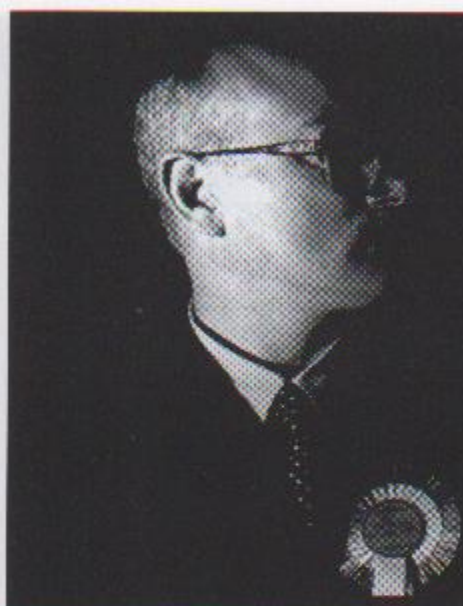
Others told me the story about the hospital the government built at the Zapatista-controlled village of Guadalupe Tepeyac, close to the Guatemalan border. Just 10 days before the rebellion, president Salinas inaugurated the hospital. But, according to the villagers, government officials removed all the hospital equipment barely minutes after the president's convoy had departed, and the water supply has never been connected. All the mechanisms used by the government to integrate the peasants, from peasants' federations to 'democracy' to government aid programmes, had become a bitter joke to the region's inhabitants.

It's not clear if the Zapatistas will accept the government's 34-point plan. If all goes well for the government, it will have laid out enough carrots to pacify the rebellious communities and create new layers of regional bureaucracy. But whatever the outcome, the revolt has severely shaken the Mexican elite.

Catalyst

The Chiapas upheaval, the PRI's abandonment of 70 years of commitment to state support for indigenous industry, and the corruption of its anti-US credentials in the Nafta deal, have combined to destroy the government's credibility. As a result, the revolt has become the catalyst for discontent in every corner of Mexican society.

Anybody who has been to Chiapas would not be surprised that the revolt took place. What is remarkable, however, is the way that a local uprising has unleashed a legitimacy crisis in the government and broken the traditional mould of Mexican politics. American tourists, meanwhile, are back on the streets of San Cristobal, this time clutching small black dolls with balaclavas.



An island race?

Evan Andrews on why some whites are voting for the British National Party in the East End of London

BNP councillor Derek Beackon

Sitting in a pub on the Isle of Dogs talking to British National Party voters, I half expected to be clubbed over the head. If the press is to be believed, BNP voters are violent thugs, responsible for every act of racial violence in the East End. But Betty, George and Richard were just common-or-garden opinionated British racists.

With the May local elections looming, the political atmosphere is hot with rumour and gossip. Everyone is talking about the BNP winning two more council seats in Tower Hamlets, east London, where it gained its first councillor last year.

Betty is in her sixties. She hadn't voted for 30 years until BNP candidate Derek Beackon came along in last September's Millwall ward by-election. She feels her vote has been vindicated by the response to his victory, and plans to vote for Beackon again. 'It's not racial', she protests, 'it's a resentment vote. I've lived on the island all my life. You got married and had children and stayed with your parents before you got your own council house. My children have been on the waiting list for five, six and seven years and these Bengalis fresh off the plane jump the queue and get brand new places with two kitchens. What about some rights for whites?', she asks, adopting the BNP slogan.

Betty has been waiting for years to get the council to do some simple repairs. Within a week of a Beackon visit, it's all sorted. Everyone has a story to tell about how miraculously the council has begun to allocate housing to whites who weeks before the election were told they didn't have enough points. 'Let's see what we get when we vote two more in', chuckles Betty.

George is a life-long 'islander'. 'This used to be docklands. We had the Jews, the Chinese—it didn't matter what colour you were, we all mixed in. But what's happening now is ridiculous. You've got Bengalis taking the new housing and we've lived here all our lives and had to wait. Don't get me wrong, I don't blame them. I'd do the same in their shoes. It's the council I blame.'

So far everyone has been on their best behaviour. Now the discussion begins to heat up. Richard is younger and bolder. 'It's not just

housing—it's a lot of things. You see them in the post office drawing cheques for £1000. They're claiming for two wives and a relative in Bangladesh.'

If you think you may have heard this somewhere else, you're right. It's the voice of plain, old-fashioned British racism. It is shocking to hear people spell out what cabinet ministers like Michael Portillo and Peter Lilley say in code, but BNP voters do not have horns and pointed tails. They express the same racist sentiments that are institutionalised in mainstream British politics.

For over two years the Anti-Nazi League and the left have been campaigning against the BNP. They have advertised and talked up the BNP to the point of expanding the fascists' influence and credibility. The ANL's self-proclaimed goal was to drive a wedge between the majority of soft racists and a minority of hardcore racists. They have achieved exactly the opposite.

In all the huffing and puffing about the BNP it is conveniently forgotten that the mainstream political parties are responsible for Beackon's election victory. They have all played the race card in local campaigning and used race as a criterion for allocating resources—especially housing.

Since the Labour administrations of the sixties, the council has kept the best houses for whites. The Liberals took over the council in the eighties, carrying on with Labour's racial housing policy and stirring up racial jealousies in the name of community politics. Meanwhile Labour, which still has a majority of councillors in the local Isle of Dogs neighbourhood office, talked up the BNP threat in an attempt to get its voters out for last September's by-election. It was a manoeuvre that blew up in Labour's face.

In their election literature, all the parties talked about prioritising housing for 'local people' and 'islanders'. Of course, there is nothing wrong with local councils housing local people; that is their job. But in the highly charged racial climate of east London, these slogans are understood as coy euphemisms for putting white people first.

The more traditional Labour councillors are carrying on the policy. Their breakaway group

from Labour, the 'East London People's Alliance' is playing the race card by saying that the council should house the 'hidden homeless'—a code word for whites on the waiting list.

Driving around the new estates on the Isle of Dogs it is clear that Bengalis have had some of the new housing abandoned by yuppies when the slump began. Since the High Court ruled that the Liberal council could not refuse to house Bengalis on the grounds that they had made themselves intentionally homeless by leaving their country of origin, Bengalis have been allocated to the Isle of Dogs. The Labour neighbourhood administration on the island has put some Bengalis into upmarket flats built in the eighties—to the outrage of local whites. They have been taught to believe that they come first; Beackon is their answer to anyone who thinks otherwise.

Instead of challenging racism head on and fighting for decent housing for all, local councillors have responded to the backlash by hiding behind token gestures and bureaucratic red tape. They have dumped Bengalis into flats with rents so high that they cannot afford furniture. What is worse they have left the Bengalis to carry the can for the frustration that local whites feel at not being housed. When feelings run high the council only makes it worse by trying to silence white islanders with bans.

When Betty and some friends decided to go to housing meetings and ask difficult questions, she was branded a racist and thrown out by council officials. When Richard got into an argument with a Bengali neighbour, a housing official reported him to the police on the grounds that he was racist. But bureaucratic bans cannot combat racist sentiments—they only consolidate the sense of grievance and allow racism to fester in private.

The council's infantile posturing in relation to Derek Beackon—cancelling meetings he is due to attend, etc—has typified the way it has treated the white population. Labour and Liberal alike have sought to shut the problem out and pretend it doesn't exist—or tried to buy off local racist feeling. Either way, the central problem of everyday, mainstream British racism has gone unchallenged. ●

What's the connection between Whitewater, the mafia and 'Back to basics'? Pat Roberts gets a handle on the scandal culture now dogging political life in Europe, America and Japan

Those who blame John Major's 'Back to basics' initiative for turning the spotlight on personal morality and flushing out high-profile sex scandals are wide of the mark. The bedroom light was flicked on some time before 'Back to basics' made it on to the autocue, as David Mellor and nearly all of the younger royals found to their cost. There is a dynamic to 'scandal politics' which runs far deeper than the latest government policy initiative.

Today scandals seem to be one of the central features of the contemporary political vocabulary throughout the world. The political classes in Japan, Italy, the United States of America and even Germany are no less immune to the disease than the British Tories.

The similarities between Whitewater in the USA, sex scandals in Britain and corruption scandals in Italy may not seem immediately obvious, and the links are certainly not drawn by most observers. Many Italian commentators find British shock-horror reports of promiscuous and sexually adventurous MPs to be a confirmation of Anglo eccentricity. In similar fashion, most British commentators smugly regard the various Italian corruption cases as illustrative of the peculiar character weakness of the Latin temperament.

In the know

But if we look beyond the specifics of each and every scandal, it is possible to see a broader pattern at work. Sex scandals are to Britain what mafia links and bribes are to Italy: different forms of moral outrage in the service of a similar dynamic.

First, take the timing of the scandals and the reaction to them. Why now? Everyone in Italy has been aware for many years that bribes were an integral part of established business practices. The well-informed understood the informal financial arrangements between business and the political classes. Only the most naive believed that the mafia was marginal to Italian public institutions.

In the same way, those in the know have long appreciated that the relationships between many members of parliament and their researchers were not always strictly professional. Anyone familiar with the Westminster lifestyle of British politicians was unlikely to have been shocked by the latest revelations of sexual infidelities.

Nor is it exactly shocking news that an American president and his spouse might have a less-than-flawless past. After all, making money on the side, giving key appointments to your friends and being able to destroy incriminating evidence are three of the reasons why somebody would go into US politics in the first place.

On the make

So why have the media and sections of public opinion suddenly become so agitated about practices which they have turned a blind eye to in the past? Why have customs and arrangements which have been around for some time become the cause of public scandals today?

The second, and related, question is this: why are scandals now so difficult to cover up? Once there was a time when politicians and influential public figures could rely on friends in high places and the media to be relatively discreet. This is no longer so. In the event of any indiscretion in the nineties, politicians had better watch out.

A brief inspection of European newspapers shows more than one promising political career coming to a premature end. Take Germany, for example. Peter Gauweiler, minister of the environment in the Christian Social Union (CSU) government of Bavaria was recently forced to step down as a result of revelations about having 'rented out' his legal practice for DM10 000 a month while in receipt of his handsome official salary. In the same week, Jutta Limbach, one of the few dynamic female Social Democratic Party politicians, had to resign as Senator of Justice in Berlin after it

was discovered that she claimed state funds to pay her hairdresser's bills.

It seems somewhat unlikely that this is the first and only time in Germany's recent history that leading politicians have been on the make. Yet it is only now that these relatively minor financial irregularities have acquired a tendency to make the headlines.

Indiscrete snogging

An important consequence of today's scandal culture is that the public now expects the worst from public figures. Americans now presume that their leaders on principle never pay the taxes of the childminders they employ. Here we expect MPs to get their leg over at any opportunity. When Hartley Booth resigned over the revelations of his indiscrete snogging with a former





Scandalous affairs of state

life-model, most of the country was surprised that he *hadn't* had sex with her.

Today's scandals, in Germany, Italy and the USA as well as in Britain, are symptoms of a widespread questioning of public institutions. The sad souls who are caught with their pants down or their fingers in the till, or the shredding machine, become the focus of society's outrage.

Political life throughout all the industrial nations appears exhausted and unfocused. It is as if governments, lacking any clear objectives or policies, are merely going through the motions of proposing initiatives. Staying in power has become an end in itself. Under these circumstances the meaning of politics has become more and more narrow. Neither government nor opposition even bothers to pretend

that significant principles are at stake in their little debates. It is not surprising that many people are cynical, bitter and ready to put the knife into those who are seen to have any responsibility for the mess in which the rest of us have to live.

Cock-ups

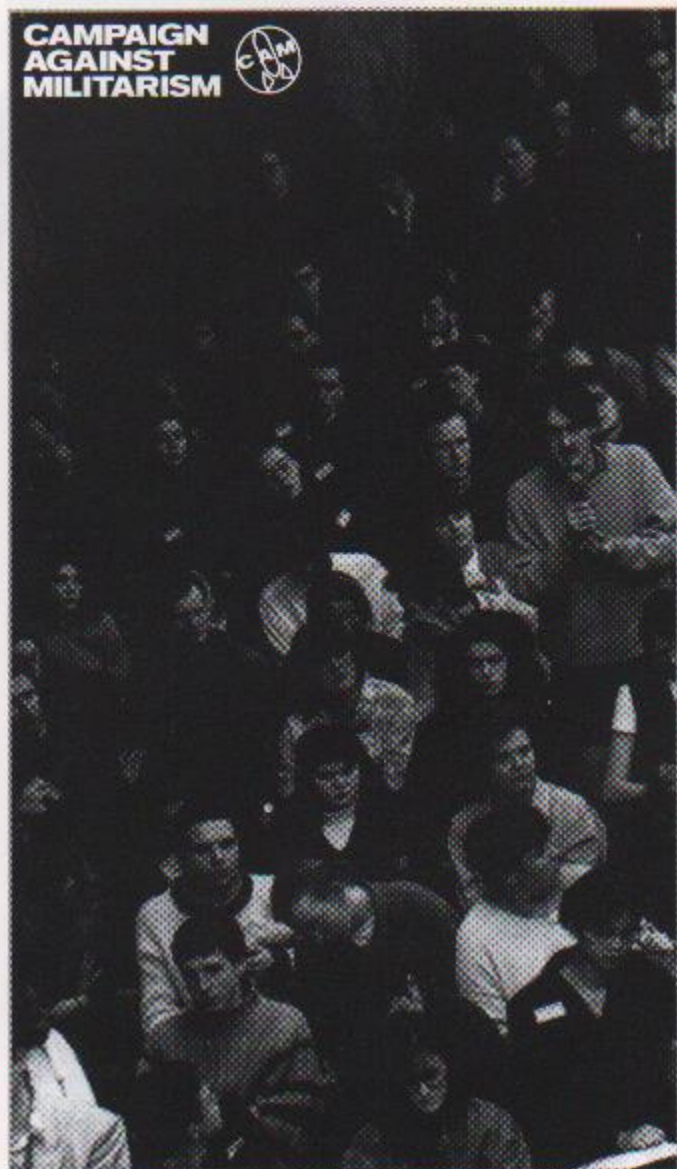
Scandal has become a kind of poor substitute for political opposition. Today, despite the catalogue of government cock-ups, it can seem difficult to criticise or oppose policies effectively. There are no strong opposition parties to provide a voice for the angry and the alienated, or to suggest political, economic or social alternatives to the mess of the modern world. And, in the absence of an alternative standpoint from which to criticise, it is difficult to criticise at

all. In these circumstances, it appears as if the only thing open to scrutiny is the individual behaviour of politicians.

It is this shift of focus from the wider domain of substantive issues to narrow concerns with the conduct of the politician that helps to throw light on the contemporary culture of scandal.

Today's epidemic of scandals is a symptom of the breach between those who are supposed to run society and those who live in it. It is a symptom of the widespread exasperation with leaders who seem incapable of conducting an affair of their own, let alone an affair of state. John Major may well decide to redefine or even drop 'Back to basics', but it won't take the heat off. When people are expecting a cock-up they are bound to find one—of one kind or another. ●

CAMPAIGN
AGAINST
MILITARISM



In March, the Campaign Against Militarism's War Drums and Peace Talks conference drew around 1500 people to the Wembley Conference Centre for a weekend of debate about the problems of Western militarism today. The highly successful event ended with the announcement of CAM's future plans. The campaign is to organise a season of initiatives to challenge the official celebrations of war around the fiftieth anniversaries of Second World War events, starting with D-Day in June 1994 and continuing until the nuking of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1995. For full details of what the Campaign Against Militarism is up to, phone Kate Margam on (071) 278 9908.

The New Ideology of Imperialism

Frank Furedi



The New Ideology of Imperialism

Frank Furedi

The New Ideology of Imperialism takes as its starting point the renewed onslaught on the countries of the Third World by the major Western powers. In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Third World has been cast in a new role as the major threat to international stability. References to environmental degradation or the menace of the international drugs trade ensure widespread public support for continuing interference in the affairs of the Third World. However, the misleading humanitarian talk of aid, development and democratisation conceals a colonial agenda that is as imperialist in intent as its nineteenth-century precursors. And, as Frank Furedi persuasively demonstrates, the fear of resurgent Third World nationalism and self-determination which fuels the new imperialism is as racist and as irrational now as it was over a century ago.

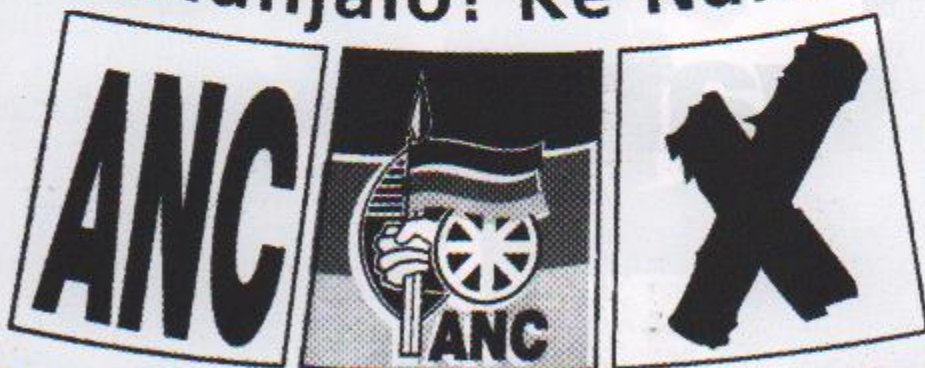
Using original archive material, Furedi's multidisciplinary study looks back to the growth of an Anglo-American imperialist ideology since the First World War and examines the shift in emphasis and approach on the part of administrators, diplomats and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic as they struggled to contain the emerging post-colonial world. In doing so, he exposes the moral and intellectual underpinnings of the new imperialism.

The New Ideology of Imperialism is priced £8.95 plus 75p postage and packing and is available from Junius Publications, BM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd.

Free South Africa?

Charles Longford on why those who want to see liberation in South Africa should not invest their hopes in April's elections

Sekunjalo! Ke Nako!



NOW IS THE TIME!

From 26-28 April, South Africa's black majority will be allowed to exercise its right to vote when the country stages its first-ever non-racial general election. For many people this represents a great victory, the culmination of decades of bloody struggle. At last, it seems, South Africa's black majority has won the most fundamental of democratic rights. Unfortunately, April's elections will not mark a victory for the black masses in South Africa, but will confirm the defeat of their struggle.

This may strike many people as an outrageous, even totally bizarre, point to make on the eve of the elections. Surely the fact that black South Africans are participating in an election which affirms their status as equal citizens of South Africa—a status forcibly denied them by apartheid—represents a major step forward? Is this not a victory against racial oppression?

Sadly, the answer is no. A black ANC-dominated government will almost certainly be elected. But the real power in South African society will remain with the very forces which were behind apartheid in the first place—the white minority capitalist class, now aided by a new black elite.

Apartheid—the forcible denial of any semblance of democratic rights to South Africa's black majority—was never simply an irrational racist system. It was the form that capitalist rule took in the past. The laws and practices of apartheid racially divided the working class, and ensured that white workers supported the regime. The white minority capitalist class was left free to exploit the source of all its wealth and power—the black working class. The white elite's power has always rested upon its ownership and control of South Africa's productive

resources. After 28 April, whatever happens in the elections, this basic class division in South African society will remain intact.

Although the new post-apartheid South Africa will have an ANC-led government, Nelson Mandela's leadership has made it clear that the old rulers of apartheid capitalism have little to fear. The ANC has renounced its state socialist policies and embraced the market economy. It has pledged not to interfere with the repressive machinery of the apartheid state. And the ANC has accepted a constitutional arrangement which institutionalises power-sharing and minority rights at every level of government, effectively abandoning its commitment to real black majority rule. Taken together, these arrangements will ensure that the white minority capitalist class continues to exercise social power.

President De Klerk's entire strategy of negotiating a settlement with the ANC has been geared towards protecting that privileged minority. His National Party is reconciled to seeing black faces in government. De Klerk's strategy has been to draw the liberation movement—or at least sections of the ANC leadership—into a relationship with the state. By rewarding moderation while brutally cracking down on those unwilling to compromise, De Klerk has succeeded in moderating the ANC to the point where it dropped all talk of fundamental economic and social change, and has even abandoned black majority rule, the democratic principle at the heart of the liberation struggle.

It is important to point out just how far the ANC has retreated from its principles. In 1969 the ANC conference in exile at Morogoro, Tanzania, adopted the document 'Forward to

freedom: strategy and tactics of the African National Congress'. The 'Morogoro Declaration' signalled the ANC's intention to be a liberation movement committed to mobilising the black masses and overthrowing the apartheid regime. In appealing to the black working class, the document spelled out that liberation meant more than electing a black government: 'to allow the existing economic forces to retain their interests intact is to feed the root of racial supremacy and does not even represent the shadow of liberation'. It is a measure of De Klerk's success and the ANC's complicity that even such a 'shadow' as power-sharing should now be celebrated as the achievement of black liberation.

Of course, compromises are sometimes necessary. But the fact that the ANC is presenting its compromise as a victory is a betrayal of the black masses and all the sacrifices they have endured—sacrifices which have allowed the ANC leaders to get where they are today. The ANC leadership has settled its differences with the apartheid regime, and is determined to reap the benefits of its compromise which will allow a black elite access to political power and economic privilege. What the black masses are poised to discover is that it will not be apartheid legislation that confines them to their squalid townships in future, but market forces and an elected black government.

As prudent converts to the free market, the ANC envisages a scenario in which at most 500 000 non-agricultural jobs will be created by a public sector investment programme. When set against South Africa's estimated 40-50 percent unemployment rate, and the total of 17m living below the breadline, it is clear how an ANC election victory will certainly 'not even represent the shadow of liberation'.

April's elections will not result in peace and freedom for the majority in South Africa. While De Klerk and Mandela warn about the dangers posed by the white and black right, it is the black masses who represent the real long-term threat to their envisaged cosy relationship. The likely shape of things to come was shown by events in the 'homeland' of Bophuthatswana in March.

In Bophuthatswana, it was the actions of the black masses that finally deposed the apartheid stooge Lucas Mangope. While the world's press concentrated on the execution of three white Afrikaner 'commandos' by a black policeman, they largely missed the critical point. After the rag-tag army of white supremacists had been routed, De Klerk and Mandela took a joint decision to send in the South African Defence Force to restore order, so ensuring that mass action was curbed and the people were kept off the streets. The ANC's willingness to use the armed forces of the apartheid state to contain the black masses gave a glimpse of what we can expect from the post-election government. For the black majority, the new South Africa is set to be a land of austerity drives and law-and-order clampdowns.

In South Africa from 26-28 April, the black majority will have the freedom to vote for the first time. However, they will not be voting for liberation, but for a system which will keep them at the bottom of the pile in the factories, mines, farms and townships of apartheid capitalism. ●

Just back from Sarajevo where she was monitoring what the British defence secretary called the 'creeping ceasefire', Joan Phillips reports on the creeping colonialism of the United Nations

Where peace means war



A few months ago Wayne Atkins of No1 Company of the Coldstream Guards in Vitez was hoping to be sent home from Bosnia. Now he's hoping that his old mate Darren Atkins of the newly arrived 1st Battalion of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment will soon be joining him for an off-duty drink in Split.

Only six weeks after the Western powers were threatening to withdraw their forces from Bosnia, why did they suddenly decide to send more troops there?

It is taken for granted that the Western U-turn on troop deployment is the result of what is called in UN-speak 'the reality of change' (or even 'the change of reality') on the ground in Bosnia. The consensus seems to be that peace has broken out and more UN troops are needed to police the ceasefire.

Strangely nobody has asked the obvious—why more troops rather than fewer are needed if peace is really

breaking out? It seems to be accepted without question that peace requires the presence of more people whose business is war.

Why is it that every time another ceasefire is agreed in Bosnia the UN commander issues a demand for more soldiers? As I stood watching UN tanks trundling into Sarajevo after the ceasefire in February, I wondered how long it would be before more would follow. Within weeks, the Western powers were sending more military firepower to Bosnia.

All this made me think long and hard about what is really happening on the ground in Bosnia and what Western governments are responding to. I came to the conclusion that recent initiatives have got very little to do with what is happening in Bosnia and a lot more to do with what is happening in the West.

Look at the way the British government changed its policy on Bosnia three times in the space of three months. In January, John Major's

government was debating whether to withdraw its forces from Bosnia. By February, the government had ruled out a withdrawal, but set its face against any deeper military entanglement. In March, Britain decided to despatch 900 of the Duke of Wellington's men to Bosnia.

The fact that Britain, which has no desire to get sucked in militarily in Bosnia, has ended up despatching more troops there reveals the inexorable pressures driving all the Western powers to militarise their foreign policy. Anybody who has been following the sad fortunes of the British prime minister in recent months will know what pressures I am referring to.

Whatever authority John Major might once have had is being buried beneath the column inches devoted to his mismanagement of the economic slump, his government's propensity for corruption and his ministers' apparent inability to see a sex scandal when it is staring them in the face.



PHOTO: SIMON NORRIS

UN troops from the 4th French battalion lord it over Serbian soldiers at Vidikovac

Everything Major touches, from the economic 'recovery' to education reforms, turns to disaster. Every attempt he makes to restore the government's credibility, from 'Back to basics' to the law-and-order crusade, blows up in his face. Major desperately needs something that can boost his authority. Unable to find any quick fix at home, he is increasingly driven to look abroad for salvation. And who better than a military man like General Michael Rose, the British commander of UN forces in Bosnia, to play the role of saviour. Who knows, he may even be able to restore the iron image that used to be associated with the British premiership, at a time when the present incumbent appears to have about as much backbone as a banana.

And Major is not the only Western leader who could do with a backbone-boosting injection from Bosnia. All the great powers are using the war in Bosnia as a way of recouping abroad the moral authority

which they have lost at home. Even the Japanese, in the person of Yasushi Akashi, the UN special envoy in Bosnia, are getting in on the game so far monopolised by the Americans, Germans, French and British.

Assailed by slump, scandals and sleaze, the governments of the West are experiencing a political crisis. They evidently find it easier to walk tall by carrying a big stick in Bosnia than by making policy in London, Washington, Paris or Bonn.

John Major, Bill Clinton, Edouard Balladur and Helmut Kohl are driven to intervene in Bosnia not only by a desire to boost their domestic ratings. They are also intervening in order to improve their international standing at the expense of their rivals. By taking the initiative on Bosnia, Western politicians are seeking to show the rest of the world who's boss, and staking a claim to global influence.

Most of the initiatives taken in Bosnia are inspired by national chauvinism. So when General Rose

demands more peacekeeping troops in Bosnia, he makes a point of saying that British peacekeeping troops are best. As one of his subordinates let slip to the *Daily Telegraph*, the British are second to none at colonial warfare:

'I know this sounds nationalistic, but British troops so outclass those of several other nations here that they sometimes do the others' work for them. With our colonial experience, and especially Northern Ireland, a battalion of British infantry is worth two or three from some other nations.' (3 March 1994)

What does it matter if John Major cannot tie his shoelaces, when the Duke of Wellington's boys can show off in their Saxon armoured personnel carriers and show the natives of Bosnia a trick or two that they picked up in Belfast from behind the barrel of a 7.62mm machine gun?

This need to bolster the authority of Western leaders by banging the ▶



national drum is what lies behind the latest spate of initiatives on Bosnia. The war has now entered a new phase, in which a dynamic towards more intervention is being fuelled above all by the legitimacy crises afflicting every Western government.

The moment it was given authority over heavy weapons, the UN effectively became a colonial army of occupation

The Nato ultimatum to the Serbs to withdraw their weapons from around Sarajevo or be bombed had nothing to do with what was happening on the ground in Bosnia. Indeed, if they had really reacted to something in Bosnia, the Nato powers might have issued an ultimatum to the Croats and Muslims in central Bosnia, where for the past year the war has been raging much more fiercely than in Sarajevo. But instead, the atrocity in Sarajevo's marketplace on 5 February became the pretext the Western powers were looking for to get tough with the Serbs by threatening air-strikes.

In the days before the expiry of the Nato ultimatum, Sarajevo was even more of a media circus than usual. As the deadline came and went, journalists were still queuing for a UN flight into Sarajevo. Only this time, the pack didn't hole up in the Holiday Inn, but headed off for the hills above the city, where they hovered like vultures waiting for the bombs to fall on the Bosnian Serb positions.

Staged atrocity?

One crew never got near the mountains. CNN's Christiane Amanpour tried to beg, bribe and bully the Serbs into letting her come to Pale. But they wouldn't let her past the checkpoint at Lukavica. CNN had not endeared itself to the Bosnian Serbs with its biased reporting over the past two years. But the final straw was its live coverage of the marketplace carnage which automatically assumed that the Serbs were to blame.

There is much circumstantial evidence to suggest that the atrocity was stage-managed. There are questions about whether a single 120mm mortar shell could kill and maim so many (265); about the fact that so many of the injuries were below the waist, unusual for a mortar-explosion; about the relative lack of shrapnel wounds, also unusual for victims of a mortar shell; about the stiffness of some of the corpses at the scene.

There are questions, too, about the refusal of the UN to interview and examine all the survivors of the explosion; about the UN's refusal to make an assessment of the bomb based on an analysis of the fragments; and about the nature of the crater from which prying eyes were kept by a 24-hour armed guard.

Now it appears that UN officials had their doubts from the start about blaming the Serbs. While I was in Bosnia there was a lot of furtive whispering among UN officials about atrocities being stage-managed to secure military intervention. And yet nobody objected to the way the Nato powers singled out the Serbs as the villains of the piece to justify their bombing threat. It now seems likely that a UN report blaming Muslim forces for the marketplace explosion has been suppressed, as reported by the French TV channel France One, but ignored by every British newspaper except the *Times*.

'The Russians are coming!'

The journalists who covered the marketplace attack didn't ask any probing questions about what had happened. They were too busy hunting for Serbian heavy weapons in the hills above Sarajevo. It is not hard to understand how Nato sold its ultimatum to these people, who seem to have abandoned their critical faculties. What was not so easy to grasp at first was how the hell the UN was going to sell the Nato deal to the Serbs. In the end, the Russians did it for them.

Back in 1989, when I watched the Berlin Wall come down, I would never have imagined that within five years I'd be standing in an Eastern European country watching hundreds of people shouting 'The Russians are coming!' with rapture on their faces. But that's what I saw on the bridge in Pale, watching the Russian UN tanks roll down the road to Sarajevo.

The Serbs would never have trusted the other UN forces to police the front lines and oversee the withdrawal of their heavy weapons. They remember how French UN troops ran away in January 1993, when heavily armed Croatian forces invaded Serbian villages in the UN-protected areas in Krajina after Serbian soldiers had handed over their guns to the UN. But they were happy to hand over their guns once the Russians had arrived.

In fact, the Russians were playing a similar game to everybody else. Boris Yeltsin has just as big an authority problem as John Major. By seizing the initiative from the Nato powers in Bosnia, he hoped to show his people that Russia could still call the shots. By appearing to come to the rescue of the Serbs, Russia's old allies, Yeltsin was also saying that he would

not abandon his countrymen outside Russia's borders. And he was sending a signal to the Nato powers that Russia is not a two-bit country like Bulgaria which the Americans can push around, but a power with its own strategic interests in the region.

Bill Clinton didn't like Boris Yeltsin stealing the limelight, and showed his displeasure with Moscow by shooting down four Serbian planes over Banja Luka. Yet the intervention of the Russians paved the way for the Americans to broker a Washington agreement between the Bosnian Croats and Muslims. Indeed, without the Russians it is questionable whether the events of the past few months would have provided such a boost for the West.

UN checkpoints

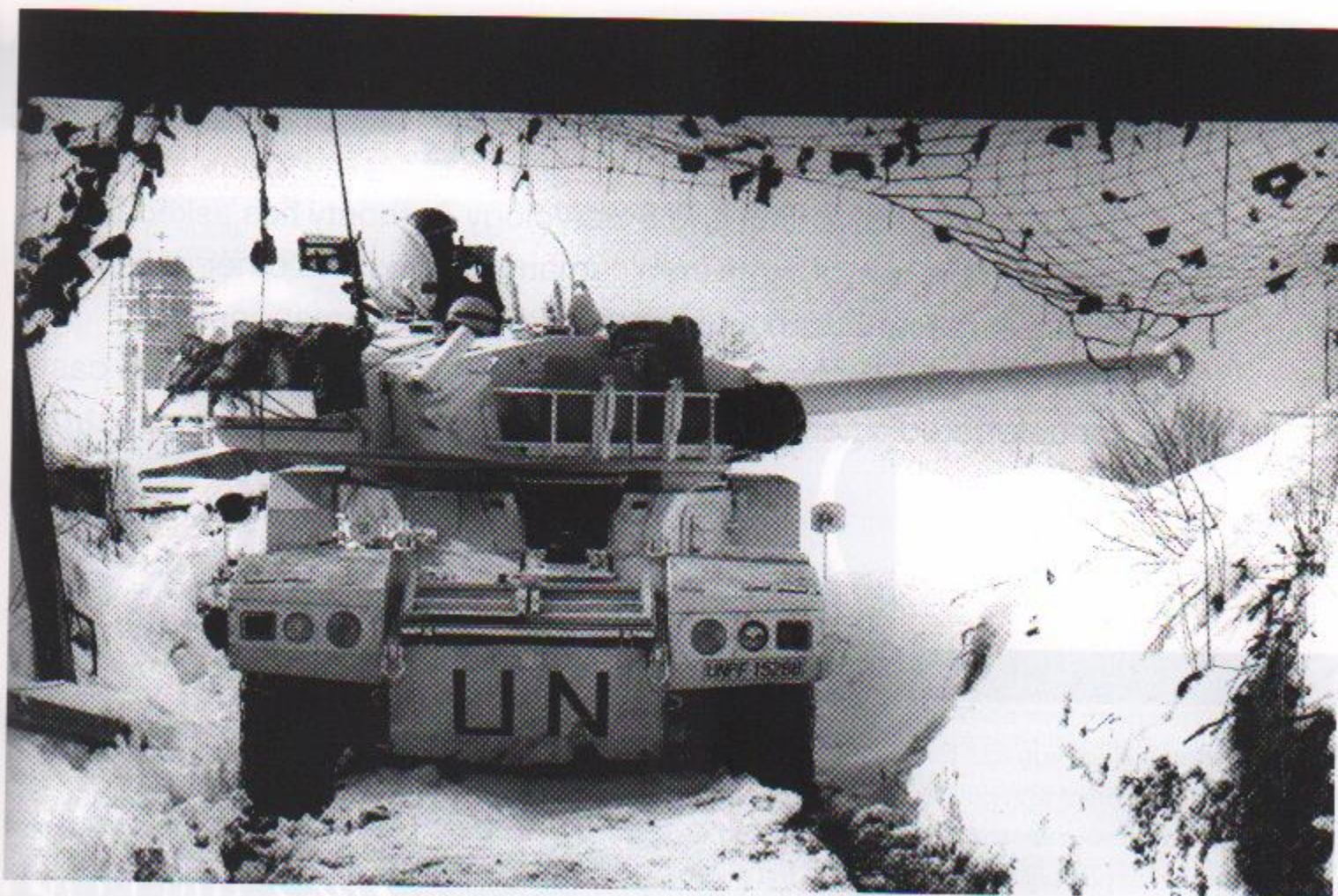
On the one hand, events have boosted the moral authority of Western governments at home. It is now accepted without question by most people that their governments have the moral right and indeed a duty to impose a peace settlement on the warring factions in Bosnia at the point of a gun. The fact that nobody raised an eyebrow when Nato jets blasted four Serbian planes out of the skies over Bosnia shows how successful Western governments have been in getting everybody to accept that they are in Bosnia to do good, even if doing good has been reinterpreted to mean carrying out an act of war in somebody else's country.

On the other hand, the events of recent months have strengthened the military authority of Western forces in Bosnia. The UN's writ now runs in places where it never ran before. I never used to bother getting an Unprofor press card when I went to Croatia or Bosnia because I knew I'd never be asked for it. The UN had its own checkpoints and its bases. But it was only pretending to be in control. The people who really controlled the roads, even in what were meant to be UN-protected areas, were the local armies.

Power games

Now the UN is no longer a pretend army. Within days of the ceasefire in Sarajevo, it was possible to detect a new swaggering arrogance about the UN. This was summed up for me by the 4th French battalion troops at Vidikovac on Mount Trebevic, who don't bother to conceal their contempt for the ragtag Serbian and Muslim soldiers whose front lines they have to police.

The moment it was given the authority to take control of Serbian, Muslim and Croatian heavy weapons, the UN effectively became a colonial army of occupation. UN troops haven't just been taking control of heavy



United Nations tanks take Serbian positions at Lukavica

weapons, front lines and military checkpoints. They are starting to take control of everything and starting to take more liberties. Not only are the UN forces dictating who can and can't fight, they are saying who can go where, and when; not only are they policing the front lines, they are deciding how cities like Sarajevo will be divided; not only are they turning into roadhogs, they are taking over the whole country.

This is seen as good news by most people in the West. But it's not good news for anybody in Bosnia. Everybody is talking about 'the best chance of peace for two years'. But there has been no peace in Bosnia for two years because Western intervention has kept the war going. And there won't be any peace for another two years if the Western powers have anything to do with it.

Only the peoples of Bosnia are capable of working out an equitable solution to this war. Outside interventions of the sort we have seen for two years cannot bring peace because they are motivated by the cynical self-interest of the great powers who are playing their own games in Bosnia. The upshot of this process so far has been to entrench divisions and prolong the war.

It is hard to take the latest US initiative seriously or to imagine that

its consequences will be any different. The Washington accord envisages a federation of Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims linked with Croatia through a confederate structure. It is a 'peace' deal imposed with the threat of war. The Bosnian Serbs have been told that if they do not accept the Washington agreement and join the federation they will be isolated as 'the black hole of Europe'.

Creeping colonialism

Any deal being brokered by the Western powers will inevitably create new divisions among the warring parties in Bosnia. It is already apparent that the Washington agreement has altered the balance of forces in the war and laid the basis for new conflicts. The truce imposed between the Croats and Muslims strengthens the ability of their respective armies to go on the offensive against the Serbs. This immediately provoked the Serbs to head off any attack by going on the offensive themselves.

Predictably, the Serbs, left out of the latest Western deal, have been lashing out in an attempt to scupper the Washington accord. A renewed offensive against Muslim towns has been accompanied by attacks on UN personnel and planes and by the blocking of aid routes which have reopened in central Bosnia since the

Croat-Muslim ceasefire. In other words, the US intervention has managed to make the Serbs start fighting again, after they had been suing for peace for the previous six months.

Even if the Western-imposed peace deal did last, the implications of accepting it are very dangerous. It means accepting the right of outsiders to decide the fate of the peoples of Bosnia; accepting the right of Western governments to redraw the borders of somebody else's country; accepting their right to tell people in the Balkans how to behave, at the point of an air-strike.

In the old days, that used to be called colonialism. Now it's called a peacekeeping operation. In the old days, the people who used to enforce colonial rule were called soldiers. Nowadays everybody calls them 'peacekeepers'. But why should men whose profession is killing suddenly become social workers because they happen to be in Bosnia and not Belfast? We should start to call things by their proper names again. After all, if we let them get away with their doublespeak in Bosnia, what's to stop them doing the same thing in Sudan or Palestine or anywhere? I'm not sure what Malcolm Rifkind was talking about when he described what's going on in Bosnia as a 'creeping ceasefire'. Creeping colonialism more like. ●

No controls on inf

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has asked for views on the use of eggs from human embryos and other ovarian tissue in research and infertility treatment. In his response to the HFEA, *Living Marxism* science editor John Gillott puts the case for unfettered scientific progress, and against authoritarian controls

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) was set up by parliament to regulate the provision of certain fertility treatments and any research involving human embryos. In a public consultation document issued in January, the HFEA asks for responses to eight questions on the use of donated ovarian tissue in embryo research and assisted conception.

- a Should ways be sought of increasing the supply of eggs for use in research and infertility treatment? If so, what ways can be suggested?
- b Should ovarian tissue from live donors be used in research?
- c Should eggs or ovarian tissue from cadavers be used in research?
- d Should eggs or ovarian tissue from fetuses be used in research?
- e Should ovarian tissue from live donors be used in treatment?
- f Should eggs or ovarian tissue from cadavers be used in treatment?
- g Should eggs or ovarian tissue from fetuses be used in treatment?
- h If you think that eggs or ovarian tissue from any of these sources should be allowed to be used in treatment or research, whose consent should be required, when should it be given, and in what form? Should there be any difference in the consents required for eggs or tissue used for research, and eggs or tissue used for treatment?

Leaving aside for the moment the issue of consent, the answer to the first seven questions must be a resounding yes. This is the only answer consistent with human welfare and scientific advance.

There are around 600 000 infertile women in Britain, and the waiting time for fertility treatment can be as long as three years. This is a cause of much human misery and frustration. In part the delays are caused by a shortage of donated eggs for assisted conception. The use of eggs from dead bodies and fetuses would make a significant difference to many women. The donation of ovarian tissue, rather than simply eggs, would, if the graft was successful, greatly reduce the amount of treatment an infertile woman need undergo in order to have children.

Much more research is needed to improve the efficiency of fertility treatment. Success rates vary from zero to over 30 per cent. If research on eggs and ovarian tissue from any source can help to improve success rates, it would make a significant difference to many people.

Research using donated ovarian tissue could also widen knowledge of issues that directly impinge on the lives of millions of people, such as the development of congenital diseases, the causes of miscarriages, and the timing of the menopause. Research could also lead to new methods of contraception, and new methods of detecting fetal abnormalities.

Research on embryonic development and research using fetal material are central to many other areas of medicine and science—cancer research and treatments for degenerative disorders to name but two. Even complete spinal breaks may one day be repaired using fetal material. While these issues fall outside the remit of the HFEA's consultation, they need to be brought into the discussion so that the full range of benefits deriving from research using donated ovarian and fetal material becomes more widely known.

Unfortunately, little has been heard of the advantages of using donated tissue in the debate so far. Instead, critics who stress the public 'yuk

fertility treatment

HUMAN
FERTILISATION



EMBRYOLOGY
AUTHORITY



factor' that the use of fetal eggs arouses have received most attention. The HFEA is in part responsible for this.

The HFEA is preoccupied with what it calls the 'ethical' issues involved in fertility treatment. For women seeking treatment, however, a whole host of other questions are crucial. Fertility treatment is a lottery. Access to it depends on where you live, how much money you have, and whether a local GP or hospital decides that you have the right 'lifestyle'. Providing decent treatment, open to all, ought to be the priority.

Before this consultation began, the HFEA chose to second guess public opinion when it declared that 'the public...may feel an instinctive repugnance to the use of ovarian tissue from these sources for research or fertility treatment'. And the HFEA's enthusiasm to highlight what it sees as 'new and difficult moral dilemmas' has only helped sow confusion. In fact, the moral issues are quite straightforward.

The HFEA's biggest worry is the effect on a child of finding out that he was born from an egg taken from a fetus. HFEA member Richard Holloway, the episcopalian Bishop of Edinburgh, and members of parliament David Alton and Dame Jill Knight argue that such a child would

be psychologically disturbed.

There was a similar outcry when *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF) techniques were developed. Yet today, it is widely recognised that children born through IVF are generally as well-adjusted as any other children. Perhaps more so, because their parents went to such trouble to have them. The same may well hold for children born using fetal eggs.

Much more damage will be caused to a child by the reaction of society to him than by the biological facts of his birth. In the past, generations of children born outside marriage had their lives blighted by being branded as 'bastards'. If religious and conservative critics succeed in attaching similar social stigma to children born using donated eggs and tissue, they will be responsible if those children turn out to be disturbed.

Some commentators have raised broader fears about the transfer of germ cells. Apparently, such transfers threaten to undermine the human soul and put us on a slippery slope leading to a totalitarian Brave New World complete with 'designer babies'.

This is nonsense. The transfer of eggs from one woman to another has already taken place without society falling apart or soulless monsters being born. The transfer from cadaver and fetus to a woman is no different.

All that women seeking infertility treatment today want is the possibility of a healthy child. However, if in the distant future 'designer babies' become possible, society may well decide that a little design is no bad thing. After all, the blind working of chance mutation and natural selection has given us cystic fibrosis and many other diseases.

The HFEA believes the issue of consent to be especially problematic. In fact, the transfer of ovarian tissue and eggs raises no new problems as far as consent is concerned. If existing practice is followed, the family of the diseased would give consent in the case of cadavers. And, treating a fetus as a part of the body tissue of a woman, she would give consent to the use of the aborted fetus. Alternatively, consent could be handed over to the relevant authorities. Either way, the pros and cons are not specific to ovarian tissue donation.

Access to treatment is the only serious policy issue arising from the new techniques. In fertility treatment, as in many other areas today, the rights of the individual are increasingly being abrogated by a plethora of state and para-state bodies.

In France, IVF is restricted to sterile heterosexual couples in a 'stable union'. In many clinics in Britain, a couple must satisfy a whole host of 'lifestyle' conditions in order to receive treatment. Health secretary Virginia Bottomley has said that 'women do not have the right to have a child; the child has the right to a suitable home'.

All of these policies and arguments are authoritarian impositions and should be rejected. Who is to judge what 'suitable' means? The logic of these measures would be Mrs Bottomley and her health quangos taking control over the procreative activity of fertile women.

Neither doctors, fertility clinics, nor the state should be able to decide who can and cannot have children. Individuals must be free to make their own decisions.

Carry on, Doctor



Vicky Richardson talked to Dr Roger Gosden of Edinburgh University Medical School, whose research into infertility treatments has made him a target for the new scare about using eggs and ovarian tissue from fetuses

When I turned up at Edinburgh University Medical School to meet Dr Roger Gosden, I half expected him to be working in a laboratory surrounded by bottled fetuses. Instead I found him in a small office sitting next to a three-foot high pile of medical students' essays.

Gosden's research on fetal ovarian tissue transplantation has plunged him unwittingly into a storm of controversy. His critics give us the impression that scientists like Gosden are up to no good, meddling with nature and out of control. He has received letters saying 'you should be exterminated', and anti-abortion crusader David Alton MP has called his research 'a macabre and gruesome development' that kills babies in the womb.

In reality Dr Gosden is the deputy head of a physiology department who devotes himself to research that will one day enable infertile women to have children, and to marking his students' essays. He says his guiding principle is compassion for those who are suffering; not exactly my idea of Dr Frankenstein.

For Gosden, there is an irony in the furore that now suddenly surrounds his work. For one thing, contrary to the impression given by much of the media, the transplantation of fetal tissue is not new. As Gosden explained, pointing to a photocopy of a paper published in 1945 called 'Offspring from unborn mothers', 'we've known for a long time that a fetal graft is possible, but it's only in recent years since reproductive technologies have become a focus of public attention that people realise that immense progress can be made'.

On the other hand, technology which could enable scientists to grow up the eggs from aborted fetuses for use in assisted conception is still some years off, despite the recent media furore about it. Gosden reckons that it will be 10 or 20 years before this is possible. The coverage of the issue has been out of all proportion to the actual stage of the technology, an exercise in media scaremongering rather than serious scientific debate.

Fetal eggs

If scientists were able to grow up fetus eggs in culture, or to transplant fetal ovarian tissue, it would revolutionise infertility treatment, which at present relies on taking mature eggs from the ovaries of donor women. Using the eggs of aborted fetuses would be one way of solving the problem of egg shortage, which is now a major barrier to women wanting *in vitro* fertilisation. The problem is that nobody yet knows how to mature human eggs outside of the ovary. Gosden's team have successfully matured and fertilised the eggs of mice, pigs and sheep, but, although theoretically possible, it's more difficult to do this with human eggs. For Gosden, work in this field is very much at the pioneering stage.

Gosden keeps an open mind as to what may be possible, and he hopes that simply by studying the eggs he could make all kinds of discoveries. For instance, doctors will soon know much more about the causes of early ovarian failure, as well as being able to determine exactly when menopause will occur. This would allow women to plan ahead, knowing how many fertile years they had left. At the moment, nobody knows exactly what effect

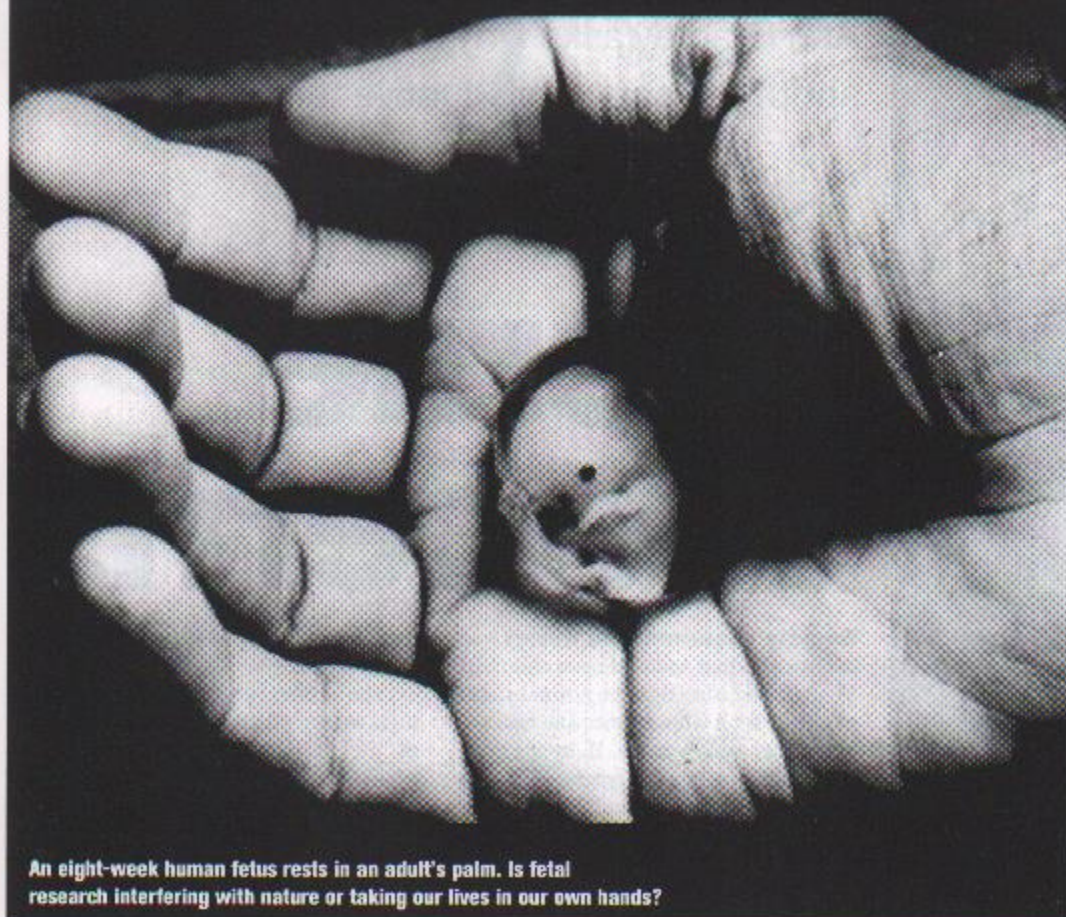
drugs, alcohol and tobacco have on fertility. Gosden suspects that smoking kills the egg cells, but he will be able to investigate this by growing eggs. Other spin-offs from the research might be to better understand the causes of infertility, birth defects and some forms of cancer.

If this work is halted by the government or its regulatory body, as many people now hope it will be, scientists will remain ignorant about the early stage of life when many birth defects occur. Gosden feels strongly that research must go ahead. 'Some people would like to proscribe research in this area and say leave everything to nature. To me this is a vacuous argument. If we don't make discoveries here, they will be made somewhere else. It's not like the *Satanic Verses*. If Salman Rushdie had not been born, nobody would have written the book. But the book of life is there for anybody to read, provided they have the scientific tools.'

Culture-grown eggs

Despite the burst of publicity, Dr Gosden and his team of six are currently not using fetal tissue at all. He is working instead with bits of ovaries from mice, pigs and sheep. Gosden is wary of raising people's hopes too high, and stresses that the aim of growing up eggs is a long-term one. On the other hand, his current work, grafting ovarian tissue, could come on stream much faster as a way of radically improving infertility treatment.

At present infertility treatment is a lottery. Success rates for *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF) range from around 30 per cent in the best places to nil in the worst. For every cycle of IVF,



An eight-week human fetus rests in an adult's palm. Is fetal research interfering with nature or taking our lives in our own hands?

the woman has to undergo an involved process of having her ovaries shut down, and then artificially stimulated, by hormones to produce several eggs instead of just the one that would be produced in the normal cycle. The eggs, usually around a dozen, are then extracted surgically, mixed with sperm and, if fertilisation takes place, up to three embryos are placed in her womb. The procedure is extremely expensive (around £2000), time consuming and uncomfortable. If the cycle fails, the whole procedure involving hormone injections, ovary scanning and egg removal has to be repeated.

Gosden is working on a technique where instead of stimulating a woman's ovaries to ripen a separate batch of eggs for every cycle of IVF, a snippet of ovary containing hundreds of unripened eggs could be removed from the woman. A supply of eggs could then be extracted and ripened outside the body. These could be fertilised and placed in the womb as in conventional treatment. The rest of the immature eggs, or maybe the ovarian tissue itself, could be frozen and stored for future cycles of treatment as necessary. This would allow the woman to undergo repeat cycles of IVF without the repeated hormone treatment and egg extractions.

If this became possible it would also probably vastly increase the supply of donated eggs. Donating a small section of ovary would be more

acceptable to many women than undergoing the hormone treatment and egg extraction procedures that donors suffer today. However, before this can be done, scientists have to discover how to ripen human eggs in culture, and freezing techniques will have to be improved.

Like a pancreas

Another exciting area of Gosden's work involves the grafting of donated ovarian tissue from one woman to another. An ovarian graft would be a complete treatment for infertility, enabling a woman to produce both eggs and hormones on a monthly basis. Gosden uses the analogy of replacing the pancreas, thereby restoring two functions at once—production of hormones and digestive juices. The recipient of the ovarian graft would be as well-equipped to conceive as any other woman, using the normal (if rather inefficient) methods of human reproduction. The ovarian grafting technique would be of particular benefit to Turner's Syndrome sufferers, who are born infertile. Both of the techniques would also benefit cancer sufferers whose treatment often renders them infertile. If Gosden's work is successful, cancer patients could have eggs or sections of their ovaries removed before treatment, which could then be replaced afterwards.

There is nothing to suggest that grafted ovarian tissue is treated as particularly foreign by another body.

In fact it is probably accepted more readily than major organs like the heart. If ovarian grafts were made possible, the donors would ideally need to be young because that is when most eggs are available. Which means that it would make logical sense to use fetal tissue. At present the tissue from 200 000 abortions is discarded every year in Britain; some of it could be used to help the thousands of infertile women who want babies.

With both of the techniques which Dr Gosden is working on, the priority today is for much more research. So far, the main effect of the recent controversy on Gosden's work has been the time he has lost doing interviews. But the consequences for scientists like him could be far more serious if the scare about the use of fetal material and other ovarian tissue takes hold.

Reversing menopause

Dr Gosden himself stopped work on fetal tissue some time ago, because the ideas for freezing ovary snippets came along and seemed to have more immediate benefits. However, it would be a disaster in the longer run if research and therapy using fetal tissue was to be banned.

One good reason for using this tissue is revealed by science itself. The older women get, the fewer eggs they have, so that in many respects fetuses make the best donors. Think of the ovaries as being like an hour glass that is full at birth, with the sand running through, until at menopause the top chamber is empty. We should not let the fear of scientific progress and of interfering with nature which pervades society today stand in the way of people like Roger Gosden making it possible to reverse the process. ●



Ann Bradley asks why there is so much fuss about the new reproductive technologies

Sterile concerns

Society assumes that women want to have children and will have children. Motherhood is seen as the normal state of affairs for a woman once she has passed her mid-twenties. If, by the time you're 40, you haven't produced, you are seen as pitiful or peculiar. Pitiful if you can't breed, peculiar if you won't.

Any women's magazine you care to pick up assumes that a family life will be on your agenda at some time. Those aimed at a lesbian readership are the only exceptions—and babies are included among the accessories in some of these. Younger women's glossies may share their readers' desire to remain childless at present but often carry articles on 'safeguarding your fertility for the future'.

Given the consensus that 'happy families' are where it's at, you would think that any breakthrough in the treatment of infertility, or any new method of assisted conception would be welcomed without equivocation. After all, a couple who want to be parents are aspiring to fulfil a social norm and these treatments help meet the aspiration.

In reality, breakthroughs in infertility and assisted conception give the authorities cause for at least as much consternation as celebration. Each new development in this field provokes a debate on whether it is morally, ethically and legally acceptable in a way that does not happen with other forms of medical treatment.

If a woman suffers liver failure it is assumed that her illness should be treated and her life restored to normal. The situation is quite unambiguous and the treatment is seen as a clinical matter between her and her doctor. However, if she suffers ovarian failure, blocked fallopian tubes or any other condition which renders her infertile it is an issue of broader social concern. Her treatment immediately comes under moral, ethical and legal scrutiny. Why? What is it about fertility treatments that makes

them so special and their regulation so essential?

The answer is often thought to lie in their unique relationship to the creation of 'life', but this is not very convincing. Many other medical treatments and procedures intervene on the very borderline of life and death. Yet the moral and ethical controversies which once surrounded such things as general anaesthetics, blood transfusion and heart transplants have faded away. With the exception of a few religious eccentrics, nobody now suggests that it is morally wrong to transplant a heart. For centuries, people saw the heart as the central force of life, love and conscience and the idea that one person's heart could be handed over to another was unthinkable. Now the notion that your feelings are transplanted with a heart is the stuff of fantasy movies. Likewise, today it would take a lunatic to argue that general anaesthetics cause a man's soul to leave his body to which it can never return.

Despite these changes in attitude, however, with assisted conception the controversies remain. This is because while most medical procedures are specific to an individual body, assisted conception techniques relate to a social institution: the family. They remain at the centre of moral controversy because the techniques involved expose to scrutiny many things about family life that are accepted as natural.

Capitalist society copes by making a whole number of social functions private matters. The raising of children, responsibility for the sick and care of the elderly are all designated to individual families rather than being seen as the responsibility of society as a whole. In this way, the family serves some vital functions for capitalism. It sustains the workforce without draining the resources of the employers or the state. At the same time, the obligation to provide for dependants helps to keep

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

TABOOS

male and female breadwinners hard at it in the work place, as well as providing an incentive for the accumulation of wealth to pass on to heirs.

The strength of this arrangement is that it is understood to be a 'natural' one. The kind of family relationships which currently predominate are supposed to be based on the dictates of nature, rather than the demands of capitalist society. It is accepted that we take responsibility for our parents and our children because we are their flesh and blood. It is this understanding of the importance of the family that makes so many members of the establishment uneasy about new reproductive technologies, since these interfere with the natural processes which ensure that children are biologically related to their parents.

Concern about the impact of reproductive technologies on the institution of the family was expressed most obviously in the early debates around artificial insemination using donated sperm (AID), and it is still around today.

AID has been practised for over 100 years. But when, in 1960, the practice was subjected to a government inquiry, the Feversham Committee on Human Artificial Insemination concluded that it was an extremely unwholesome practice. The committee's sole reason for allowing AID to remain legal was so that it could be regulated, whereas if it were banned the practice would simply go underground.

The Feversham Committee explicitly discussed AID as a threat to the institution of marriage and the relations of parents and children within it. 'Succession through blood descent is an important element of family life and as such is the basis of our society. ▶

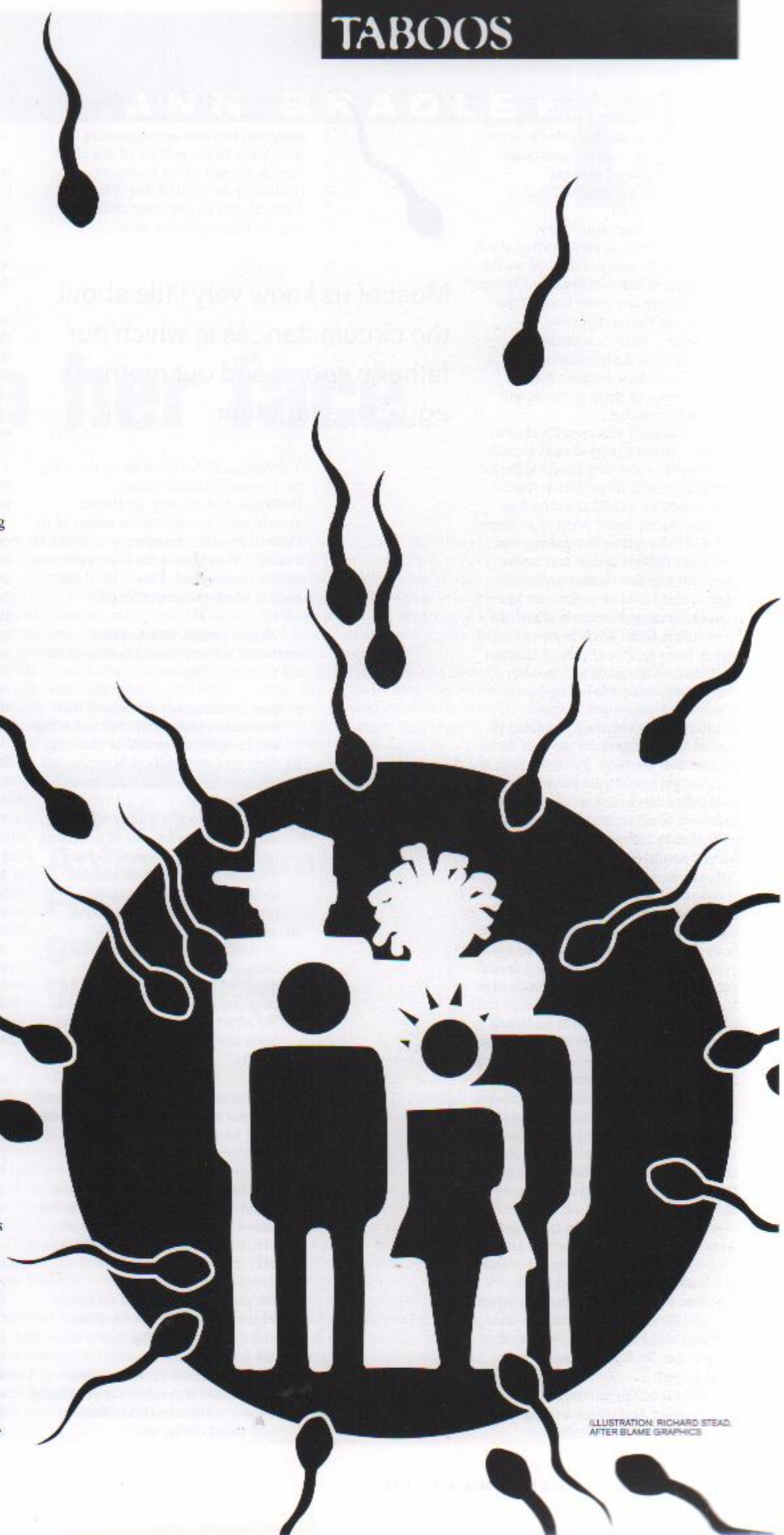


ILLUSTRATION: RICHARD STEAD,
AFTER BLAME GRAPHICS

On it depend the peerage and other titles of honour, and the monarchy itself', declared the committee's report. 'Knowledge that there is uncertainty about the fatherhood of some', it continued, 'is a potential threat to the security of all'.

This seems laughable today. But, while nobody is very worried about the possible dangers to inherited wealth, the problem of the stability of traditional family life remains at the heart of the debate about the reproductive technologies. Today's controversies crystallise around expressions of concern about how children born as a consequence of these methods will relate to their parents.

In the abstract this seems a curious concern. After all, why should a child conceived in a test tube have a different relationship with its parents to that experienced by a child conceived in the back seat of a car? Most of us know very little about the circumstances in which our father's sperm and mother's egg came together. In fact surveys suggest that fewer of us than we like to think can even be certain where the sperm came from. It has been estimated that as many as 20 per cent of children born in some hospitals may not be biologically related to both parents. It seems safe to assume that the relationship between any child and its parents is determined by the way they behave after the birth. Studies which have sought to compare the well-being of children conceived spontaneously and those conceived as a result of new reproductive technologies have found (as you would expect) negligible differences.

However, this expression of concern about the welfare of children born after intervention provides a good excuse for an explicit discussion about the desirability of the new reproductive technologies and for policing who can and cannot have access to them. Enquiries into the social circumstances and emotional stability of those seeking infertility treatment, and the restriction of treatment to those who are approved, is justified on the grounds that only those presumed likely to be fit parents should benefit. And the only families deemed fit are those which fit the image that the authorities have designated as natural.

As assisted conception techniques have developed, the authorities have tried to ensure that their use is restricted to couples who aspire to 'normal' families. In other words, those in which the relationship between parents and children will be that of the textbook nuclear family. Caring couples only need apply.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, which has regulated the use of the new reproductive



technologies since 1990, legislates that 'a woman shall not be provided with treatment services unless account has been taken of the welfare of any child born as a result of the treatment (including the need of that child for a father), and of any other child who may be affected by the birth'.

Most of us know very little about the circumstances in which our father's sperm and our mother's egg came together

The regulatory body set up by the act, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, spells out exactly what this restriction means in its Code of Practice, acceptance of which is a condition of licence for clinics offering assisted conception. Para 3.16 of the code is worth quoting at length.

'Where people seek licensed treatment, centres should bear in mind the following factors:

- their commitment and that of their husband or partner (if any) to having and bringing up a child or children;
- their ages and medical histories and the ages and medical histories of their families;
- the needs of any children who may be born as a result of treatment, including the implications of any possible multiple births and the ability of prospective parents (or parent) to meet those needs;
- any risk of harm to the child or children who may be born, including the risk of inherited disorders, problems during pregnancy and of neglect or abuse;
- the effect of a new baby or babies upon any existing child in the family.'

When donated sperm and eggs are used the criteria are even tighter. Any centre offering treatment is mandated to consider:

- the child's potential need to know about his or her origins and whether or not the prospective parents are prepared for the questions which may arise while the child is growing up;
- the possible attitudes of members of the family towards the child, and towards his or her status in the family;
- the implications for the welfare of the child if the donor is personally known within the child's family and social circle; and

- any possibility known to the centre of a dispute about the legal fatherhood of the child.' (para 3.17)

In other words, before you benefit from the new reproductive technologies you have to convince those licensed to provide the treatment that you aspire to live a 'normal' family life and that there is nothing to stop you from fulfilling this aspiration.

This means that the potential for assisted conception techniques to benefit those outside conventional family relationships is severely restricted. There is no absolute ban on lesbians or single women receiving donated sperm—but before they can take advantage of this they have to convince a counsellor or doctor that there is a man around to meet the baby's need for a father. Exactly what that need is nobody has ever spelled out.

Perhaps more crucial is the consequence that this spirit of regulation has for the rest of society. It elevates the institution of the family into the only legitimate domestic arrangement, and limits technological intervention to mirroring what already exists rather than providing new possibilities. It shackles the potential of new reproductive technologies and prevents us from using them to push aside existing biologically imposed constraints on our lives.

In theory the new reproductive technologies could extend our control over our fertility in many ways. Most women experience their menopause in their forties when they still have years of energy and enthusiasm left. Many women can probably think of better things to expend it on than young children, but if there is a demand, and if the technology exists to do it, why should we not push back our child-bearing years into our fifties? If the technology exists to allow a woman to have a child without a direct relationship with a man, why shouldn't she use it?

Why should we accept that doctors and counsellors working in infertility clinics have the right to decide whether those seeking treatment are fit to be parents? Why should we accept that parliament or a committee of the great and the good can lay down mandatory guidelines which prevent those with medical problems receiving the treatment they need?

From a clinical point of view, infertility treatment requires neither more nor less regulation than any other form of medical treatment. The only 'moral' issue we need to worry about is the authorities' refusal to provide the resources to extend the treatment to all those who want it—a problem conveniently hidden behind all the fuss about 'natural' and 'normal' family arrangements.



Egg on her face

Dame Jill Knight has hardly bothered to conceal the hidden agenda behind her rather frenzied attempt to outlaw the use of fetal eggs in research and infertility treatment. The real motivation behind her private members bill, 'Eggs from Fetuses (Prohibition of Use)' has been clear from her first reported comments on the issue in January. It is another excuse to mount her anti-abortion hobby horse.

Dame Jill's appreciation of things scientific is about as informed as my understanding of needlework. She is not interested in any of the possible benefits of research, her sole aim is to gain a platform for what she sees as 'pro-life' arguments. Her blunt and philistine response to the *Sunday Times* set the tone for the rest of the debate. Asked what she thought of the use of fetal eggs in research and fertility treatments, she described it as 'a sinister Orwellian development which could lead to the production and exploitation of the unborn child for commercial reasons'. David Alton, one of the bill's co-sponsors also came clean when he described possible research as a 'macabre and gruesome development which denies the great gift of life to the unborn but uses it to create new life in a laboratory'.

Given that these MPs oppose abortion absolutely, they are unlikely to approve of the use of fetal tissue in any circumstances. They are, however, delighted to use any excuse to whip up alarm about the procedure. Allowing them to influence the discussion on the scientific or clinical usefulness of fetal tissue is like accepting protocols for blood transfusions from the Jehovah's Witnesses, or letting the Animal Liberation Front draft guidelines on the dissection of laboratory rats.

The small but vocal anti-abortion lobby persistently returns to the way in which aborted tissue is treated because they know that it's just the thing to revolt and repulse. Most of us don't want to think about what happens to fetuses after they have been aborted any more than we want to think about the fate of severed legs or removed appendixes. But although the incineration of severed legs scores fairly high on 'yuk factor', most of us still feel that legs should, when the need arises, be severed. We suspend our squeamishness because we know it needs to be done.

Playing on our squeamishness about dead human tissue is a cheap trick that the anti-abortion lobby deal time and time again. Last year they were agitating about the way that unwanted fetal tissue is disposed of after abortions (was it burned, buried or macerated and sluiced, was it treated with due 'respect'?). Then they took up cudgels against the use of fetal tissue in research and treatment, generally casting

aspersions about an unsavoury trade between abortion clinics and research institutions. Now it is concern about the extraction of eggs from a fetus. Nobody can possibly argue that a dead fetus has any use for its eggs, which would otherwise be destroyed with the rest of the fetal tissue. But it conjures up a wonderfully ghoulish image of latter-day grave robbers (Alton calls them 'womb-robbers') plundering for medical science.

The fetal eggs debate is also a way of trying to establish that the fetus has rights in common with the rest of us. One of Dame Jill's wackier arguments against the use of fetal eggs is that a fetus would not be able to consent to the donation. 'It is difficult', she pointed out when she moved her bill for its first reading, 'to see how an unborn girl fetus

could be prevailed upon to sign the [consent] form, and it will not do to say that the fetus' mother could do so instead. For good reasons, the law does not say that the grandmother of a baby created by *in vitro* fertilisation can sign—it must be the egg donating mother, and that is impossible'. Nice one Knight. After all, if you can establish a legal case for fetal consent, where will that leave women wanting abortions?

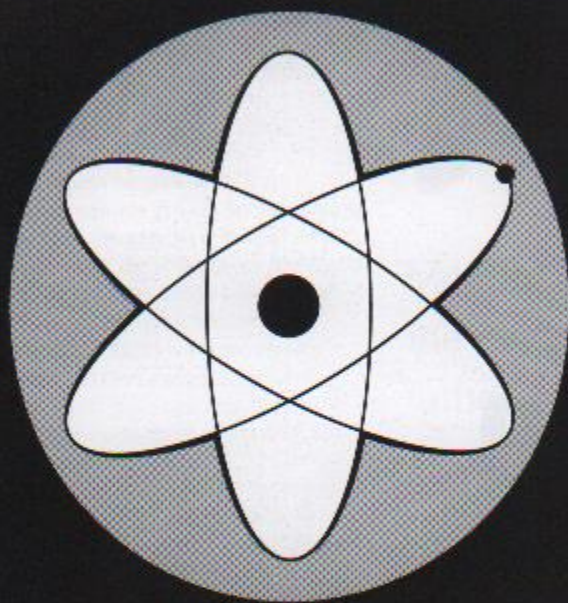
In some ways we can be encouraged by these perverse attempts to demand respect and rights for fetuses. They come in place of all-out attacks on the availability of abortion. The antis were severely shaken in 1990 when parliament

voted overwhelmingly to allow abortion, under the existing terms of the 1967 Act up to 24 weeks gestation, and from then on they haven't really known what to do with themselves. The more lunatic fringe have taken to standing outside clinics waving pictures of fetuses at women seeking abortions, while the mainstream have been reduced to these rather eccentric salami tactics—taking up any fringe issue which can be hung on a pro-life peg, from sex selection to euthanasia.

Curiously, however, the pro-life theme breaks down when it comes to the issue of capital punishment. Voting on amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill, Dame Jill (along with MPs Harry Greenway, Phil Gallie, Elizabeth Peacock and Rev Martin Smyth, all 'pro-lifers' who sponsored her bill) voted for the restoration of the death penalty for killers of policemen. I assume they will call for a stay of execution if the murderer happens to be pregnant!

Dame Jill Knight's private member's bill will disappear into the usual parliamentary quagmire, never to see the light of day, so it need not alarm us unduly. What should perhaps alarm us is that she is chairman of the Conservative Party's backbench health committee. You have been warned.

It's like letting the Animal Liberation Front draft guidelines on dissection



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

PROGRESS

What we need is more genetic engineering and less respect for nature's inefficient designs, argues John Gillott

Designer genes

Genetics is the biggest growth area in science and technology. Just one part of work in the field, the Human Genome Project, is a billion dollar enterprise that has been compared in scope to the Manhattan Project which built the atomic bomb during the Second World War, and to the Nasa missions to the moon.

Genetic science promises to produce new sources of food and medicine, and to eradicate previously incurable diseases such as cystic fibrosis and Huntingdon's Chorea. It may even offer a cure for Aids and cancer.

Genetics is also the most controversial area of science. In the past few years, there has been an explosion of committees pondering the ethical dimensions of the genetic modification of human and non-human life. Public fascination with the subject is mixed with a wide range of fears. Given the benefits genetic science offers, why is it so controversial?

The fear is that tampering with genetics could have unforeseen consequences, and that the new science might be used with evil intent. People fear that governments, scientists, doctors and others might try to enact a totalitarian eugenic policy of selective breeding. The Chinese government announced last year that it would embark on a nationwide eugenic policy 'to avoid new births of inferior quality and heighten the standards of the whole population'. In the debate on using eggs from fetuses, it is often alleged that amoral parents will want to pick and choose their offspring's characteristics—'designer babies'. There is also concern that the collection of genetic data by governments, or even insurance companies and employers, would be a threat to civil liberties.

All technology and medicine is about changing nature, or stopping nature taking its course. In this sense, intervention at the genetic level is no different. Intervention at the genetic level is of a more fundamental character, however, because of the regulative role of genes in many developmental processes and diseases. But this ought to be an argument for, rather than against, genetic engineering, since it

promises more profound improvements in the human condition than conventional medicine.

There are three broad classes of genetic modification. First, modification by insertion of the DNA from one organism into another. This might be the insertion of a healthy gene as a replacement for a defective gene within the same species, or it might be the insertion of a gene from a member of one species into a member of a different species. By the insertion of a foreign gene, sheep have been modified to produce the human blood-clotting agent Factor IX—a vital drug in the treatment of haemophilia.

Second, there is the more advanced modification through precision gene deletion and insertion. Rather than simply adding a gene and hoping for the best, a gene would be precisely inserted at a particular site in place of the present occupant. And third, there is human invention, the creation of wholly new genes or the deliberate modification of existing genes to create a new gene.

As a practical science and technology, genetics is less than 30 years old, and only the first of the three strategies has been developed. As yet there is no procedure for the accurate replacement or modification of genes, never mind for creating designer genes. Indeed science has only five years experience in applying any genetic modification techniques to humanity. On 22 May 1989, American scientists Steven Rosenberg, French Anderson and Michael Blaese injected cells carrying foreign DNA into a patient. Using the techniques developed with Rosenberg and Blaese, Anderson made history in 1990, treating a girl suffering from severe combined immune deficiency by injecting a functioning gene into her immune system. This was the first ever gene therapy trial. And it worked. Before the treatment she was confined to a germ-free plastic bubble, now she can run around with other children.

This is a promising start, but much more needs to be done. By late last year, only 160 patients around the world had received gene therapy. Treatment has only been devised for a few

genetic-related diseases. Altogether there are thought to be about 4000 diseases where a genetic defect is the prime cause. Taken together, these diseases affect between 1 and 2 per cent of all live-born babies. It is suspected that genetic defects play a role in many other diseases. Known treatments need to be extended to more people, and research to develop treatment for other disorders needs to be encouraged.

Basic gene therapy—the replacement of a defective gene by a normal one—offers the possibility of treatment or cure to individuals while effecting a change which is not passed on to the next generation. Most people accept this kind of work. The opposition begins when more fundamental forms of genetic engineering are mooted. Outrage is aroused by any mention of the germ-line modification of humans; the modification of the sex cells or the cells that produce sex cells; modifications which are passed down the generations (which have not been done and are illegal in America and Europe); and the transference of genes from one species to another (which has been done).

These changes are seen as being more unnatural, and dangerous, than simply repairing the defective genes of an individual. There is a very good reason, however, why society should take these steps: nature is a bad designer. Humanity could improve on nature.

Evolution works by a combination of blind chance and natural selection. Species are not so much designed as cobbled together. Because selection has taken place over a very long time, some remarkable effects have been produced. Nevertheless, the un-designed character of evolution's work often shows through.

Take the example of sickle-cell anaemia, the world's most common human genetic disorder. The red blood cells of people with sickle-cell anaemia are mis-shapen. This clogs up their blood vessels, depriving their organs of oxygen. It generally leads to an early death. ►



Does genetic engineering threaten us with man-made monsters?

The disorder arises when two copies of an abnormal gene—one from each parent—are present in an individual. If a person has just one copy of the same abnormal gene, however, their health is enhanced—it provides some protection against malaria, without the normal functioning of red blood cells being noticeably affected. In other words evolution has produced a defence against malaria, but the blind working of nature could not foresee the grotesque downside of the solution it has thrown up—sickle-cell anaemia.

When we have developed a cure for this disorder, we will not be simply curing an individual, we will be combating the bad design of nature. When viewed in this light, simple common sense suggests that we should extend the treatment to germ-line modification of sufferers, and even those carrying only one copy of the gene. This cannot be done at the moment because we do not have a reliable method of gene deletion and insertion. In 10 years time, scientists estimate, such a procedure will be possible.

Beyond repairing disorders, germ-line modification could be used to *improve* upon nature. If a way is found through genetic engineering to confer resistance to Aids upon people, we might want to insert this into the germ-line. Once we have a fuller understanding of processes like ageing and the menopause in women, we might want to see if we can change things around a little bit here.

An argument against germ-line intervention, and mixing genes from one species with those of another, is that we are tampering with something we don't fully understand. This can be posed as a legitimate argument for caution in the pursuit of germ-line modification. And new life forms should be studied in the laboratory before being released into the environment, because once released, organisms 'cannot be recalled' as George Wald points out in *The Case Against Genetic Engineering*. To the extent that it is true, this is an argument for more scientific research.

Wald and other critics of genetic engineering don't want more research, however. They want to outlaw genetic engineering. Some base this demand on the mystical idea that nature is a finely balanced whole which we tamper with at our peril. This is nonsense. There is no balance in nature. Because of the unplanned character of evolution, the only order that has been created is a dynamic one in which some species thrive and others die. Change, contingency, and destruction are the only fixed patterns in nature.

Other critics argue that humanity will never have a sufficient understanding of nature to risk making such fundamental changes. In the conclusion of their



influential *Genethics: The Ethics of Engineering Life*, David Suzuki and Peter Knudtson call for a new mythology which must 'evoke in human beings—scientists and non-scientists alike—an abiding sense of awe and humility towards all biological systems, whose stunning complexities outstrip our richest imagination'.

Critics are pessimistic about human abilities and human judgement, and project these concerns on to genetics

Such pessimism is unwarranted, and mythologies we can do without. Humanity already has a fairly good grasp of biology, and that knowledge is rapidly advancing. Caution must be based on rational, scientific principles, not mystical mumbo-jumbo. Caution must also be tempered by the recognition that it is only by experimenting, and making mistakes, that progress in scientific understanding is made.

There is also an imperative to crack on with genetic engineering: it will help improve the human condition. Diseases will be cured, new drugs will be developed, and, in the distant future, we might want to make more fundamental changes to our genetic constitution. Given these possibilities, it is time the tables were turned on the critics—they, not the scientists, should be put in the dock and made to justify their position.

The foreboding which critics like Suzuki and Knudtson express has nothing to do with the reality of genetic science. As spokesmen of our conservative age, they are pessimistic about human abilities and human judgement, and they project these concerns on to genetics. Their deification of nature and warnings against human interference are expressions of this social pessimism rather than serious scientific judgement.

Most popular fears about genetics are equally misplaced. What are perceived as problems thrown up by genetic science have, in fact, nothing to do with genetics—they are problems with the misuse of genetic ideas and technology by those who control them. In capitalist society, all areas of science are used first and foremost for the benefit of elites, not for the mass of the population. As with other areas of hi-tech science, it is to be expected that the military have a keen interest in genetic science. During the

Gulf War, modern computers helped to destroy Iraq. Should computer science be rejected? Of course not—it is Western militarism that should be opposed.

Eugenics is a prime example of the misuse of genetic ideas by elites. The drive behind eugenics has always been an elitist and authoritarian policy agenda that has no basis in science. The term—derived from the name Eugene, meaning 'well-bred'—was coined by Francis Galton at the end of the last century, in order to dress up prejudice as science. For Galton, it rested on the belief that the lower classes in Britain were genetically inferior to the middle classes. Galton argued that middle class families should have more children so as to raise the quality of the national stock. In America and Germany, the theory was used to justify sterilisation of 'inferior' groups of people.

The proposed eugenic policy of the Chinese government today has nothing to do with improving the health of the population. It is based on bogus science—ordinary diseases have suddenly become genetically based according to the Chinese government. And cures are not being offered. Rather, controls on procreation are being imposed. The aim is to scapegoat people for their own ill-health, and to blame poverty on population growth. It is a political campaign disguised in the language of genetics.

Access to and control over genetic information is a contentious issue today, especially in America. The state is very interested in genetic knowledge. The American military is heavily involved in genetic fingerprinting, and tried to stop a debunking of the procedure by the American scientists Richard Lewontin and Daniel Hartl from being published. There is also concern that employers and insurance companies may try to justify discrimination using genetics.

There is potential for genetic knowledge to be used in an authoritarian way. Advances in genetic science cannot be said to have caused these possibilities, however. Rather, genetic information, like any other kind of data, is open to manipulation in a society where there are fundamental conflicts of interest—between workers and employers, and between individuals and the state.

Conflating the misuse of genetic science with the science itself will do nothing to challenge the abuse of genetics and genetic information. And it will do nothing to foster a climate conducive to the advance of science. Progress in genetic knowledge and technology can bring nothing but good. Problems arising from the misuse of genetics require a political response, not a call to stop scientific advance. ●



An escalating crisis

The irritating and insidious trend of dressing up cost-cutting in PC clothes, or passing it off as a means of empowerment has reached surreal levels at London Transport.

A few years ago LT began revamping tube stations and installing smart new writing boards at the top of escalators upon which the staff could scrawl the latest news about technical breakdowns and so on. Most of the time these are used to display semi-permanent posters announcing 'temporary disruptions'. Recently, however, a new poster has appeared, with the heading 'Green Machine'. Underneath it explains that escalators will be turned off during off-peak times (whenever that may be, since trains are packed all day). This is being done 'to reduce consumption of electricity and its effect on the environment'. No doubt this also explains the cancelled trains, switched-off platform indicators and so on.

Just as I was thinking they had gone about as far as they could I arrived at Oxford Circus along with several thousand others, and began funnelling towards the one functioning staircase, only to be greeted with the following announcement: 'We apologise for the inconvenience, and invite customers to make full use of the available escalator'.

Perhaps someone could explain what 'full use' means in this context. Are there 'customers' who are in the habit of making only partial use of the escalators, maybe hopping off half way and sliding down the handrail? Or are they suggesting that we take full advantage of the facilities by going back and queuing up for a second go, like a fairground ride? Or are we supposed to 'make full use' of them for a few minutes of step aerobics, or an impromptu picnic? I await further posters with exciting suggestions.

I have been following with interest the progress of the *Independent on Sunday's* 'Dirty Dogs Campaign', which has enlisted the support of both MPs and ordinary people in the fight against dog shit in public places. Despite my instinctive distrust of this kind of thing, I can't help myself sympathising with its sentiments. Indeed, if I had my way, I would issue a Mao-like edict that every dog in the country should be shot and a public holiday instituted to commemorate the glorious day.

I was particularly disgusted by a letter I received from a 'Customer Care Manager' at the Royal Mail, apologising for the fact that the enclosed correspondence had been delayed and 'may show signs of discolouration'. The explanation offered was that 'it was found in a posting box which had been soiled by dog excrement [sic]. Each letter has been individually cleansed by a specialist company, hence the discolouration'.

Since the old GPO was separated into the Royal Mail and BT there have been many changes—worse service, higher charges and more and more customer care units. Increased bureaucracy also means the left hand doesn't always know what the right hand is doing. Judging from the above letter, the Royal Mail appears to have eluded BT's restrictions on dirty phone lines, as the closing paragraph contains an invitation from the aforementioned Customer Care Manager to phone his personal Customer Care Manger (sic), Mrs Ann Porter 'if you wish to discuss this matter'. A Southend phone number follows, which I shall not quote, in case this magazine falls into the wrong hands.

I have so far resisted the temptation to phone Mrs Porter but my curiosity grows stronger by the day. Who would wish to phone this woman and discuss dog shit? What exactly are you supposed to ask her? Does she provide titillating details, or simply sensible advice about not licking soiled envelopes? I would be interested to hear from less timid readers who have experience of her services.

Who would wish to phone this woman and discuss dog shit?

I don't usually comment on the efforts of rival columnists, but I notice that the *Guardian's* 'fifth Beagle' Paul Foot appears to become slightly economical with the truth when reporting on all things 'Anti-Nazi'.

First he reported how a racist Plymouth Argyle football fan was silenced by a spontaneous chant of 'Nazis out!'. Now, not having been present at the match myself, I am quite prepared to believe that other spectators took issue with his views—I've seen it happen myself occasionally. But the spontaneous reaction of the average non-racist is not to shout 'Nazis out!' or 'Never again!'. In fact the only incident of this nature that I can recall was in the seventies, when a ridiculous Anti-Nazi League organiser followed the pathetic British tennis 'star' Buster Mottram around Wimbledon, shouting 'Buster Mottram is a Nazi' through a megaphone, to the bemusement of the crowd.

Next Foot was—quite rightly—up in arms about the press 'narks' who printed pictures of alleged 'rioters' at the Anti-Nazi League demonstration in Welling, asking readers to identify them so they can be banged up for 10 years. However, this seems strikingly at odds with his earlier silence when organisers of the Militant Tendency's Anti-Poll Tax League offered their services to the police in fingering demonstrators involved in the 1990 riot in Trafalgar Square. Which of course would have nothing to do with the fact that Foot's SWP was busy trying to jump on Militant's bandwagon at the time.

I appreciate that Paul's memory probably isn't what it was, so I'm happy to alert him to this oversight.

Tommy McKearney, a former Irish republican prisoner and hunger-striker, told Fiona Foster why he doesn't support the current 'peace process'

One of 'the unmanageables'

Tommy McKearney is an Irish republican from the small town of Moy in County Tyrone. He was released from jail last year, after serving 16 years for the killing of a British soldier.

Tommy McKearney has lost three brothers in the Irish War. Sean was killed by his own bomb in 1974; Pdraig was shot dead by the SAS while on active service in Loughgall in 1987; Kevin was gunned down by a Loyalist death squad while working in the family butcher's shop in January 1992. Tommy himself narrowly escaped death after spending 53 days without food as part of the 1980-81 H-Block hunger-strikes demanding political status for republican prisoners of war.

In March, Tommy McKearney was invited to London by the Irish Freedom Movement to address the Campaign Against Militarism's War Drums and Peace Talks conference at Wembley. I asked him about the prospects for war and peace in Ireland.

Fiona Foster: Do you have any hope that the current peace process can deliver peace in Ireland?

Tommy McKearney: First and foremost I don't believe that it is a peace process at all. As far as I'm concerned it's a devious ploy by the British government to cover up, to attempt to wash away the outward signs of conflict without resolving it.

Fiona Foster: Republicans I've spoken to seem convinced that the process in some way reflects the British government's desire to manoeuvre itself out of Ireland. Would you agree?

Tommy McKearney: No. On the contrary I would argue that the so-called peace process is aimed at strengthening the connection between Britain and Northern Ireland, at two levels. Firstly by convincing the general public in Britain and Ireland that they are genuinely interested in

peace. Secondly by aiming to neutralise the most active opposition to British rule in Ireland, the republican population of the Six Counties, by convincing them that they no longer have cause for active opposition.

Fiona Foster: Do you think the peace process results from Britain's weakness or strength in relation to the Irish War?

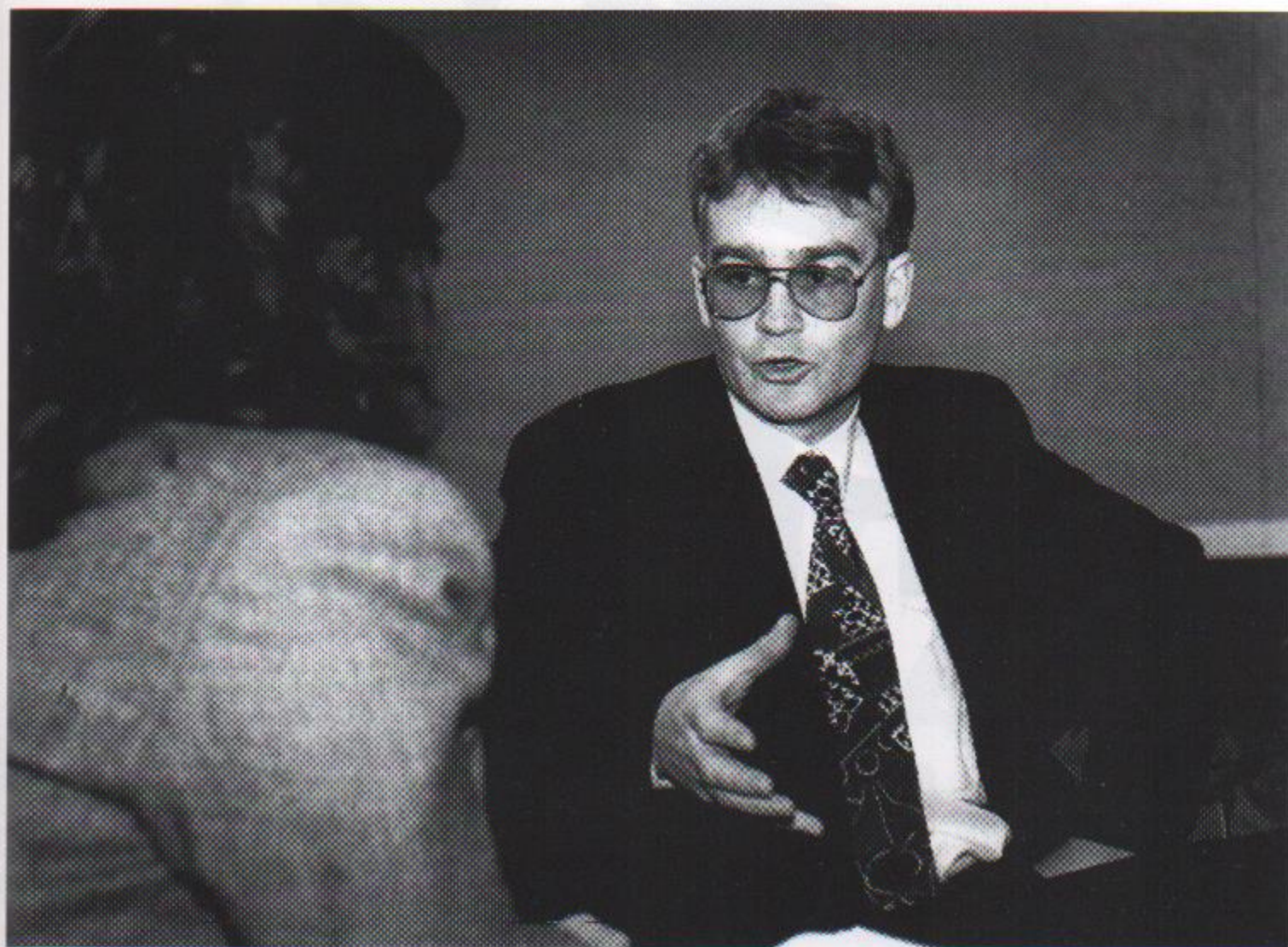
Tommy McKearney: I think we have to ask ourselves whether this is a situation where the British are being forced to concede to the realities of the battlefield. They have had to make concessions before, like in Kenya or where six or seven hundred million Indians said you can have it any bloody way you want it, peaceful or otherwise. They made the concessions in bad grace surely, but they had to make them. But I ask myself is this the reality of the field in Ireland, and I have to say, no, I don't think it is. So then I am forced to question why Britain is doing this. To use a Northern Irish expression, I ask "are we being sold a pup?"

Fiona Foster: Are you saying that it's the republican movement that is in a position of weakness?

Tommy McKearney: When you see some heads going down and the feet starting to lag, though it may be temporary, I would say yes, there has to be weakness. Let's not cover it up, if we're hurt, let's say OK we're hurt. We need to stop a minute and draw breath. But our situation hasn't changed. We have to continue the fight, but we have to be honest about where we are. My concern is that we could be misled for a number of years, and then we're saying that another generation is going to have to come along and take this awful, bloody baton from us.

Fiona Foster: You have said that the Downing Street declaration should have been rejected straight away. Why?

Tommy McKearney: Quite simply, there is nothing in it for nationalists or republicans. Britain has said "we respect your aspirations" but they've done nothing to realise those aspirations. I'd say that's just about as bogus as your boss saying I recognise your aspiration to be paid on a Friday night but I'm not going to give you any money.



I'm opposed to the declaration and I reject Britain's right to be in my country

Fiona Foster: But what's wrong with simply refusing to respond to the declaration?

Tommy McKearney: My concern is that by failing to reject the declaration out of hand, the republican leadership is creating the impression that the British are a disinterested party in the conflict, who could deliver peace. The problem is that this can undermine morale, because if you take people who are locked into a long, drawn-out struggle and you hold out the prospects of peace, it's very hard to go back on that. I believe that the British ruling class are skilfully taking the republican people down a long path that is going to be difficult to get off. And unfortunately it's not the path to peace.

Fiona Foster: What do you see as the role of the IRA's armed struggle today?

Tommy McKearney: Firstly I want to say that there is a false counterposition made in the media between those who would accept the declaration and those who would 'bomb on'. To my mind we have, for too long, been forced to define ourselves as republicans through the use of armed force. But Irish

republicanism is not equated simplistically with the use of armed force. I understand the role of force, but, by the same token, I don't say we'll use force and see what happens.

Let me make this clear, I'm opposed to the declaration and I reject Britain's right to be in my country. The question now is how do we redefine and reorganise our struggle in such a way as it succeeds. I would say that the struggle has now become directionless to the extent that we're pinning our hopes on the decency of the British doing the right thing. I would argue that we need a comprehensive re-examination of the struggle and as such everything should be on the table, including the tactical question of the armed struggle.

Fiona Foster: How do you see the struggle against British rule in Ireland fitting in with an international anti-militarism?

Tommy McKearney: As an Irish rebel and one of the unmanageables, it gratifies me to see Britain in decline. Yet she retains her seat at the inner circle of world imperialist powers. As such it's still the case that any blow

against Britain will damage Western imperialism. The very existence of a peace process shows that the Irish are still a thorn in the side of Britain, that we can still damage their prestige. I was born in Ireland and I will continue to fight imperialism where I stand as an Irish republican and as an internationalist.

Fiona Foster: Finally, what contribution do you think anti-militarists in Britain can make to challenging British rule and ending the war in Ireland?

Tommy McKearney: You can give the lie to the idea that Britain is a peacemaker. You can remind people that the regime that is talking peace in Ireland is the same one that coldly and cynically decided to sink the Belgrano with the objective of ensuring that the war with Argentina would go ahead in 1982. It is the same regime that in the last few weeks has admitted to the aid-for-arms deal in Malaysia.

Now unless there is something in the Irish air that transforms these people into peacemakers, we must conclude that they are not well intentioned. You can give the lie to the idea that this declaration is the path to peace. ●

Never mind pillorying Leeds fans for chanting during the minute's silence for Sir Matt Busby, season ticket-holder John Parker (North Stand Kop) is more concerned about the club's application to join the league of the politically correct

LUFC PC?

For away fans, Elland Road is one of the dark satanic mills of top-flight football in England. There are few places in the Premiership where visitors are received less charitably. Nor is fair play something which immediately springs to mind in connection with Leeds United. Remember the 1975 European Cup final at Parc des Princes which earned Leeds a European ban; or the notorious 'friendly' with Glasgow Celtic—by the end there were as many empty beer bottles on the pitch as blades of grass. More recently, former Leeds striker Eric Cantona was greeted by a lynch-mob on his return to Elland Road in a Manchester United shirt. Add to this the roll call of 'tenacious' stars like Hunter, Jackie Charlton, Bremner, Jones and Batty, and you get the idea of the 'bites yer leg' Leeds tradition.

So when Leeds fans failed to observe a minute's silence after the death of Sir Matt Busby in January, everyone who could push a pen or climb on a soapbox used it as an excuse to raise spectres past and to decry the Leeds fans as 'scum'. Even Leeds players labelled them 'hooligans'. Sneering press commentators took great pleasure in affirming that football fans are the same as they have always been: narrow-minded, bigoted and plain moronic. The *Yorkshire Evening Post* and the *Sun* launched photo campaigns to single out the perpetrators, and to work with the club and the official supporters' clubs to get them banned for life.

The hysterical reaction was a continuation of the club's attempts to clean up its act. The increasingly competitive world of the Premiership dictates a move up the social ladder way from the 'underclass' in the cheap seats (or terraces still) towards the higher-earning respectable

working class and even the middle classes.

It is well known that one of the first things manager Howard Wilkinson did when he took over five years ago was to remove all the pictures of the great Leeds teams of the sixties and seventies. Behind the scenes there have been parallel efforts to remove the negative image that went with the Leeds heyday.

Club officials have outlawed 'provocative' chants in the ground (punishable by ejection and banning). They have gone to great lengths to marginalise fans who chant the infamous 'Airplane Song' which, to say the least, does not take a sympathetic approach to the 1958 Munich air disaster which afflicted our great rivals Manchester United. Announcements have even been made over the PA threatening to arrest those who sing the song. In an attempt to undermine such sentiments, players have been sent to supporters' club meetings, endless articles published in programmes, and all sorts of PR stunts dreamed up involving the two clubs. The aim of all this has been to turn the monstrous spectacle of working class vulgarity into the wholesome family entertainment of American stadia. With this end in view, Leeds has set aside a large section of the East stand for family use, and promoted politically correct projects such as 'Football in the Community', fronted by the likes of Chris Fairclough and Rod and Ray Wallace.

The first thing to realise is that the target of all the public relations stunts is not hooliganism, but the fans themselves. The campaign Leeds United Against Racism and Fascism is a case in point. Touted by the local council and the police, lauded far and wide by the football establishment, it identifies racism as a problem of the 'culture' of working class

fans. You don't need to endorse the hostility sometimes vented against visiting black players to realise that Leeds' directors, the police, security staff and the local Labour council are in no position to lecture football fans on racism; or to see the dangers of allowing people like these to dictate what we should and should not be allowed to say in the stands or on the terraces or anywhere else.

The flip side of official 'anti-racism' is that nobody quibbles with the new police surveillance centre at Elland Road. It is justified on the grounds that the video cameras are monitoring the ground for racist chanters. Although I have never seen one of these ejected, the video surveillance centre allows the West Yorkshire police greater control over every fan that comes through the turnstile, while keeping a lower profile. What they save on Saturday afternoon overtime can be redirected into trumped-up campaigns to label Chapeltown—the area in Leeds with the highest concentration of blacks—as a haven for crime and drugs. The police continue to use football stadia as laboratories for crowd control and riot tactics, while their high-profile 'anti-racist' activities help them pursue their policing of the black community with impunity.

I for one don't welcome the drive towards good, clean, law-abiding football. I don't fancy being searched by a big lump on the gates before having my face on a police video—all for eight quid a time. I don't want to join a phoney membership scheme for twelve quid and hand over all my personal details to the cops for the privilege. Or, even better, spend £140 minimum to stand in luxurious surroundings all season, providing of

THE SUN

Monday, January 24, 1994

20p

Advised daily rate for December 3,571,000

TODAY AND EVERY DAY

20p

I WON **SUN** BINGO ON MY FIRST GO
See Page 13



CAPTAIN SCARLETT
CUPS FREE
See Page 11



Tory club goes bust in Major's own town

THE LOWEST OF THE LOW



Soccer's shame as yobs wreck tribute to Sir Matt

JEERING Leeds yobs shamed soccer yester by hissing a Sir Matt Busby and chanting for their own dead hero.

WATERGATE tribute to Manchester United legend Matt... 1,500 yobs... "There's only one Don Revie..." They also returned a huge banner bearing the name of...

Supporter joins in with V-sign... Leeds fans... The yobs... The yobs... The yobs... Continued on Page 11

course I don't swear, spit, or cause offence to any vicars present. The whole point about the football fan is that he is not the cricket spectator. He does not believe in fairness or politeness. When you support a team, whether it's Leeds United, Manchester United or Shrewsbury Town, for 90 minutes it is the best team in the world and you would throw anything at the opposition to try to demoralise them. Just as Manchester United fans made jokes about motor neurone disease when Don Revie died of it,

so it should come as no surprise that many Leeds fans remember Sir Matt Busby not as a national hero, but as just another manager of the team we love to hate. Supporting a team is about collective self-belief bordering on self-deception. It may appear childish to some and offensive to others, but there it is. Some

of you may not give a toss about football one way or the other. But I suggest your alarm bells should ring when you hear people labelled hooligans, paraded across the pages of the press and threatened with bans and arrests merely for expressing sentiments considered *outré* in polite circles. If we let the authorities suppress the voices from the terraces and practice their experiments in etiquette on football fans, the next voices to be silenced may be ours. ●

Dali's deformative years

James Heartfield rooted around Salvador Dali's personal stuff at the Hayward

Surrealist Salvador Dali's 'Metamorphosis of Narcissus' has adorned thousands of morbid teenagers' bedroom walls. Now, as if in an act of revenge for his immoral influence on the young, the Hayward Gallery gives us Dali's formative years, with an exhibition of paintings, drawings, notebooks, letters, memorabilia and, most important to style-fetishists, some handsome photographs of the artist as a young man.

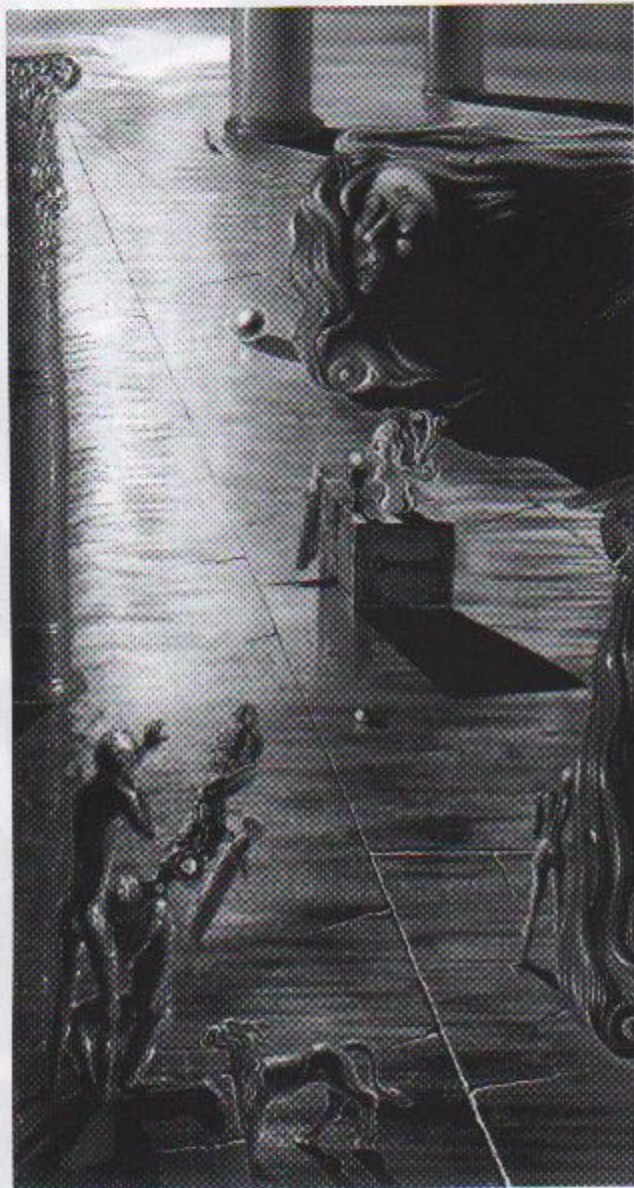
The Early Years contradicts Dali's own fantastic picture of his youth as a child-killer and pervert. Portraits of the painter with his father and family show a well-adjusted if not respectful son. And, as against the Dali who set out to offend the self-consciously offensive surrealist leader André Breton by declaring his emotional adoration of Hitler, The Early Years shows Dali following in his atheistic and leftist father's footsteps with a celebratory sketch of Trotsky (1920), and other agit-prop stuff. It's all a long way from the later Dali who outraged left-wing opinion with his professed love of money, Hollywood and the monarchy.

The exhibition reveals Dali as a diligent art student, mastering expressionist and cubist styles, assimilating Picasso, and even knocking off a quick sketch in the manner of the surrealists, before he made that movement his own. His draughtsmanship too is good, as can be seen in some elegant still lifes and solidly classical portraiture. Dali exhibited all of these disparate styles side-by-side, as if in contempt for any particular genre.

But it is in Madrid as a student at the Special School that Dali found his true voice. Away from home Dali ganged up with Federico Garcia Lorca, who was to make a name for himself as a playwright (*The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Blood Wedding*) and the anarchist film-maker Luis Buñuel (*Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*), both then fellow students at the special school.

Here the photographic record is invaluable: Dali and Lorca camp it up like a homoerotic Häagen-Dazs commercial, posing on the rocks in those single piece swimsuits that Edwardian gents wore, with white pumps, greased-back hair and pouts that would outdo Suede's Brett Anderson any day. Fashion editors and art students have been trying to recreate that Lee Miller/Leni Riefenstahl look ever since, but here are the professionals.

Buñuel is there too. But the film-maker, collaborator with Dali on the classic surrealist short *L'Age D'Or* is represented by a solid portrait in the manner



Did Dali sacrifice Lorca at 'The Altar'?

of Dali's rendition of his father. Lorca, by contrast, features in Dali's sketch-books as a clown, sticking his tongue out.

As Dali plunged ever deeper into the unconscious, and the taboo, Lorca is on hand to sing his praises in adoring surreal verse. Spum the dry flower of the square root, implores Lorca, and clear the mountains of their impressionistic mist. Dali writes that he is painting without effort or academic affectation.

By the mid-twenties Dali's style is recognisably that of the bending watches, ant-infestations and contorted flesh that was to make him famous. The mastery of style and draughtsmanship of his early years puts Dali ahead of the surrealist pack, as if he had always known that to subvert bourgeois art, you have to master it. The subject matter is proudly repulsive, the colour is vulgarly

dramatic, but technically excellent, the proportions rebel against the classical and the whole shop of horrors glints and gleams courtesy of brush-work that any photo-realist would die for.

Praised as Dali's technique is, it is only the vehicle for his development of the surreal, beyond realism to the unconscious and the unmentionable. At the time, Dali was rifling his dreams for images on instructions sent down from surrealist head office. Later works juxtapose the inappropriate with more wit, like the aphrodisiac jacket, embroidered with hundreds of tiny glasses of creme de menthe. Here, though, we get Dali's subconscious in the raw.

These works are brave, brave enough to be ripped up by the mob that attacked the first surrealist exhibition in Paris—to the surrealists' secret delight. Dali reaches those parts of the imagination that other people would prefer not to. Sex is here, not for enjoyment, but because it is shameful and repellant. Cocks throb and cunts gape, daring you to look, challenging you to justify looking away.

Nor was Dali only investigating our taboos. He wasn't frightened to pillage his own darkest fears if there was a chance of a good picture. The Hayward's exhibition wants to present Dali as slave to his own personal demons by setting his work among his private letters and memorabilia. But if the intent is narrow, the association works all the same, showing how Dali raided his own emotions for inspiration.

In 'The Altar' a church is the site for a frightening vision of a woman's head glowing. A couple of figures are cowering in shame, and look, the kneeling figure is clearly giving his partner a blow-job. The image is one of self-disgust, as the couple are caught in the act. The standing partner is shielding his face in shame; the kneeling, too preoccupied to notice. The message of The Early Years is 'that's Dali, with Lorca'. Is it? Perhaps the proper thing to say would be that Dali is describing the human condition, but comparing the figures in 'The Altar' with the photograph of Dali and Lorca on the rocks, the similarity is inescapable: Lorca looks adoringly at Dali, smitten. Dali, striking a disdainful pose, has his eyes on the horizon.

Sixty years on the programme for The Early Years warns that some of these pictures are unsuitable for children. Dali would be proud.

The Early Years shows at the Hayward Gallery, London SE1, until 30 May.



Why do they do that?

When the history of the visual arts in the twentieth century is finally settled, pride of place will certainly go to Blaster Bates. The demolition of large buildings by means of controlled explosion is the most emotive and beautiful of all modern forms. Council tower blocks blown on to their knees, begging for forgiveness; the skirts of cooling towers billowing and twisting in dainty curtsies; gasometers collapsing like dying ballerinas—you don't get thrills like that at the Tate. In a country as fixated on the past as this one is, any demolition is an act of profound moral courage. It's a national scandal that the Sertex School has had to confine its attention to provincial planning mistakes. What an enriching experience it would be to watch St Paul's cathedral or Wembley stadium crinkle up like an old balloon before vanishing into its own dust.

For those who would like to make a ballistic statement of their own, the secrets of the art were explained by Desmond Lynam on the BBC's new show *How Do They Do That?* Des also explained how to teach your dog to sing, how to make your cat eat with its paws, how to do a very impressive card trick, and how to separate Siamese twins. Television is notoriously incapable of distinguishing between the trivial and the profound. It doesn't bother Desmond. The next week's show encompassed one feature on grouting and another on how to rebuild your life after a traumatic amputation.

It is impossible not to be uplifted by the show's faith in humanity's ability to learn and grow. It reminds me of the old Teach Yourself books which dominated our local library—a black and yellow monument to the belief that a person can learn absolutely anything. With nothing but a library ticket you could teach yourself everything from Latin or personal enlightenment, to bookkeeping and psychotic cruelty (in fact, *How To Be Cruel* was one of my favourites).

Not all explanation is demystification of course. There comes a time in the history of any art form when the artists get fed up with art getting all the credit. They work hard to make it look easy and then it goes too far and the audience start to think it is easy. Most modern painting is about the difficulty of painting. The modern literary novel is largely about how frightfully difficult it is to write a literary novel. Now it seems to be the turn of magic. Penn and Teller keep explaining their tricks to the audience partly because it is pleasantly outrageous to do so but also to advertise their own skills and inventiveness. This is how you do it. Ha! You could never do it, could you?

You can write in to *How Do They..?* with requests. Personally I would like to know how they train presenters like Desmond's sidekick Jenny. She has a set of facial and spinal gestures which seems to defy the laws of human biology. She grins out all her vowels and does a convulsive sideways headbutt at every comma. There are few entertainment experiences in which it can honestly be said that subordinate clauses ending with vowels are the real highlights, but *How Do They Do That?* is definitely one of them.

The other highlight, of course, was the separation of the twins ('first you take a strip of medical grade Gore Tex...'). We followed them from the moment they were detected on the ultrasound scanner

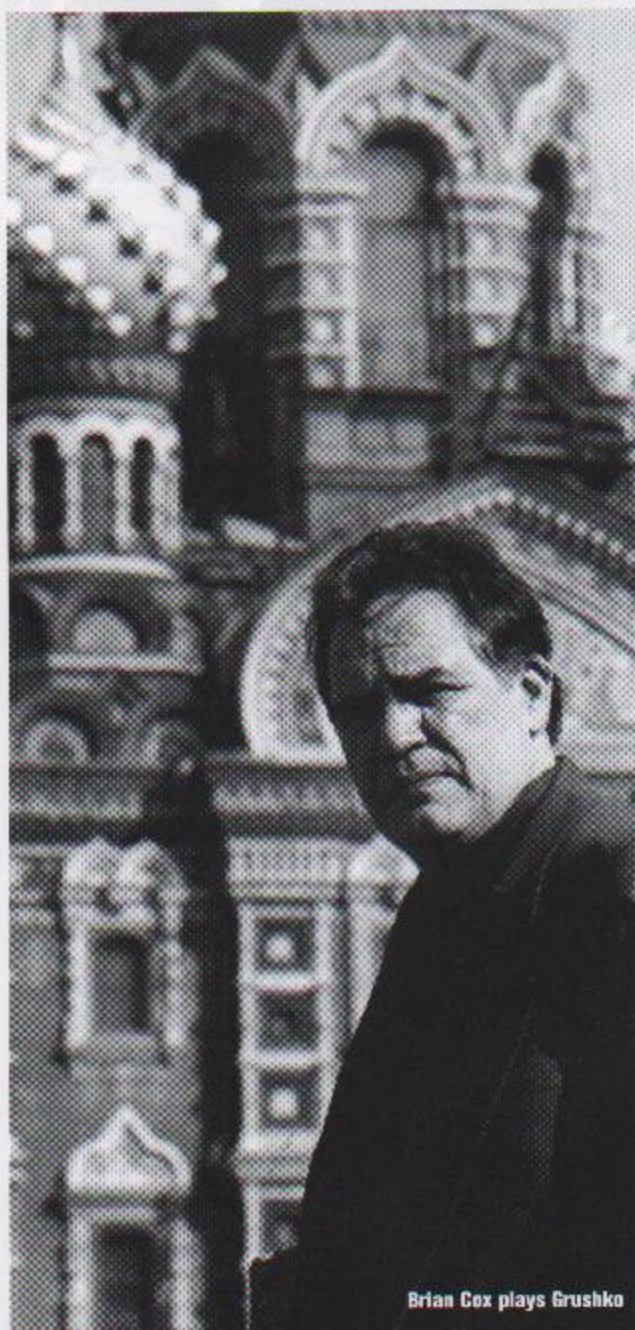
to the day they were born ('here's one I started earlier...'), via the incubator, to the operation. We saw the mother angsting while they went into theatre and we suddenly realised that she had pre-sold the video rights.

Now selling the story of your life and crimes is one thing, selling it before they have actually happened is something new. Something which has taken off in a big way. More or less everyone participating in the Winter Olympics seems to have done it. The most successful example is, of course, the Jamaican bobsleigh team. They knew they weren't much cop at the actual event (the nearest snow is 2000 miles away), but they also knew they were a good story. They sold the story of their Olympic adventure to Disney before they went, with the result that the reality and the fiction came out simultaneously and you had the weird feeling that the reality was somehow less real than the movie, because it was in effect just a trailer for the movie (though they did beat the Americans). Imagine if *The Ten Commandments* had been released during the Exodus itself.

Cool Runnings is about resourceful amateurism and the Olympic spirit. The other pre-sale was about the battle between Good and Evil, Nancy v Tonya. This one reads like the plot of a Chalet School novel. The decorous Nancy Kerrigan was kneecapped by her rival, Tonya Harding, but went on to recover and glide out of her league in the finals while Tonya whinged and moaned about the state of her skates, obligingly like a classic poor loser.

Like all Chalet School stories this one is really about class. Harding was from a poor family. She saw skating as her way out. The blue chip Kerrigan, on the other hand, looks and acts like Grace Kelly. All American stories about class end up defining it as a personal attribute rather than a social fact. Tonya simply had no class. When Nancy signed for Disney, Tonya signed for *Playboy*. Sports reporters moaned about the personal rivalry obscuring the real sport. It is indeed the case that we can remember who came tenth (Tonya) but not who won (a Ukrainian). The BBC, however, trailed the finals with the music from *Dallas* and lots of shots of the two girls making each other cry. So the final became a kind of sub-zero mud-wrestling bout. What else could it be? The highest technical achievement of a skater is tedious ease. The Tonya-Nancy story put the pain back into it, the Penn and Teller of the rink.

Both these realities went pretty much to story. The other big Olympics story was pre-sold not to a studio, but to the British public, and it all went wrong. It was the story of Torvill and Dean who—after 10 years' absence—would return in triumph and make Britain Great again. It was a comeback story. There is no word in the language more poignant than comeback, a hopeless imperative disguised as a noun. A successful comeback is a triumph over age, the negation of the passage of Time, the erasure of Death. Torvill and Dean did not negate the passage of Time. They simply reminded us of how crap it is to live in a nation whose self-image is so fragile that it can be mortally wounded by a failure in what is essentially the synchronised swimming of the Winter Olympics.



Brian Cox plays Grushko

Ian Scott asked Philip Kerr about his novel, *Dead Meat*, just filmed as *Grushko* by the BBC

St Petersburg cop

was first approached by an independent film producer to adapt a Russian bestseller set in the fifties called *The Sad Detective*. Philip Kerr found the book a bit too sad and argued that, with all the changes taking place in Russia, it would be better to work on a contemporary idea. He was given the go-ahead by the BBC and set out to Leningrad to research the story.

The result was *Dead Meat*, which follows Chief of Detectives Yevgeni Grushko, the leading anti-mafia policeman in the now renamed city of St Petersburg, as he tries to crack a series of murders. What inspires Kerr is not the story itself, but the characters and the context: 'I write about outsiders, marginalised by society', ordinary people under extraordinary conditions. Kerr feels his characters have a strong sense of having been 'betrayed by politicians'.

Did his characters' sense of alienation reflect his own? 'I don't feel angry about anything in particular. It is more like my own feelings of bewilderment and a sense of a future which is not necessarily going to be better than the present'.

Martin Cruz Smith, who wrote *Gorky Park*, is the best-known crime writer working on contemporary Russia. Cruz Smith is not popular with the Russian police. Philip Kerr is unsure whether they like *Dead Meat* any better. 'When I left St Petersburg I was advised by the chief of police to "make sure my book was not like *Gorky Park*".' Kerr was surprised by this advice. He thinks *Gorky Park* was 'an important book, written at the time when the country was opening up'.

In Arkady Renko, the main character in *Gorky Park*, Martin Cruz Smith created the first major contemporary Russian detective. Renko is the son of a leading Soviet general and a loner. Published in 1981, *Gorky Park* captures in vivid detail the daily routine of the Soviet people in a society out of control. The book was nominated by *Time* magazine as 'the thriller of eighties', became an international bestseller and was made into a major film. What impressed Kerr most about the book was its 'real people'. The character of Renko appears in two other novels, *Polaris* and *Red Square*. The latter is set around the period of the Soviet Union collapsing and focuses on the rise of organised crime with the introduction of the market. Cruz Smith's characters all aspire to be like Western businessmen but have no illusions as to the nature of the market. 'Another way to say "non-violent crimes" is "business"', says an illegal banker in *Red Square*.

In the Russian mafia crime novel stakes, Kerr's *Dead Meat* has the edge over Cruz Smith's *Red Square*. Cruz

Smith tries to cover the great events unfolding around his characters, such as the breaking away of various republics, leaving you wishing he would just concentrate on the story. By contrast, in *Dead Meat* Kerr uses his central characters to guide the reader through life in St Petersburg today, but not at the expense of the story. Kerr succeeds in capturing a strong sense of time and place while still telling a gripping tale.

Novels on the Soviet Union and now Russia written in the West often tell us a lot more about the preoccupations of Western society than about reality in the East. The success of Martin Cruz Smith's novels coincided with the West's love affair with Gorbachev and the theme he pursued reflected the West's fears over the unstable conditions in Russia.

Unfortunately Kerr falls into the same trap of viewing Russia through the prism of Western concerns. I asked Kerr what he thought the future held for Russia. 'Russians are going to get a shock when unemployment really hits there. I think we should be very worried about the coincidence of unemployment and extreme nationalism.' The twin fears of economic and social breakdown are the major Western preoccupations over Russia today.

An exaggerated sense of threat from Russia reflects the crisis of confidence in the West. Kerr told me that following *Grushko*—*Dead Meat*'s name for TV—a number of other television projects were in development on organised crime in Russia, including one from Lynda La Plante (*Widows, Civvies*).

In all of his novels Kerr deals with extreme social conditions, the rise of fascism, an apocalyptic future of uncontained violence and sickening squalor, the collapse of Stalinism and the establishment of the market in Russia. Kerr's re-creation of prewar Berlin in his Bernie Gunther novels is compelling. He does not let the historical situation crush his characters. But it seems he has had rather more trouble protecting their integrity against the banal agendas of the television people.

Grushko was filmed entirely on location in St Petersburg. The process of turning his story into a television series was, says Kerr, 'painful'. 'I had in mind the pace of *Tinker Tailor* or *Smiley's People* but the producer wanted more car chases and a higher body count'. This conflicted with the BBC request for Kerr to develop the family side of the story. 'I think they wanted me to turn it into *Love Hurts* or *Casualty*. The BBC seems to be obsessed with domestic drama.' ●

Dead Meat is published in paperback as *Grushko* by Arrow at £4.99, and is currently showing on BBC1.

THE

MARXIST REVIEW OF BOOKS

Daniel Nassim asks whether capitalism has really gone global

In bed with Madonna?

The Global Marketplace: Capitalism and Its Future, John Redwood, Harper Collins, £18 hbk

The Work of Nations: A Blueprint for the Future, Robert B Reich, Simon & Schuster, £7.99 pbk

After the announcement that British Aerospace was to sell Rover to the German car giant BMW, John Major was tackled by the Labour leader at commons question time. John Smith asked Major: 'Is it now the government's definition of success for a British company that it is taken over by a foreign competitor?' Major, for once, managed an effective put-down, telling Smith to 'catch up with the modern world. The fact is that he simply does not understand how free markets work' (*Independent*, 2 February 1994). Modern companies, argued Major, trade across frontiers.

One reason for this rare display of assuredness from Major was that his argument is backed up by the influential theory of globalisation. Virtually every significant social thinker accepts the argument that the world, in some way, is becoming more globally integrated. We are told that we live in a global village where global communications allow global companies to buy and sell goods in a global market. The brand names of our favourite products are recognised by consumers the world over: Sony, Sega, Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Mercedes and so on. People from Kent to Kyoto can enjoy music by Madonna or films by Steven Spielberg. Soon we are all due to inhabit the world of 'cyberspace' where we will communicate through personal computer networks.

One of Major's cabinet colleagues has gone to the trouble of writing a book outlining the impact of globalisation on the world. John Redwood, the Welsh secretary, believes that globalisation is on balance a good thing. For him, free enterprise—the global marketplace—means democracy and prosperity for the world's millions. In this

view, state intervention in the economy in anything but its most limited form is likely to stunt development and encourage dictatorship.

The theory of globalisation has clear political implications. If the world economy really is globalised then it will not succumb easily to intervention by a national state. In which case the free marketeers must be right, and the traditional project favoured by leftists and Keynesians, of regulating capitalism through state intervention, is hopelessly out of date. What's more, if the world is really one big global market then who can blame the Tory government for the slump? Cabinet ministers are always ready on hand to explain that there is nothing wrong with British capitalism in particular, the problem is the worldwide recession.

Globalisation also raises problems for Marxists. If capitalism could really overcome national boundaries there would be no need to get rid of it. The whole Marxist case is based on the chronically uneven and crisis-ridden character of capitalist development. There would be no point in trying to overthrow a system that could unite and provide for the whole world.

So does globalisation exist? The problem with taking up the idea of globalisation is that its adherents rarely spell out what they mean by it. It is more like an assumption implicit in much discussion on economic and political life. John Redwood's book is typical, failing to develop any clear conception of globalisation. In fact, *The Global Marketplace* is a particularly useless example of the genre. It reads like a series of speeches on different parts of the world united only by a vague sense that the ►

world is somehow becoming more globalised and that the free market is A Good Thing. All of this from a man who an Oxford don, writing in the *Guardian*, called 'the most intellectually gifted member of the present government' (4 January 1994)—an observation which can only confirm the public's suspicions about the intellectual qualities of the Tory Party leadership.

In contrast, *The Work of Nations* by Robert Reich, a Harvard professor turned president Clinton's labour secretary, gives a good presentation of the ideas of globalisation. Reich, a man associated with the left of the American political mainstream, has developed a theory of globalisation that is far more coherent than anything on offer from the British right. His conception of the new global era is clear from the first page:

'We are living through a transformation that will rearrange the politics and economics of the coming century. There will be no national products or technologies, no national corporations, no national industries. There will no longer be national economies, at least as we have come to understand that concept. All that will remain within national borders are the people who comprise the nation.'

Reich contrasts the current period with America in the middle of the twentieth century. In his view American society at that time was characterised by a national bargain between 'Big Business' and 'Big Labor'. American corporations would produce a large volume of goods and a large slice of the revenue they received would be paid to middle managers and production workers (the 'middle class' in Reich's terminology). In return for decent pay, organised workers would avoid strikes and work stoppages: 'The bargain thus rested on a tacit agreement by each party...to exercise restraint, sacrificing immediate gains for the sake of larger gains for all the parties later on.' (p68)

More recently, in Reich's view, fierce competition from foreign companies has been responsible for breaking up this cosy relationship. American industry tried three sets of measures to counteract its effects: protectionism against foreign goods, wage cuts and financial speculation. But to no avail. 'From a peak of nearly 10 per cent in 1965, the average net after tax profit rate of America's non-financial corporations dropped to less than 7 per cent in 1980, a decline of more than one-third.' (p76)

Reich believes that globalisation has transformed society. It is no longer divided into the old categories of business and labour

As a result of these pressures we are apparently entering a new era. American corporations are ceasing to exist in any meaningful sense. Instead there is a 'global web' of enterprises without any distinct nationality.

Reich believes that globalisation has transformed society. It is no longer divided into the old categories of business and labour. Instead there are three main kinds of work emerging: routine production services, in-person services and symbolic analysts. While the first two types of services must be provided person-to-person, symbolic analysts can sell their services worldwide.

It is the symbolic analysts, who comprise the top fifth of the population, who have all the global fun. These are involved in 'problem-solving, problem-identifying, and strategic brokering activities' and include research scientists, design engineers, software engineers, public relations executives, investment bankers, lawyers and real estate developers. Among them Reich numbers such global celebrities as Steven Spielberg, Bill Cosby, Eddie Murphy, Sylvester Stallone and Madonna.

It is at this point that Reich identifies a problem with his schema. Whereas 'all Americans used to be in roughly the same economic boat' now they are 'in different boats, one sinking rapidly, one sinking more slowly, and the third rising steadily' (p208). He believes that the symbolic analysts derive great benefits from the global economy. In contrast the in-person service providers are doing badly and the routine producers are doing very badly. In other words, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. As a result of this divergence of interests the communal ties that bind Americans together are being undermined.

In just over 300 pages Reich moves from proclaiming that we are living in a new global world to espousing the old recipe of economic nationalism

In Reich's view there are three possible responses to this problem. The first is 'zero-sum nationalism', an aggressive form of nationalism which assumes that if one country gains then another loses. The second is 'impassive cosmopolitanism', usually espoused by symbolic analysts, which can lead to the denial of any social responsibility to the broader community. The final position, which Reich himself advocates, is 'positive economic nationalism', in which 'each nation's citizens take primary responsibility for enhancing the capacities of their countrymen for full and productive lives, but who also work with other nations to ensure that these improvements do not come at others' expense' (p311).

And there's the rub. In just over 300 pages Reich moves from proclaiming that we are living in a new global world to espousing the old recipe of economic nationalism. However hard he tries this just does not add up. Reich ends up asking us all to make sacrifices for what he believes is the greater good.

So where does Reich go wrong? Like most orthodox theorists he gets so transfixed by the changing forms of capitalism on the surface that he loses sight of the real underlying relationships in society.

In the first place, despite the trend towards more inter-

national trade and investment, the world is not global in the sense that Reich uses the term. The world economy is still primarily organised around nation states. Although cross-border investment and trade is growing as a proportion it is still a very definite minority. It is true that about 20 per cent of the output of American firms, for example, is produced overseas. But this still leaves 80 per cent produced at home.

Even the financial markets, which nowadays are often held up as the essence of globalisation, are far from completely globalised. Only foreign exchange and US Treasury bonds are predominantly global markets. Other sectors—such as equity markets or retail finance—are still largely national.

But Reich's error is not simply factual. He is wrong to counterpose the internationalisation of capital to state intervention. In reality the two trends are both strengthening. The world economy is becoming, in relative terms, more global. But nation states are at the same time becoming ever more interventionist. For example, the Clinton administration, of which Reich is a member, is in the process of trying to impose import quotas on Japan to ensure that it buys more American goods. The nation state is still there to protect the interests of a particular national capitalist class.

The reasons why Reich and others from the retreating left have embraced the idea of globalisation have more to do with their own feeling of inadequacy than with any objective developments in the world economy. In the past such people saw state intervention as the means to solve economic problems. But, with the collapse of Stalinism in the East and the failure of Keynesian state spending programmes to stop the slump in the West, they have lost faith in their old solutions. The conclusion they draw is that the free marketeers must have been right after all—the state can only hold the market back. But instead of admitting that they were wrong, they try to argue that state-led national development is a thing of the past, superseded by the globalisation of the market.

In reality it is the market that is the problem. The trends towards internationalisation and growing state intervention are both symptoms of falling profitability. But these trends do not result from foreign competition. Rather, as Marxists have long recognised, they are immanent tendencies in the capitalist economy.

British Aerospace, used by John Major as an example of free market economics, is actually an illustration of how the nation state props up 'private enterprise'

Increasing state intervention is necessary to offset the impact of falling profitability. Despite the rhetoric of 'free markets' the reality is very different. The state has found numerous ways to keep 'free enterprise' going, especially through the slump years—giving many kinds of subsidies, curbing competition and directly running large sections of the economy.

Similarly, the trend towards internationalisation is an attempt by capitalists to try to overcome the barriers to national development at a global level. Much foreign direct investment—like Honda's involvement in Rover—is undertaken to guarantee a capitalist nation a foothold in large foreign markets that might otherwise be protected.

British Aerospace, used by John Major as an example of free market economics, is actually an illustration of how the nation state props up 'private enterprise'. Back in 1988 British Aerospace bought Rover from the state for £150m. Six years later it sold its stake to BMW for £800m. The suspicion that British Aerospace bought the car company from the state at a knockdown price has proved well-founded.

In his role as Clinton's labour secretary Reich is already putting his ideas for increasing America's national competitiveness into practice, by imposing an austerity programme on American workers

Nor does it end there. British Aerospace is one of the most pampered companies in Britain. For example, the government negotiated for Malaysia to buy BAe Hawk trainer aircraft as part of a £1 billion arms-for-aid deal personally signed by prime minister Margaret Thatcher in 1988. The British government also provided backing for an even bigger BAe deal to sell combat aircraft to Saudi Arabia in the mid-1980s.

British Aerospace is supposed to be one of British capitalism's most globally successful companies. Yet the only way it can survive is through a 'dependency culture' of sweeteners and other forms of covert support from the state. The free market sounds like a nice idea in theory, Mr Major, pity it doesn't work in practice.

While Major's pronouncements ignore the reality of the state propping up 'free enterprise', it is Reich's pragmatic recognition of this need for the nation state that leads him back on the path to economic nationalism. In his role as Clinton's labour secretary he is already putting his ideas for increasing America's national competitiveness into practice, by imposing an austerity programme on American workers. And, despite Reich's denials, the encouragement of nationalism in a great power like the USA is always liable to take a chauvinist, anti-foreign form—as the Iraqis, Somalis and Haitians will testify.

The trends characterised as 'globalisation' offer us no escape from the crisis of capitalism. The one sort of globalism which could offer a way forward would be the development of a new internationalism, that can express the common interests of working people worldwide. Contrary to Reich's argument, all classes in society have never been in the same boat. It is up to those of us without a stake in this society to fight together for something better. We should not be tempted by Reich's dangerous diversion of getting into bed with Madonna.

This Game of Ghosts, Joe Simpson,
Jonathan Cape, £16.99 hbk

Not content with regulating our sex lives and our partying activity, the government is now sticking its nose into climbing. After a record number of climbers died in the Scottish Highlands in January and February, the government joined hands with the 'something must be done' brigade and launched an investigation. To what end? Not to save taxpayers' money, since the rescue services are voluntary and the RAF helicopter crews say searching for missing climbers is the best training they could have. No, what we have is another example of the urge to regulate and sanitise. The nannies, would like to turn climbing into one big Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. In this autobiographical follow-up to the award-winning *Touching the Void*—his tale of disaster and survival in the High Andes—Joe Simpson brings out the spirit of adventure and risk that makes climbing what it is.

Why climb? Simpson asks, and answers this age-old question beautifully: 'Why ascend a mountain by its hardest, most dangerous face when you can walk, hands in pocket, up the other side?...If it were simply adrenalin you were after, you could take a ride on a roller coaster, snort a line of cocaine, indulge in a fraught extramarital affair, any number of things have thrills without kills. Why be a conquistador of the useless, a compulsive addict of the absurd?' Not as is often said 'because it is there', but because 'there is a perverse delight in putting oneself in a potentially dangerous situation, knowing that your experience and skill makes you quite safe. To stand with a friend in eerie moonlight at the foot of a vast mountain wall and be certain that you can safely reach the top—that is a wonderful feeling of self-confidence'.

Traditionally, climbing has been unregulated. Were this to change, it would no longer be climbing. So long as individuals do no harm to others, it should be nobody's business what they do in the mountains. Simpson's first serious climbing experience was in the Scottish Highlands in winter, and a serious accident nearly put an end to him. Throughout his career, Simpson has thrown himself in at the deep end, and learned as he went along—usually from the mistakes he made, and by teaming up with more experienced climbers for a difficult route. This, not training courses or whatever, is the usual pattern of development for any climber. With greater experience, a climber acquires a greater understanding of the dangers involved. Taking risks becomes an increasingly conscious decision as you progress onto more difficult routes.

'Quite safe' would not be my description of the kind of climbing Simpson engages in. *This Game of Ghosts* chronicles the number of near-death experiences Simpson has had, and the number of his friends that have gone west. The beauty of climbing is that, to an extent, you choose the level of risk involved: from rock-climbing on outcrops where broken limbs are as bad as you could reasonably expect, to Himalayan climbing where on average one in 10 fails to return. Not everyone will want to follow in Simpson's footsteps, but anyone who has climbed will admire his sense of adventure. More power to his elbow, and his pen.

John Gillott

Beyond Westminster: Finding Hope in Britain,
Paddy Ashdown, Simon & Schuster, £9.99 pbk

Beyond Westminster is the result of Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown's tour of Britain to find out what the country is thinking. Its premise is to the point: '[the] dislocation between politics and real life is creating a dangerous and growing gap between politicians and people in Britain and other advanced Western democracies.' Paddy's tour is undertaken with an air of false humility—to let the people tell the politician what is going on—but what he finds tells us more about him than it does about the country. Ashdown is the faithful mouthpiece of the little man, struggling with big government on the one hand, and a baying mob of working class thieves and drug addicts on the other.

The breakdown of law and order is the strongest impression of Britain in *Beyond Westminster*. Estates in Camden and Moss Side are littered with syringes. One Bristol estate, Hartcliffe, exemplifies all that has gone wrong; or rather two estates because, as Ashdown tells us, there is 'Darkness Hartcliffe' and there is 'Daylight Hartcliffe': 'These two communities live separate lives with different standards and opposite body clocks. The former sleep to avoid the day. The latter barricade their doors at night', as if Count Dracula was a-roaming.

Ashdown's prurient investigation of the depressed regions is in a long tradition of liberal-minded writing. A hundred years ago, Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree garnered horror stories about how the other half lived to try to frighten the middle classes into paying for social improvements. The difference is that this time there are no social reforms on offer. Instead Ashdown wants to see more local anti-crime schemes like Solihull's Crime Reduction Programme, which, our author faithfully repeats from the police press releases, is organised from the 'bottom up'. What that means is that it is run by a former probation officer and veteran of the Worcesters and Foresters.

Often Ashdown's viewpoint seems quite radical. He makes a point of hanging out with the East End Asians that his party in Tower Hamlets has been accused of attacking. In Oxford he visits the gay and lesbian centre. But what he really identifies with in both cases is the sense of 'a persecuted and misunderstood minority group'—his own middle class constituency as he imagines it, standing up against the oafish horde, decently working away.

Exactly who Ashdown thinks the people that have lost a voice in Westminster are becomes clear in his account of the Solihull Crime Reduction Programme's grass roots: 'schools, welfare organisations, business, voluntary bodies—the whole community'. For Ashdown 'the whole community' consists of people like him, the middle class do-gooders that deal with the 'social problems' (that's the rest of us) that government ignores. But, contrary to Ashdown's complaints, these are exactly the sort of people whose influence upon policy is growing daily through quangos, urban development corporations and all the other institutions that are supplanting Britain's moribund democracy.

James Heartfield



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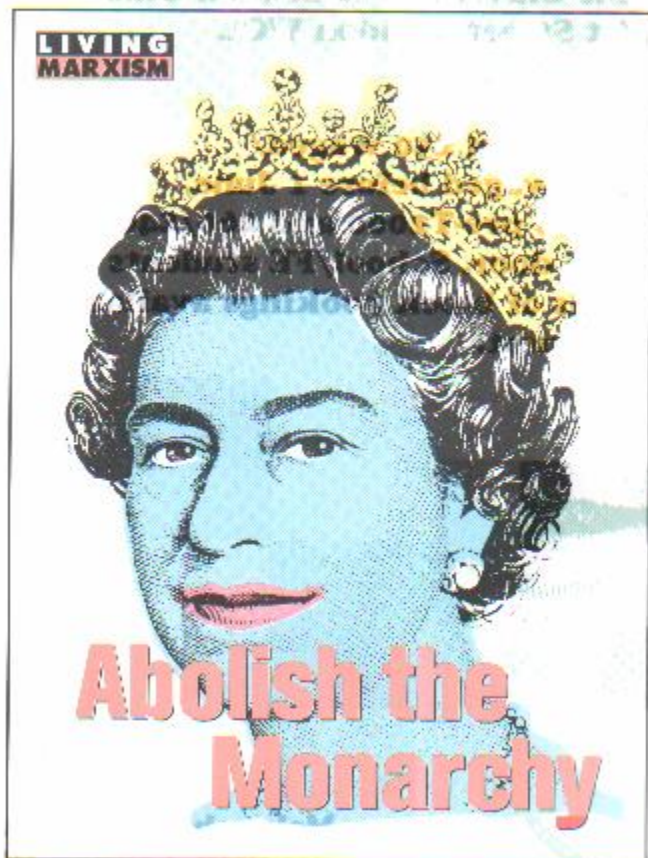
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