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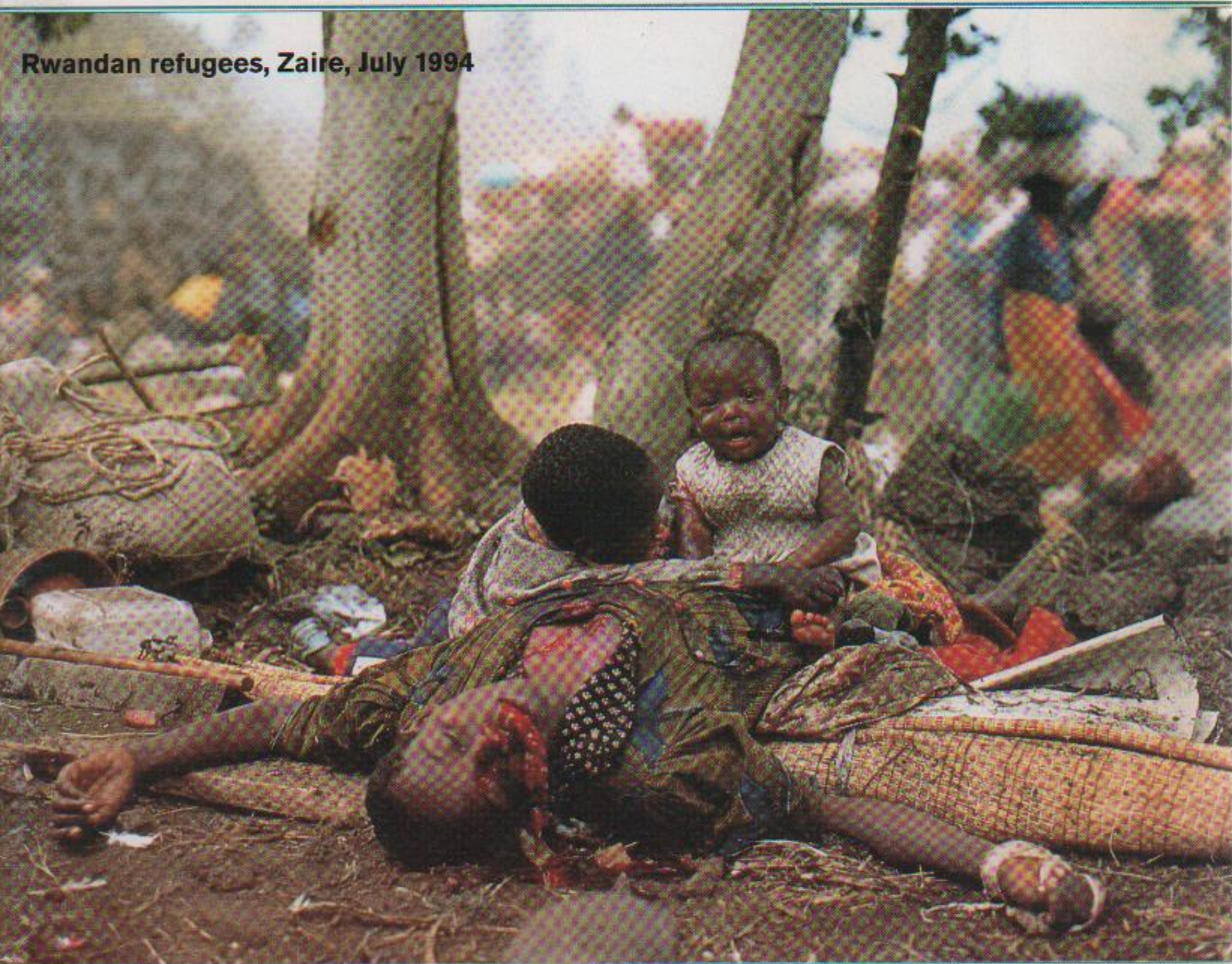
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Mick Hume

An age of evil?

Turn on the television or read the newspapers and it seems as if evil is all around us today. Why have Hutus killed Tutsis in Rwanda? Why does Nato have to bomb the Bosnian Serbs? Why has the USA threatened to overthrow the regime in Haiti? Because these people are evil. Why has the British home secretary been forced to extend the prison sentence imposed on the Merseyside boys who killed young James Bulger? Because they are the symbol of evil in our own cities.

All manner of horrors, tragedies and crimes are now held up as proof of the power of human evil, evidence that there is 'a beast within us all' which can suddenly pounce out of blind hatred. The implication of talking up the power of evil is always that there is something rotten in the human condition, something inherent within the individual, which makes people prone to doing wrong.

That is an idea far more dangerous than any Hutu militiaman or boy from Bootle could ever be.

In modern times, the concept of evil has generally been considered so irrational that it has even fallen out of fashion with those who invented it—the churches. They have long found that old-fashioned fire-and-brimstone morality is out of step with the mood of our more sophisticated society. As a consequence it has become common for vicars and even bishops to say that they don't believe in the old vengeful God/good v evil scenario 'in a literal sense', and to look for some more modern-sounding moral code.

It is all the more mysterious, then, to find that the notion of human evil is suddenly in vogue with the spokesmen of secular society. What's more, the new emphasis

upon the problem of evil seems particularly prevalent among the least Godly public figures—like Murdoch journalists or Tory backbenchers, people not always noted for their high sense of morality. So why should concern with human evil have come to the fore again?

It is not too difficult to see why the authorities would be keen to discuss domestic and international issues in these terms. The advantages which accrue to them from a fascination with human evil are clear enough. After all, if 'the beast within' is blamed for the things that afflict our lives, then the employers, bankers and government ministers without cannot be held responsible, can they?

Any approach which begins by ascribing the problems of Africa or the inner cities to the influence of evil or immorality always ends up pointing the finger at the behaviour of flawed individuals. Which gives a flawed social system like capitalism, and the elite class which presides over it, the opportunity to get off the hook.

Better still, from the authorities' point of view, the preoccupation with human evil provides the pretext for them to tighten their control over the rest of us. If our problems really are caused by the fact that some people are just naturally no good, then the best that society can do is to try to control them. So every discussion about evil and immorality ends up with a demand for more regulation, and a call to invest more power in the hands of the authorities, whether that means creating a new form of colonialism in Africa (see centre pages) or setting up more surveillance cameras in the inner cities.

A funny thing, that—while these debates usually start out with the declaration that there is a beast within us all, it quickly

becomes clear that 'us all' does not include those leading the discussion. Enconced in their air-conditioned offices, the newspaper editors and TV producers clearly feel immune to the human failings which they are keen to discover among the people of Rwanda or Liverpool. And the government ministers, police chiefs and army generals entrusted with taming the human beast are also considered free from the contamination. It seems that evil, like dirt, always has a natural tendency to attach itself to the great unwashed rather than the pure-of-heart members of the elite.

Exposing why those in authority are happy to talk about the influence of human evil is one thing. But it does not answer the other big question: why do these notions seem to find such resonance in the public imagination today? Why are people in the 1990s apparently more willing to accept explanations which focus on the failings of individuals? The reason lies not in any 'natural' impulse, but in what has happened to human society.

Over the past 15 years or so, every change in society has worked to weaken the links between people, undermining the old consciousness of a common good. The trouble is, that this lost sense of identification has not yet been replaced by anything new (witness the banal declarations from every politician of the need to bring back a sense of 'community'). As a result, we are left with a heightened sense of individuation and privatisation among people—and heightened feelings of fear and insecurity.

These developments have drastically altered many people's perspectives on life and its problems. From a normal distance, it ought to be possible to see that what we are facing today is a social impasse,

created by a combination of economic slump and governmental crisis. But few people today feel able to take a normal distance from events. Instead, most now interpret the social malaise in immediate, individual terms. They experience society's impasse as a lack of meaning in their own lives. And they see their own security threatened, not by an out-of-control capitalist system, but by malignant, out-of-control individuals.

As a consequence of this, public opinion is now more prepared to accept individualised explanations for all kinds of social problems; for instance, it is widely acknowledged that if your health is poor it is because you don't look after yourself properly, rather than because you don't have enough money or you work in dangerous conditions.

In much the same way, it becomes easier to identify the cause of the world's major problems as the crimes of evil individuals rather than the crisis of a social system. Individual insecurities are recycled as a demand for more order to cope with the 'underclass' at home or the 'tribal killers' abroad. And in this atmosphere, fearful people become open to accepting the kind of authoritarian controls and restraints that they would not otherwise tolerate. The scare about human evil turns into another law-and-order crusade.

This mood should be challenged at every opportunity. The trend to interpret social problems as a product of evil or immoral individuals is leading us in a pessimistic and very dangerous direction. It is always underpinned by the assumption that humans in general don't amount to very much; that people are a pretty poor lot, prisoners of age-old animal instincts. If that is true then there can be no new solutions

to our problems, and no real hope for the future. All we can do is retreat further into our private fortresses, keep looking over our shoulders to see what our neighbours are up to, and entrust yet more power to the 'enlightened' authorities in the hope that they might save us from each other.

On the other hand, by situating the world's problems in their proper context, as the products of a society which has reached an impasse, it becomes possible to see some far more positive possibilities for us all as individuals—if we can act together for social change.

Back in the eighties, Margaret Thatcher famously said that there is no such thing as society, there are only individual men and women. She was 100 per cent wrong. In the end, there is only society, and all of us are shaped by our relationship to it. Even the most rebellious, distinctive individuals react to social circumstances and pressures. Go along to a protest against the Tory Criminal Justice Bill, for instance, and you will find that even those people most in favour of individual freedom of expression are distinguished by the fact that they all dress and wear their hair in a similar way.

The fact that our lives are shaped by society does not mean we are passive objects or robots. Instead, society itself is created and continually recreated by people. There is nothing natural within us, 'beastly' or otherwise, driving us to act in a certain way. All human behaviour is the product of human initiative and the interaction between people in particular social circumstances.

From this perspective it becomes possible to say that, yes, anybody can commit an atrocity (although history shows that usually only those with privileges in society, and power to defend them, do so). But that possibility is not the product of human evil or

individual immorality. Instead, Rwanda and the brutality of the inner cities of the West are different consequences of living in a class society built on foundations of want, alienation and violence.

From that same perspective it also becomes possible to say that individuals are capable of tremendous new achievements. We are not limited or restrained by human nature, or the beast within, or the touch of evil. Our life choices are constrained only by the type of society in which we live, and the material and moral barriers which the market economy and those who run it put in the way of anybody who attempts to break out of their conventions.

In general, the problems which confront us and the truly destructive trends in the world are caused by the attempt to preserve social institutions and rules which have outlived their usefulness. The attempt to preserve the status quo provides the impulse to control and repress that hampers the realisation of the human potential at every turn.

There is no such thing as a timeless evil, an original sin within us all. What's evil is a system which, instead of unleashing the creative potential of society in a constructive way, continually seeks to wall it in and hold people back. Once the barriers are in place, and we can see no way forward, it is easy for self-belief to be destroyed, and for us to fall prey to religious myths about humanity that are really the invention of our own insecurity.

If we believe in human evil, we are doomed. But if we focus on challenging the barriers to human emancipation thrown up by capitalist society, we can be free. That will require us to believe in our ourselves and our abilities, instead of breathing in old lies and legends about the evil that men do.

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The other OJ scandal

The OJ Simpson murder scandal is indicative of the level of racism in the USA. The case also shows the extent to which the state has chiselled away at civil liberties.

The case has a lot in common with the trial of boxer Mike Tyson for rape (Tyson was recently denied parole because he maintained his innocence and did not earn his high school equivalency diploma while incarcerated). During Tyson's trial, media reports focused on his problem-child behaviour and gang involvement. Likewise the Simpson trial is no longer about the brutal murder of a woman and her male friend. Reports surfaced early on that Simpson had been a gang member and probably a wife-beater. While this disclosure can only strengthen feminist and liberal cries for more police intervention in domestic violence, the state's encroachment into our lives may not stop there.

The Fourth and Fifth Amendments of the Bill of Rights guarantee, respectively, no unlawful search and seizure by the government without a warrant, and the right not to incriminate oneself (the right to silence). Both are in jeopardy here.

The most damning evidence obtained by the Los Angeles Police Department from the Simpson estate was done so without a warrant. The judge admitted the evidence on the grounds that the police officers were acting benevolently. Simpson has also been required to turn over blood samples and 100 of his hairs for DNA-testing: he may be convicted by evidence he provided himself.

Legislation about the admissibility of DNA-testing is pending in 14 states. Many of the bills provide for an ongoing DNA database of convicts. These increased powers are being afforded the government all in the name of protecting women from further victimisation. While I think that rapists and wife-beaters deserve to have their heads kicked in, I can't believe that increasing state and police power is all a benevolent act to protect little ol' me.

Justine Prudhom *New York*

Misty-eyed over old Ireland?

In his August review of Irish books, Mick Kennedy acclaims Mark Ryan's *War and Peace in Ireland* because 'whereas Desmond Fennell is inclined to retreat into nostalgia for the Ireland of Yeats, Connolly and George Russell, Ryan keeps his feet in today's Ireland'.

But when we turn to read Ryan's introduction to his interview with Bernadette McAiskey, we find him wallowing in his own brand of nostalgia.

He tells us how he was brought up in Dublin at a time when Ireland still felt Irish. As an exile he now seems bitter that Dublin has become 'as British as the Home Counties'. Again, Ryan is appalled at the growing difference between the South and the North, but for him at least the North seems 'more like Ireland because the past is so present everywhere'. Ugh!

Ryan has a point about the growth of passivity in Ireland as republicanism dies out. But how long can that last when the peace process means more instability in Ireland not less? That's why it's strange that Ryan should be nostalgic about the old differences between Ireland and Britain. The abolition of national divisions at least means that a major barrier has been removed. If Irish people view themselves as essentially the same as British people, all the more chance to bring them together against the London-Dublin establishment. To slip into nostalgia myself, that's what Marx and Engels advocated during the Chartist upheavals.

Sean Fearon *Dublin*

Friendly feminists

James Malone is quite right to have a poke at Catharine MacKinnon's brand of feminism (*Marxist Review of Books*, August). Patriarchy theorists have abandoned the struggle for equality and taken up the battle against individual men. But socialist and humanist feminists today have as little time for MacKinnon and Dworkin as Marxists. In attacking feminism now we are in as much danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater as socialist feminists were with Marxism at the beginning of the eighties.

Women are a permanent part of the working class and many left feminists are attempting to organise women, struggling for equality. Not everyone calling themselves a feminist agrees with MacKinnon or so-called radical feminism. Hold your fire, they're on our side!

ST Brown *Pontypriid*

Tribalism hurts

Sabine Reul and Andy Clarkson make light of the problem of tribalism in the Rwandan war ('The invention of tribalism', July). It is fair enough to point to the way that Western ideas of tribes and races have been imposed upon African society from without. But that does not mean that they have no influence. Indeed the opposite is the case. Like the problem of national self-determination in Eastern Europe, tribalism has spun out of control. Without the restraining influence of the pan-Africanism of the Cold War, petty ethnic rivalries threaten to destroy civil society in Africa. In Uganda, Yoweri

Museveni's government is trying to overcome tribal divisions by promoting a loyalty to political institutions of a more universal nature. It is not perfect, but it's better than the collapse into chaos.

Patricia Lenihan *Nottingham*

The dangerous nerd

I've just read your article on the Criminal Justice Bill ('Power to police the people', July). What the fuck does John Major think he is doing? This man was elected in Thatcher's wake on the grounds that he was a nerd, a 'safe' bet. Now I remember why kids like that were picked on. They're even more dangerous than an army of pissed-up footy fans.

I've grown into manhood knowing only Tory rule, and not one good thing has come out of it. But the thing that quite frankly scares the shit out of me is that now I cannot tell them that (assuming the bill becomes law). In one move, dear John has ripped out a nation's vocal cords. I think that the Tories just want to control the people, turn a nation into Stepford Wives.

Why can't I be free? I was always taught that this is a free country. Would a free country criminalise free movement, expression, gathering? I doubt it.

Why is the government so scared of people who erroneously believe that they are free? I honestly believe that instead of addressing real issues they divert our attention and cripple free thinkers by criminalisation of the groups who are almost truly free.

Alec Buchanan *Chertsey, Surrey*
Party-goer, protester, pot-smoker, and very very pissed off

What alternative?

In the March edition of *Living Marxism* it was announced that subsequent issues of the magazine would seek to address some of the themes raised by those clearly disillusioned by 'old political solutions'. A number of common questions were cited: 'Living Marxism is good at arguing against what exists, but what do you stand for?'; 'What is the alternative to a capitalist society?'

As far as I can tell, issue after issue has passed without this pledge being fulfilled. In fact, I was just about to write to you for an explanation when I read 'There is an alternative' (August).

After reading it with interest, all I can say is—'what a bloody cop out'. So *Living Marxism* readers who have the audacity to ask for some alternatives do not really want answers, just an excuse to take the piss. So much for your

expressed faith in the 'human potential'. We are informed that we cannot expect to be offered any alternatives because none can be conceived of while we continue to exist within capitalist society. How then will this present structure fail?

Frank Richards does not appear to want to offer anything that may be construed as a concrete proposal, though he does seem to intimate that as people become more critical of our present society, something may (miraculously?) happen. And there we have it. *Living Marxism's* response to all those awkward questions raised by readers is...to carry on precisely as before.

This sophistry was not worth the four-month wait. Personally I was not expecting a fully fledged 'blueprint for a better world'. I did, however, expect some discussion of possible alternatives, even if purely hypothetical. At least you could offer us some link between *Living Marxism's* present negative approach and how this may translate into a wider programme of political activity.

David R Clarke Brighton

Sporting questions

Ann Bradley ('Gloves off', June) rubbished boxing's detractors and highlighted how other activities are more dangerous. She also introduced a few pearls of conventional wisdom herself.

Ms Bradley's stereotyping of 'splendid and well-bred rigger chaps stamping on each other's necks in the ruck' was a classic. Defending boxing from its ill-informed critics on the one hand and throwing a few wild punches at another much-maligned sport. For Ms Bradley's information, rugby is played by people from many walks of life and the splendid chaps are increasingly being joined by splendid chapesses as women's rugby is now one of Britain's fastest-growing sports.

Chris Wheal Lewisham

Today the press is awash with fear and loathing: 'threat of this' and 'disintegration of that' are now the staple diet of what passes for serious news coverage. Fears about the future are being transformed into excuses for further incursions on our freedom to think and do as we please. This process is not only taking place in the obvious sense of passing laws, but also

through more insidious channels.

The invention of a debate about 'dangerous' sports dovetails nicely with the wider panics about social disintegration and society spinning out of control. By talking up such non-issues not only do the authorities shift the focus away from the real problems facing us, but by raising them in this way, they are able to pose as the responsible guardians of our peace and security.

If we accept their definitions of what constitutes danger we are making a rod for our own backs. There isn't any real concern about whether we do ourselves a mischief. Such Aunt Sallies serve as useful propaganda in the state's on-going campaign to impose greater strictures on our lives.

Nick Gool Seville, Spain

Lesbian lifestyles

Well, it's a funny old world: a politically correct article in *Living Marxism*. Jennie Bristow is clearly miffed because being a lesbian is becoming respectable ('Lesbian cheek', August). The old image of a 'butch, sex-hungry dyke with pierced nipples', guaranteed to shock, is out. Even Jennie's mum is more bored than outraged by dykes.

However, there's nothing wrong with lesbians becoming respectable. The real problem lies with those who think being a lesbian is radical. The reactionary fantasy is Jennie's one of the old image of lesbians 'turning accepted ideas of femininity and respectability upside down'.

Looking and acting non-feminine cannot change the position of lesbians in society. Promoting the butch image as somehow radical downgrades the fight for equality into a fashion parade or lifestyle statement. Sorry, Jennie, but there's nothing inherently progressive about being a lesbian, regardless of your appearance or number of sexual partners.

Dave Clark Newcastle

Anti-social workers

Leon Jones (letters, July), although 'not a social worker', feels passionate enough about their plight to write into *Living Marxism* and criticise Sara Hinchliffe ('Anti-social work', May). Jones argues that Hinchliffe's attack on social workers

fails to reflect the positive experience of those groups in society who have had their situation 'much improved' by the efforts of social workers and social services.

Unfortunately, Jones appears to have missed the broader issues that were raised in this article. Whilst many of us may accept Jones' view that there are numerous 'dedicated and caring' members of the social services, it is the broader political implications of the social work profession which need to be recognised.

In recent years, the British government has gone to extreme lengths to maintain and increase the powers of the state over our everyday lives. The so-called explosion in child abuse is just another convenient reason cited by social workers in order to justify their increasingly interfering activities. As Hinchliffe notes, the evidence of an increase in child abuse is dubious. Unlike Jones, I agree with Hinchliffe's argument that what we need is far less intrusion by social workers.

Joseph Malone Sheffield

Art: essence or commodity?

Louis Ryan (letters, August) suffers grotesquely from an artist's view of art. He takes issue with the world, as seen from the Left Bank.

The individual artist may not see her work as a commodity, but a subjective definition of her work by the artist has little or no influence on art as a social practice via the division of labour. It was not Van Gogh's inner 'magical essence' that elevated his 'Sunflowers' to a paradigmatic representation of Western culture. Had it not been for the later 'commodification' of his work, he would not have been known beyond the cell he inhabited.

Ryan accepts that art is a commodity under capitalism. Yet his letter suggests that while it may be necessary for the division of labour to distribute art, the artist herself can be some sort of authentic genius. The very idea that the artist inhabits her own separate *Weltanschauung* filled with a boundless creative energy is patently absurd. Surely the very act of recognition of a work of art on the part of another person is a negation of there being an 'inner essence' from the artist? For art to be deemed 'art', it has to be socially recognised as such, quite apart from the egoism of the artist.

Robert Fletcher Manchester

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

Sara Hinchliffe disapproves of the authorities' sudden concern for the victims of domestic violence

Battered rights

Domestic violence is now a big issue everywhere from the police training school to the corridors of Whitehall. How times change. A decade ago, domestic violence was an issue that nobody wanted to talk about. Feminist campaigners and women's refuge workers accused the police of having the attitude that 'an Englishman's home is his castle'—rarely turning up to incidents, attempting to reconcile the victim with her partner, and then 'no-criming' the incident by not recording that an assault had taken place. In turn the police argued that it was not their place to interfere in family life, that it was difficult to get convictions and that women were reluctant to press charges.

These days things appear very different. The Department of Health funds the national office of the Women's Aid Federation England. Local authorities across the country are spending thousands promoting advertising campaigns like Zero Tolerance. The police in particular seem chastened. The Met alone now runs 61 domestic violence units, staffed by specially trained WPCs. It produces leaflets encouraging battered wives to call the police in seven languages. The government has changed the law to allow easier prosecution of violent husbands, and tougher penalties when convicted. In 1988 Sandra Horley, Director of Chiswick Family Rescue, became the first woman civilian to address the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) annual conference, where she roundly scalded the police chiefs for neglecting domestic violence.

The police now work closely with a variety of feminist organisations, including Women's Aid, rape crisis groups and Victim Support (who in many regions are helping to train new coppers and who the police routinely send round to see victims). The West Yorkshire police have put out a leaflet entitled 'West Yorkshire's sensitive response to assaults on women', in

which the 'o' in women has been replaced by the feminist symbol.

So why have such illiberal organisations as ACPO, the Home Office—particularly under Michael Howard—and the courts suddenly become so keen on protecting women?

Everyone admits that there is nothing to suggest that the problem of domestic violence is on the increase. And it is stretching the imagination to believe that the police and Home Office have only just noticed that some women are being battered by their partners. In fact, the sudden concern in high places with domestic violence has much more sinister motives. It is being used as just one more way to reinforce a climate in which more state intrusion into our private lives is not just accepted, but demanded.

The new discussion on domestic violence emphasises the potential for any woman to be a victim, and the possibility that any man can abuse. This notion stokes a climate of suspicion, mistrust and insecurity in society. The message that we are supposed to take to heart is twofold. First, that we are not even safe in our own homes. Second that we cannot trust anybody, not even (perhaps least of all) our partners. And, since you never know what goes on behind closed doors, it's important to have benevolent outside agencies—be they the police, probation officers, social workers or semi-official counsellors—to peek in through the curtains to make sure we are all behaving.

Campaigns like Zero Tolerance claim to highlight that women in all situations—poor or professional—are at risk from domestic violence, to get away from the old stereotype that it is only horny-handed sons of toil who knock their wives about. The effect is to create an atmosphere in which we are all supposed to scrutinise each other for scratches, bruises and signs of abuse. In practice, however, despite their intention to embrace as many people as possible

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

TABOOS



in the ring of potential abusers and abused, the authorities cannot resist the chance to give the issue a racist or anti-working class spin.

For example, an uncommonly large proportion of the cases highlighted by anti-domestic violence campaigners involve black and Asian families. Vandana Patel's tragic case made the headlines in 1991 when she was stabbed to death by her husband Jayanti in the domestic violence unit in Stoke Newington police station. Kiranjit Ahluwalia who stabbed her violent husband to death has been another black woman whose case has been prominently taken up by anti-domestic violence campaigners.

Feminist groups like Southall Black Sisters have been to the fore in pointing the finger, often demanding that the police do not stint in stepping into Asian families to remove violent men. In America black football star OJ Simpson's record of violent behaviour to his wife has been widely reported amid demands that evidence illegally obtained by the police be admitted to ensure his conviction for her murder. And the British police—never slow to seize on a justification to target more blacks, especially if it comes in a politically correct package—have taken the issue to heart. Just to make it clear who their target is, the Met have

printed their domestic violence leaflet in Punjabi, Gujarati, Urdu, Turkish, Vietnamese and Chinese as well as English. No doubt the patois version is on the way.

Concentrating attention on black and working class violence conveys the message that there are certain sections of society which are uncivilised and do not know how to treat women. It strengthens the notion that there is a sizeable group of people who cannot control their behaviour, and who need external bodies—like the police—to lay down more stringent guidelines about how they should behave. In this way the new panic about domestic violence creates new points of intervention through which the state can act to regulate and control working people's affairs more closely.

A report produced by Brighton council's police adviser, using reports on domestic violence incidents compiled by the police over a four-month period in 1993, reveals that the police are stepping into more and more rows and arguments between couples, which it is openly admitted involve no violence at all. Of 103 incidents described as 'domestics', around half involved no physical violence. Many of these incidents are described as resulting from 'verbal abuse' or 'verbal frightening' or a 'verbal dispute'—in other words, the

police are intervening in rows.

Examples of incidents included in the report (in the words of the police) include:

- Ex-common law husband verbally frightened victim
- Common law partners both drunk, argued on way home from nightclub
- Husband and wife cannot get on
- Male cohab wanted out of relationship
- Female attends front office, Brighton to request assistance to retrieve clothes from home address
- Family members argued. One member kicked another's car
- Ex-boyfriend hanging round ex-girlfriend's house to 'talk'. He is not welcome
- Husband been out drinking tried to come in through bedroom window. Wife frightened dialled 999
- Husband and wife arguing in front of two-year old child continually. Wife came to front office to ask police to speak to husband to stop arguing in front of child
- Dispute between common law husband and wife over whose parents should care for children whilst they were away.

The definition of domestic violence is being continually broadened to include ▶

all manner of everyday incidents. Many of those involved in what has now been defined as domestic violence are the type of people perceived by middle class do-gooders as inadequates in need of help to make their lives work: people with kids on the child protection register, cohabitantes, people who get into drunken rows on the way home from nightclubs, people who make too much noise in their homes at night. In other words, not respectable quiet married people, who are assumed to be able to have a disagreement in the suburbs without the police needing to become involved.

Under the guise of a campaign against domestic violence, the police and other state agencies have gained access to new repressive powers. There have been demands for the police to install covert surveillance cameras in homes to trap violent men. There are demands that any man accused of violence towards a woman should be arrested, without the need to provide proof, and charged rather than cautioned. The police already have an impressive array of powers to intervene into our homes on the pretext of helping battered women; as a Home Office circular of July 1990 pointed out, 'police powers to deal with domestic violence are extensive'.

Section 80 of the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) gives the police the power to force wives to testify against their partners. Enhanced powers of arrest were granted to the police under PACE—they can enter buildings and search individuals who they believe to be about to commit acts of domestic violence. In the 1990 Home Office circular, chief police officers are advised to treat domestic violence incidents as common assault and to pursue them through magistrates rather than crown courts; convictions are speedier and more likely without the intrusion of a jury. Where a woman cannot be persuaded to testify in court, under the 1988 Criminal Justice Act her original statement to the police may be admitted to the court as evidence.

Such extensive police powers would once have provoked protests from feminists and other critics of the authorities. Today, however, radical activists who have lost faith in their own ability to tackle women's problems increasingly turn to the state for solutions. When an increase in police and legal powers is justified as a measure against domestic violence, it is widely accepted among groups and individuals who in the past have been suspicious of the state. Indeed it is more common today to hear these people leading the demand for more police powers rather than opposing intervention in our affairs.



In September 1993 I went along to the inaugural conference of Brighton Campaign Against Domestic Violence. From an avowedly feminist perspective, speaker after speaker argued that the police needed more scope to intervene to stop domestic violence. The speaker from Southall Black Sisters urged the police to intervene more forcefully

All of the police intervention in the world will not solve the problem of women's economic dependence

into the Asian community. One woman, representing a group of prostitutes, explained a case in which the police had tapped the phone of a battered woman, and had staked out her home for three weeks. Instead of complaining about this as an infringement of civil liberties, she demanded that the police pursue the same tactics in every case.

Some will argue that despite all the potential problems, it is surely better that the issue of domestic violence is aired and discussed—and that something done by the authorities is better than nothing. But they would be wrong. Granting the authorities more power to interfere in people's lives will not solve the problem facing the minority of women who suffer violent abuse. But it will create new problems for all of us.

Some women suffer terrible violence at the hands of their partners. But despite the hype of campaigns like Zero Tolerance, it is only some women. Most women are not battered. But everyone—men and women—will suffer the effects of giving the police more power to enter our homes, discipline our families and police our arguments. We will all be denied the right to decide how we run our lives. Most of us have big arguments with our partners from time to time; many of us get drunk and noisy on the way home from a night out. But do we really want the police stepping in to draw the line for us? The impact of the legal changes which have already been made and those being demanded does not just affect domestic violence cases. For instance, imagine how much easier the police will find it to fit up anybody they want to, if they can make arrests and charge people without any evidence, and use withdrawn statements to secure a conviction in court.

What battered women do need is real independence, the ability to break free from their domestic situation and make it on their own. The problem women face is having nowhere to go and nothing to support their children on if they leave home. All of the police intervention in the world will not solve the problem of women's economic dependence. If a woman was able to walk out of a violent relationship, nobody would even be raising the question of more invasive policing. It is because of this social inequality that women stay in bad relationships—not because the police don't protect them enough. If those local authorities which have spent a few thousand quid on anti-domestic violence posters were serious about freeing women trapped in their homes, they could invest the necessary resources in setting up nurseries to give mothers a bit of real independence. Instead, the cynical manipulation of the issue of domestic violence by the authorities can only make things worse, reinforcing a sense of women as powerless victims incapable of controlling their own lives.

Some feminist campaigners now go so far as to argue that women are such victims that they cannot be trusted to make the right decisions about their relationships. In similar vein, many police forces now run 'at risk' registers of women. This approach reduces women to the status of abused children—kept on a register so that the authorities can sort things out for them. The fact that many battered women do not want the authorities involved in their lives and refuse to cooperate with the police has moved some to argue that their wishes should not be taken into account and that their rights should simply be removed.

Prominent domestic violence author Susan M Edwards, consultant to the Met domestic violence working party and a member of Victim Support, argues that we should ask 'whether moves to empower battered women by taking account of their choices and wishes are right....how far are those wishes the result of free choice? Many would argue that free choice for the battered woman is as mythical as the happiness of the happy slave'.

Not only do we have the police stepping up their interference in our lives, but we have professed feminists arguing that women don't know their own minds. Do we really want to be treated as children, have our rights and wishes disregarded and be kept on a register like maltreated dogs? Let's forget about inviting the police, courts and social workers to run our affairs, and get on with campaigning for the social equality that every woman needs.



Natural methods—no way!

Whenver my grandmother needed a good illustration for the young-women-today-have-it-easy speech, she would always conjure up two scenarios: one was life before modern contraception ('self-control was what we relied on') and the other was life before modern tampons ('we used to say we were "on the rag" because that was what we used').

Her scathing attitude towards those of us who had not suffered these privations was always tinged with a hint of envy. She may have thought that old-fashioned black-and-white films were better than 'all this rubbish you get today', but she was never sentimental about what she called 'women's matters'. I doubt if any sane woman from her generation is, which makes it all the stranger that a growing number of women from our generation seem to celebrate the chance to suffer the inconveniences our grannies were glad to leave behind.

Women's magazines are suddenly full of enthusiasm for NFP—that's natural family planning to the uninitiated. Just as in the 1960s being on the pill was taken to be a sign that you were liberated and confident about sex, today abandoning the pill for natural methods signifies the same. NFP, in the words of one advocate, means that you are 'in touch with your body, in tune with the natural rhythm of your cycles'.

It is a curious change of fashion. For the last three decades the ideal contraceptive was thought to be one that was effective, easy to use and did not interfere with sex—now NFP is the flavour of the month because it has all the opposite qualities.

NFP relies on a combination of four processes. 1) You keep a careful record of when your periods start and finish so that you can estimate when you are about to ovulate (usually between 12 and 16 days before your next period is due), and you abstain from sex for several days before and after this time; 2) you measure your temperature every morning when you get out of bed, because it will rise slightly just before your fertile period; 3) you examine the texture of your vaginal fluids because their consistency changes at the fertile time; 4) you rely on extra strong will-power to resist sex when it is 'unsafe'. But don't even think about trying it yourself from my thumbnail sketch—apparently you need individual instruction from a qualified trainer!

NFP enthusiasts claim that it is the ideal method for the nineties because it requires commitment, it encourages men to appreciate how a woman's body works, and it is not artificial. I do not find this convincing. If I wanted a man to understand how my body worked I'd either tell him or buy him a book, and as for commitment—I'd rather be committed to sex, or to the relationship, than to a method of contraception. Nor am I in the slightest bit worried whether a contraceptive is artificial or not—you might just as well argue that chocolate is artificial, and very nice it is too.

In the final analysis, NFP is complicated, a hassle and not even that effective unless you have a very regular monthly cycle. So why are a growing number of women getting into a method that used to be shunned by all except pope-fearing Catholics?

The answer seems to lie in the current fashion for all-things 'natural' and the rejection of all things 'artificial'. Sometimes this is fuelled by a healthy suspicion of the pharmaceutical industry, and an awareness that the development of family planning methods has been fuelled by the concerns of shareholders rather than the concerns of women. But this healthy suspicion is taking an unhealthy direction, leading to a rejection of the product rather than the system that produces it.

The irony of this is that the product may be good—the contraceptive is safer and more effective now than it has ever been—while the system is increasingly exploitative. Yet while younger women are probably more panicked about the pill's safety than any previous generation, many seem less concerned about politics. The same approach also leads to the ridiculous romanticisation of minimal technology and backward methods.

The same concerns are abroad in relation to what are politely referred to as 'feminine hygiene products'. Who would ever have thought that towels would have started to rival tampons? Further more, who would have thought that it would become fashionable for women to make their own washable sanitary towels out of—yes, you have guessed it—rags.

At a recent conference I was verbally mauled by a representative of the Tampon Safety Campaign when I said that I could not imagine anyone in this day and age wanting to make, wear and wash their own pads (not even if they were made out of velvet and embroidered as one woman had suggested). I was accused of being repressed (afraid of my own menstrual blood) and ignorant (of the risks of toxic shock syndrome). As it happens I am neither. In fact I am rather

well versed in the risks of TSS—and consequently I am aware that you could not find a more irrational reason for rejecting the convenience of tampons.

TSS is about as prevalent as the flesh-eating bug necrotising fasciitis. Between 1985 and 1990 in the UK there were only 18 (in total) cases of identified and probable cases of the potentially deadly infection TSS, and only half were in women using tampons. TSS is just as likely to arise from bites, burns or surgery. But such is the public concern about a possible association between TSS and tampon use that tampon manufacturers have poured money into a snazzy information service with a hotline to reassure the public, every health writer short of a story wastes words warning about it, and the Tampon Safety Campaign divides its time between plastering public toilets with posters warning that your period could 'make time stand still', and producing homemade san-pro.

Lots of recent articles in *Living Marxism* have pointed out that we live in a social climate obsessed with risks—and health risks are at the forefront of people's minds. The enthusiasm for 'natural' family planning and san-pro is yet another unnecessary burden that lots of young women have taken up. If it wasn't good enough for our grannies, why should it be good enough for us? ●

Natural family planning is complicated, a hassle and not even that effective

● In August 1995 it will be 50 years since the USA, with British support, dropped the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing around 200 000 people.

● August 1994 marked the launch of an international year of action against war, leading up to that anniversary. In Britain, the Campaign Against Militarism kicked off its 12 months of action with a colourful thousand-strong protest at the Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment, the bastion of the British Bomb.



The **NO MORE HIROSHIMAS** year of action is not about commemorating the past. Instead, the run-up to the fiftieth anniversary provides an opportunity to warn the world about the growing threat of militarism and war which we face in the 1990s.

The importance of Hiroshima for today is that it blows the whistle on the rulers of the Western world.

Today the governments of America, Britain and the other Western allies tell us that their foreign policies are organised around the principles of humanitarianism and peacekeeping. But the casual way in which their humanitarian predecessors wiped out Hiroshima and Nagasaki should remind us of what these people really stand for, and how far they are prepared to go to protect their power in the world.

Conventional wisdom says that it could never happen again. But why not? No American president or British prime minister has ever apologised for Hiroshima or acknowledged its criminal character. Indeed they have all defended the decision to drop the Bomb. And when they say that it was justified in the past, they are saying that they would do it again if they saw the need.

But we don't have to speculate about the possibility of future atrocities. It is possible to argue

that the Western powers have already staged several more Hiroshimas since 1945. The only difference is that they did it with conventional weapons rather than nuclear bombs. And for those on the receiving end, that is a pretty meaningless distinction.

Again and again during the '50 years of peace' since the Second World War, the US-led Western alliance has proved itself a ruthless killer in its crusade to impose its authority over the third world. The Western powers destroyed Korea in the 1950s, devastated Vietnam and Cambodia in the sixties and early seventies, and bombed Iraq back into the Stone Age in 1991.

In the Gulf War alone, they killed as many people as in Hiroshima and Nagasaki; except that this time they did it by dropping not two bombs, but 250 000 bombs. Before and since that war, the USA, Britain and the rest have left a bloody trail across the modern world from the South Atlantic to Somalia.

If that is true, how do they get away with it? If Western governments really are the world's most dangerous warmongers, how do they manage to preserve intact their image as global peacekeepers? Hiroshima gives the game away here, too. It reminds us that these people are racists, and that they get away with it because they have imbued our societies with the racial attitudes of Empire.

The carnage at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was considered acceptable because the Japanese were an 'Oriental' race. That was why the Americans felt free to experiment with the Bomb against the Japanese, when they would not have dropped it on their white enemies in Germany.

Hiroshima can be seen as a kind of Anglo-American version of the Nazi Holocaust, in the sense that it was a practical application of the



politics of race. Just as the Germans felt free to butcher the Jews and Slavs as sub-humans, so the Allies had no compunction about massacring the Japanese as members of a lower race. The media reflected the mood of the time, with the American press referring to the Japanese as 'yellow vermin', 'mad dogs' and 'monkey men'. The British ambassador noted the 'universal exterminationist' mood which Americans felt towards the Japanese during the war. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the result.

Some will say that it couldn't happen again, because people don't think like that in our sophisticated Western societies. Of course, today we hear no open talk of 'yellow vermin' and overt racism is considered impolite in governing circles. But, albeit it in nineties language, similar attitudes underpin every important discussion in international relations today. The basic division between 'us', the civilised nations, and 'them', the barbaric races, still informs the Western worldview.

The consequences of that racial double standard can be witnessed on every issue today. You can see it behind the idea that the West should set up war crimes tribunals to sit in judgement on the rest of the world, while the actions of British soldiers in the Falklands or Americans in Somalia are considered beyond reproach. You can see it

NO MORE H

● The Aldermaston protest was just the start of the 365-day countdown to 6 August 1995. The **NO MORE HIROSHIMAS** year of action will be packed with other protests, events and initiatives in Britain and abroad. If you want to take a stand against the threat of militarism and war today, get in touch.

● For more information, ring Kate Margam on (071) 278 9908, or write to **NO MORE HIROSHIMAS**, Campaign Against Militarism, BM CAM, London WC1N 3XX, or e-mail on hiro@camintl.org



in the major debates about the need to control population growth in the third world, to protect our way of life. And you can see it, ironically, in the campaign to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the third world.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is due to be renewed in 1995. Strengthening the treaty is seen by many peace activists in the West as an important safeguard against the threat of nuclear war. In reality, this treaty has nothing to do with getting rid of nuclear weapons. It is a declaration that the great powers of the United Nations Security Council have a legal monopoly on the Bomb. Anybody else who tries to develop a single nuke can be, in the words which president Bill Clinton used recently to threaten North Korea, annihilated by the nuclear powers.

The scare about nuclear proliferation turns the truth about the threat to peace on its head. Attention is focused on the alleged (usually imaginary) development of nuclear weapons in a third world state. These invisible missiles become the stuff of major international incidents. Meanwhile the real power to destroy the world many times over, which rests in the huge arsenals of the major powers, is ignored. Indeed these powers are portrayed as the leading force for world peace.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty imposes the same division on the world that was made so clear by Hiroshima: the divide between the West and the rest, between those civilised enough to handle the Bomb and those so barbaric that they are fit only to be bombed. The treaty acts as a nuclear blackmail note to be used against the entire third world. The demand to tear it up should be a key issue for the **NO MORE HIROSHIMAS** year of action.

That year of action could not be more timely.

The threat of militarism and war is more pressing in the 1990s than at any time since the forties.

Everywhere we look today, we see desperate Western governments trying to overcome their domestic difficulties by intervening around the world. Politicians beset by economic, political and corruption crises at home sense that the international stage is one area where they can still hope to win some standing and authority. That is why Clinton, Major, Mitterrand and Kohl are all so keen to be seen acting as leaders and champions of civilisation in world affairs: whether by threatening to invade Haiti, bombing the Bosnian Serbs, sending high-profile missions to Rwanda, or invading who-knows-where tomorrow.

The consequence of this trend is that gunboat diplomacy is increasingly becoming the stuff of everyday international relations, and the world is being turned into a nuclear and non-nuclear powder-keg.

It is time for those of us who are concerned about peace and freedom to take a stand in the run-up to the Hiroshima anniversary—not just against the threat of a future nuclear war, but against the real danger of militarism today. The clock is ticking towards August 1995, and there is no time to lose if we are to make this international campaign count.

**NO MORE
NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL**

abolish the Non-Proliferation Treaty

**NO MORE
MILITARY THREATS**

fight imperialist intervention

**NO MORE
ARMS BAZAARS**

end global militarisation

**NO MORE
REARMAMENT**

not a penny more for war

HIROSHIMAS

No war crimes, we're British

The testimonies of Argentinian POWs expose British double standards over war crimes. Ben Brack reports

No British soldier will be prosecuted for war crimes committed during the Falklands War. This was the decision taken by Barbara Mills, Director of Public Prosecutions, in July. She concluded that following a Scotland Yard investigation no prosecution would take place due to a 'lack of evidence'. Yet in Argentina, there is more evidence than Mills would know what to do with.

Allegations of British war crimes have appeared ever since the end of the war, but both the British and the Argentinian governments have largely ignored them. However, when the British ex-paratrooper, Vincent Bramley, published his book *Excursion to Hell* in 1991, the two governments were forced to respond.

In the book, Bramley describes an incident in which British troops murdered Argentinian soldiers whom they had taken prisoner, evidence which was later confirmed by Tony Mason, at that time a captain with the 3rd Parachute Battalion. An investigation was launched by the army itself in June 1991. By August 1992 the matter was in the hands of Scotland Yard. One of its most senior men, Detective Superintendent Alec Edwards, spearheaded an 18-month inquiry.

'We received the order to collect the mines, missiles, detonators, grenades and projectiles. They made us walk through mined areas. The corpses of the Argentinian soldiers were put in bags and I didn't see them again.'

Luis Alberto Gómez, 12th regiment

It proved to be a very unorthodox inquiry. Witnesses were not apparently needed. The Scotland Yard team, according to reports in Argentina, talked to journalists and politicians but not to the people present at the events. The investigation also concentrated on the events at Mount Longdon, despite widespread reports of other incidents, in particular around Port Darwin. It seems you did not even have to be alive to be questioned by the inquiry. Colonel Pedro Conde, an Argentinian soldier, apparently gave evidence despite his death 170 years before.

Even with the lack of witnesses, the inquiry was reported to have

found real evidence that could justify a prosecution. Yet this was not apparently good enough. Scotland Yard did not recommend that anybody be prosecuted for war crimes. Metropolitan Police chief Paul Condon said that he didn't see 'why the British police had to make any kind of recommendation'. In the end, the Director of Public Prosecutions announced that no prosecutions would take place on the grounds of a 'lack of evidence'.

'We saw corporal José Carrizo, crouched down, with his rifle in his hands and his head down. The English hit him on the head, stopped him, disarmed him, and took off his jacket, while they talked among themselves. One made a gesture of drawing his thumb across his throat and the other shot Carrizo with a burst of four or five shots. We thought he was dead.'

Santiago Dionel Mambrín, after the battle of Mount Longdon

Meanwhile, in Argentina, there has been no shortage of evidence. Up to the publication of Bramley's book, in 1991, the Argentinian government had ignored the testimonies of Argentinian soldiers. The Falklands debacle was a painful memory for the Argentinian military authorities, and the government was more interested in repairing relations with Britain and the EU. But when Bramley's book appeared in Argentina, more and more witnesses came forward. Even then, the chief of the Argentinian armed forces, Martín Balza said that he knew of 'no violation of the Geneva Convention by British soldiers during the war, nor during the 30 days in which we were prisoners'. Eventually, however, a committee of investigation was formed by the Argentinian Ministry of Defence, led by the military bishop Norberto Martina. The inquiry, which was condemned as half-hearted by Malvinas veterans organisations, produced damning evidence of British atrocities.

Neither the Scotland Yard investigation nor the report of the Argentinian commission's inquiry have been made public. The Argentinian report, however, has been leaked and the contents revealed by Buenos Aires newspapers. Julia Solanas Pacheco, a member of the Argentinian commission, has confirmed that each allegation made by Malvinas veterans can be corroborated by other

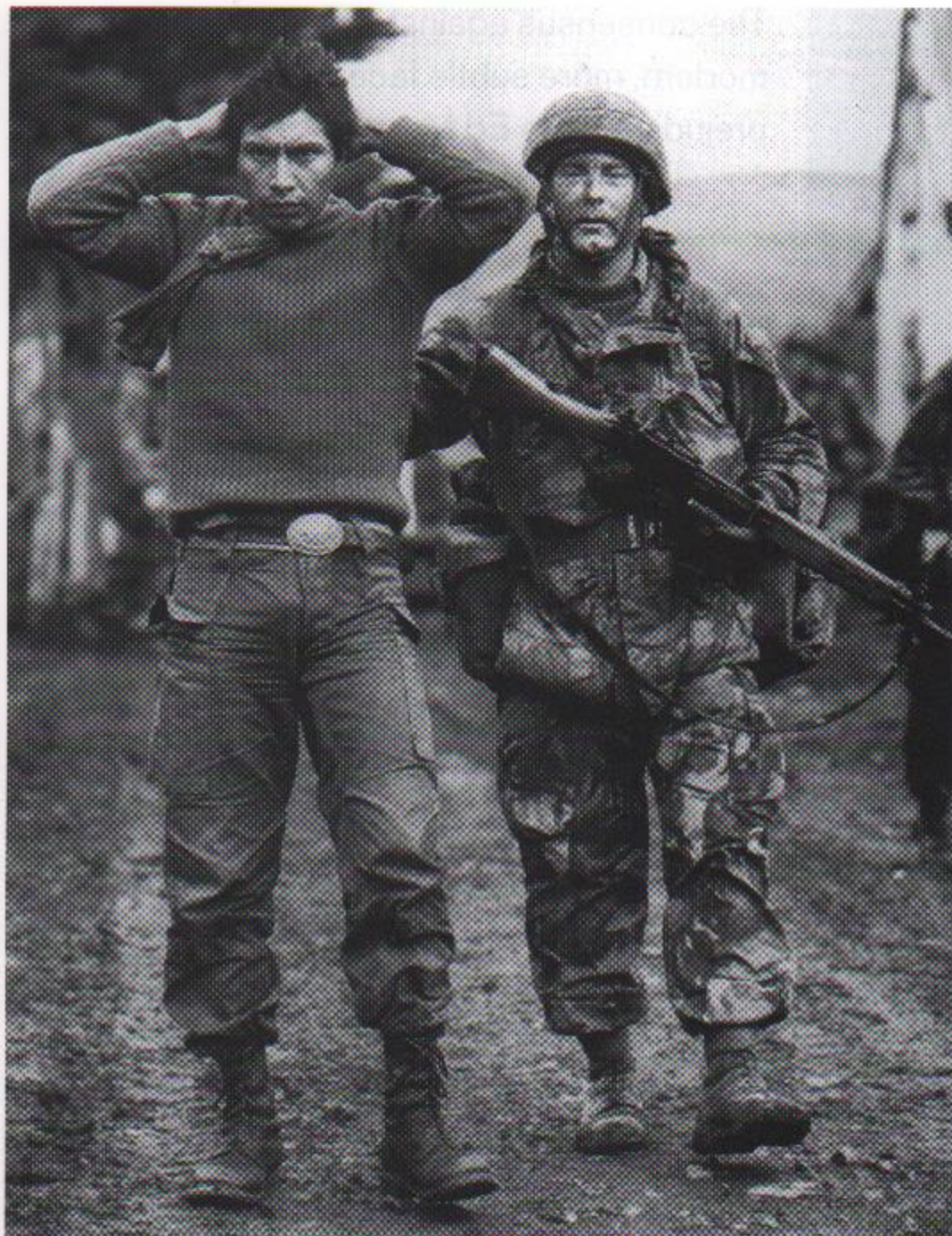
witnesses. The allegations indicate widespread abuses by British troops. The main charges are murder, attempted murder, using prisoners for dangerous tasks and the execution of wounded during combat. All these are abuses of the Geneva Convention of 1949.

Many of the allegations focus on events around the battle of Mount Longdon on 12 June 1982. British soldiers are said to have shot Argentinian prisoners and dumped them into open graves, both during the battle and on the morning after. These include the cases witnessed by Bramley and Mason and the case of Corporal José Carrizo, who survived after being shot in the head with

a machine-gun by the British troops who were holding him prisoner. This was witnessed by Santiago Lionel Mambrín.

Also at Mount Longdon, Néstor Flores reports seeing British troops murder privates Quintana, Graminni and Delgado. Corporal Gustavo Osvaldo Pedamonte witnessed the murder of privates Ferreyra, Mosconi, Petruccelli and Maldana by British soldiers. To this must be added the confession of a British former Lance Corporal in 3 Para, who described how he and a colleague had machine-gunned three prisoners they believed to be American mercenaries (who were probably US-educated Argentinians). Ex-Captain Mason says that he told a colonel about the killings at the time. Nothing was done and the colonel has since been promoted to major-general. Similarly, Lucas Morales of Argentina's fifth marine battalion describes being shot at by British troops after surrendering after the battle of Mount William. One British soldier killed during the battle was even found to have a bag full of severed Argentinian ears, indicating the prevalence of atrocities before Mount Longdon.

The butchery did not stop with the end of the war. British soldiers seemed oblivious to the surrender of the Argentinians, and carried on killing regardless. Epifanio Casimiro Benítez testified to further executions of



wounded prisoners on 16 July 1982 after the total surrender of Argentinian troops in the Malvinas Islands. Captain Horatio Alberto Bicaín claims that he saw British troops kill Captain Artuso after his submarine *Sante Fe* had been captured. He was shot in the back.

'Despite the fact that we were wounded, we had to jog alongside the platoon. With another two soldiers we were left under guard. The rest carried on. Straight away we heard machine gun fire. We did not see them again!'

Epifanio Casimiro Benítez, after the total surrender of Argentinian troops

Allegations about the use of prisoners to transport war materials began to appear soon after the end of the war. The incidents centre around Port

Darwin, where 1050 Argentinian prisoners were detained. On 13 July 1982, Raúl Américo Vallejos of the 12th Infantry Regiment described how British forces used prisoners at Port Darwin to clear live munitions. He lost his leg in an explosion that killed Martín Flores, José Ramón Ferrán and Rafael Barrios. Leonardo Durán, Angel Antonio Urban, Ricardo José Pinatti, Gerardo Fernández, Francisco Ocampo and Luis Larger were also injured.

This story is corroborated by the recent testimony of Roberto Alarcón and Marcelo Colombo who were detained in Port Darwin, and by that of Ricardo Daniel Jakinsuk, who was disfigured by the explosion. The *Sunday Times* book, *The Falklands War*, mentions the incident and describes in a matter-of-fact way

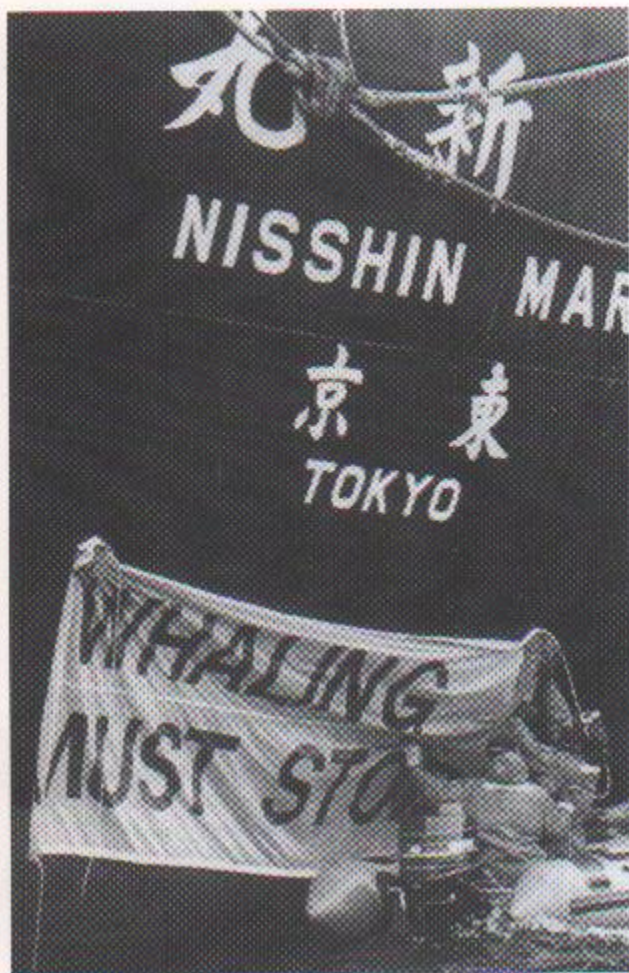
how one of the prisoners (José Ramón Ferrán) was given the *coup de grace* by a British soldier while wounded. According to the Argentine report, 'it is notable that the testimonies as well as the documentation coincide totally and absolutely, both in respect to the place where the incident occurred, in respect to the dangerous tasks undertaken, in respect to the explosion, and to the shot to the live body of Ferrán'.

The Scotland Yard inquiry did not, it seems, interview any of the witnesses from Port Darwin. The incident is not being taken into consideration, despite the fact that it has been almost common knowledge since 1982. And despite the evidence of Vincent Bramley and Tony Mason, which was briefly emblazoned across the British press, the Director of Public Prosecutions has managed to conclude that there was a 'lack of evidence' of any atrocities.

War crimes are a fashionable issue. The United Nations is even setting up an international tribunal to punish the guilty. But you can guarantee that Britain will not be standing in the dock. For the great powers which run the UN Security Council, the purpose of publicising war crimes is to point the finger at Iraqis or Serbs or the Hutus of Rwanda. The USA, Britain and their allies have set themselves up to judge the world and conveniently forgotten their own well-documented atrocities. Setting up a war crimes tribunal is a way of vilifying third world regimes while endowing Western governments with moral authority and integrity.

The issue of war crimes exposes the double standards which dominate international affairs. Atrocities are committed in all wars. But whether or not they are defined as war crimes depends upon who is responsible. If a British or American soldier shoots a prisoner, it either didn't happen or it's just a fact of war. If an African or an Arab or an Argentinian pulls the trigger, on the other hand, it's a crime against humanity. Cold-blooded executions and using prisoners to clear minefields are not considered war crimes if British troops are behind it all. After all, as Margaret Thatcher insisted again on a recent trip to Latin America, Britain was doing the Argentinians a favour in the Falklands War by bringing them democracy.

Unlike British policemen, it seems that Argentinian veterans cannot be trusted to tell the truth. Even British newspaper editors agree that Argentinians are liars. My recent attempts to place articles in the press containing the allegations detailed here were met by a wall of indifference and mistrust. 'They would say that', said one news desk editor, 'they're Argentinians'.



The consensus against whaling is the modern, more subtle face of anti-Japanese prejudice, says Ed Murray

Meetings of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) come as an annual boost to environmentalists and journalists alike. For a while, world attention can be focused on 'the sacred cow of the sea', providing easy stories and emotive photographs. Look closer, however, and the debate is not about whales at all. Instead, there is a growing trend for Western governments and media to use the arguments about whaling as a way of reinforcing prejudice about Japan. And environmental groups like Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) are becoming increasingly acquiescent in this anti-Japanese campaign.

The IWC did not start life as a whale conservation group. It was founded in 1946 to manage the whaling industry, and act as a lobbying group for its interests. However, as whaling became uneconomic, major whaling nations like Britain and Australia wound up their industries, and the IWC became a vehicle for international power politics. The IWC's growing interest in whale conservation was essentially a lever for other countries to extract diplomatic concessions from the remaining whaling nations (primarily Japan, Norway and Iceland). Backroom deals allowed for loopholes (such as the clause which permits 'scientific' whaling) to be created, in return for favours in other areas.

Most parties would like the IWC to continue as it is, as a favour bank disguised as an environmentally concerned body. However, new pressures are coming to the fore today which make whaling a more contentious issue, the most important of which is the new wave of anti-Japanese sentiment in the West.

In the recent coverage of the whaling controversy, the Japanese come across as a carnivore mafia. There have been the usual 'disgusted-of-England' articles about the barbarity of eating whales. The *Sunday Times* ran an article headed

'High-priced blood on the chopsticks' (29 May 1994) which made Tokyo's only whale restaurant, Kujiraya, sound more like an opium den than an eating place. Hawaiian-based environmental group Earthtrust claimed to have discovered endangered whale meat on the top shelf of a Tokyo grocery store.

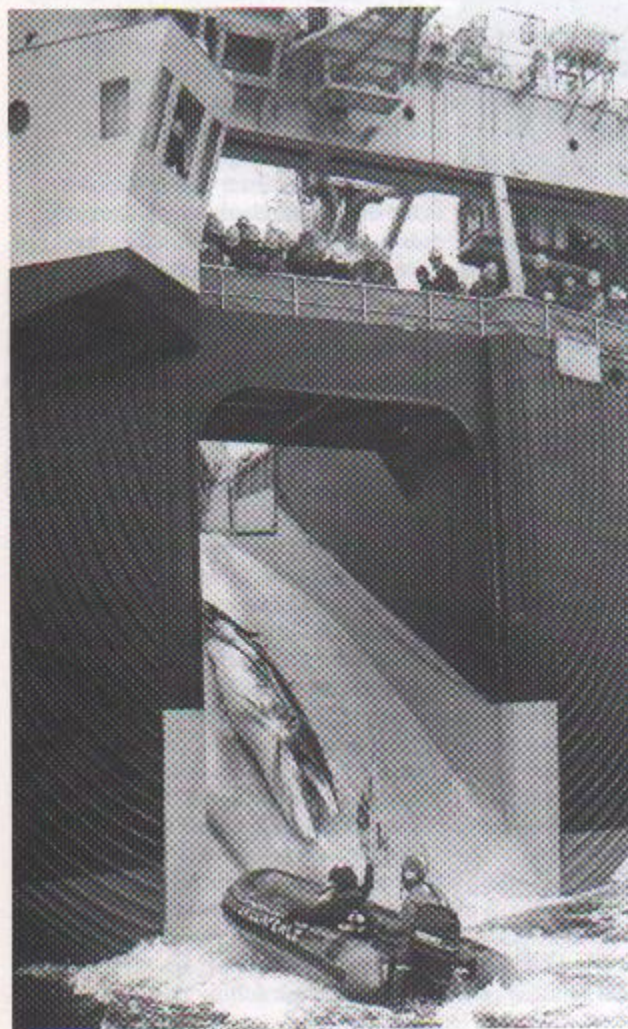
This was familiar 'aren't we nicer to animals than foreigners' stuff, similar to a thousand British newspaper articles on bull-fighting or bear-baiting. However, more striking were the constant accusations that Japan is running an international dirty tricks campaign. Journalists, experts and environmental groups have competed to see who could depict Japan as the most unscrupulous.

Dr Sidney Holt of the IWC's scientific committee set the tone with his attack upon Japan's 'opulent wining, dining, and other entertainment of targeted individuals, and the flashing of corporate credit cards' which meant that 'Japan now has enough controlled votes to block any potentially binding conservation measure it doesn't like'. Indeed it is difficult to find a group which the Japanese are not accused of trying to buy off.

'In the pay'

Scientists releasing data unfavourable to the anti-whaling argument are generally denounced as being in the pay of the Japanese. A letter to the *Independent* last year, signed by James Martin Jones of WWF and Andy Ottaway of Greenpeace, argued that it was 'Japanese pressure' that was causing scientists to 'hedge bets' (in other words, to disagree with the environmentalists' arguments about whales being an endangered species).

It is assumed that any country which considers voting against anti-whaling measures must be in the pay of the Japanese. When St Lucia, Grenada and Dominica considered voting against the Antarctic whale sanctuary proposed at this year's IWC meeting in Mexico, environmentalists everywhere saw the hand of Japan. Cassandra Phillips of



Whale meat again

the WWF pointed to the 'massive Japanese aid' these islands had received. Particular attention was paid to Grenada, where Japanese aid to a construction site was 'revealed' as a pay off. Even untalented rock star Bryan Adams accused the Japanese of 'vote-buying' during his world tour this year.

Double standard

It is highly probable that the Japanese were trying to wrangle concessions out of the different countries: that, after all, is what the IWC has always been about. What's noticeable is the double standard. When Washington pressurises other governments through international organisations like the IWC, it's called diplomacy. When Tokyo does the same, it's 'dirty tricks'. More than that, when you consider America's own record in Grenada, a tiny island invaded by thousands of US marines in 1983, the intervention of the Japanese to help finance reconstruction hardly seems a major blow. This is an irony that escapes most environmentalists.

To anyone following Western discussions about Japan, all of this will sound familiar. There are stark parallels between the slating of scientists who are not overtly hostile to whaling and the dismissal of political commentators as 'chrysanthemum kissers' if they don't attack Japanese policies. Similarly, the 'dirty tricks' allegations over whaling are commonplace in rows about Japanese trade and economic policy. In the growing library of anti-Japanese literature, from pulp fiction like Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun* to the studies of Japan's economic practices, you are as likely to find killing whales listed as a feature of the twisted Japanese psyche as asset-stripping or market dominance.

Japan poses a considerable problem for the Western elites. The expansion of a non-white power is unsettling. Last time around, in the 1930s, it was possible to attack the Japanese in explicitly racist language, as the

'yellow peril' or 'monkey men'. In the 1990s, new prejudices must be appealed to.

Pick up anti-Japanese material today and the accusations will all be about Japanese racism, or their lack of environmental consciousness, or the position of women in Japanese society. Politically correct concerns about Japan are a less contentious form of attack. This explains the prominence given to the debate on whaling, and why so many conservative commentators, who have never picked up a veggie burger in their lives, are so keen to promote whale conservation. Stressing the moral authority of steak over *sushi* is another way of preserving the image of Western superiority.

Environmentalists have welcomed the new anti-whaling consensus in the West at a time when their own arguments for a moratorium on whaling are being exhausted. For most people, the arguments that Greens feel comfortable with (that whales are 'special', that whale song is beautiful) are unconvincing. Think of what you find most aesthetically pleasing in the world and I can guarantee that it won't weigh two tonnes and smell of fish. The current population levels of certain whales (once predicted as terminally in decline) indicate there is room to exploit them. Minke whale population figures were up from original estimates of 140 000 to 941 240 in June 1991 and are now at a level where they threaten blue whales' food supply. Faced with strong evidence that undermines the environmentalist case, it is far easier to denounce the scientists responsible as being in the pay of the Japanese than it is to come up with a better argument.

It is becoming more apparent that a poisonous anti-Japanese climate is developing in every discussion of international affairs. The willingness of Greenpeace and the WWF to go along with the witch-hunt over whaling only provides the potential for racism with a radical gloss. Personally, I think a few whale burgers in the local McDonalds is infinitely preferable to that.



Inside the restaurant

The Japanese government's defence of whaling has very little to do with public demand for whale steaks. The 330 Minke whales caught annually contribute little to Japanese life: whale meat is served only in a handful of restaurants across Japan and there is little profit to be made from scientific whaling.

The defence of whaling has far more to do with an attempt to rebuild Japan's national self-image. Read any brochure produced by the whaling industry and you'll find more references to 'culture' and 'tradition' than you will to 'delicious with rice'. Yoshitsugu Kaino, a municipal official given the job of promoting whaling, agrees that the loss of the whaling industry would have little effect upon jobs, but argues that 'what we're really asking for now is the right to preserve our culture, to teach our children about whaling'.

The whaling debate has a dual advantage for the Japanese authorities. It allows them to promote themselves as victims of Western dictates through the IWC. And it provides them with an example of Japan's distinct national culture that stretches back beyond the embarrassment of defeat in the Second World War. The notion that whaling gives modern-day Japan some continuity with its ancient past is designed to play a part in promoting a 'cleaner' Japanese history.

As it happens, attempts to use whaling as a focus for nationalism have been pretty unsuccessful. For most Japanese, whale meat is an anachronistic luxury, enjoyed by businessmen who want to relive their school days (whale meat was a staple of school lunches in the fifties). As the British experience of spam fritters on D-Day shows, it takes more than cold meat to produce national pride.

The trial of two detectives accused of framing the Tottenham Three was twisted into a retrial of Winston Silcott and the youth of Broadwater Farm. Andrew Calcutt reports

It makes a mockery of British justice.' This was Sergeant Mike Bennett, chairman of the Metropolitan Police Federation, commenting on the £10 000 interim payment made by the Home Office to Winston Silcott over his wrongful conviction for the murder of PC Keith Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm riot of October 1985. Bennett's comment on the Silcott affair was entirely apt—but not in the sense that he intended.

The *Sun* (2 August 1994) condemned the payment of 'blood money' that would 'turn most people's stomachs'. The *Daily Telegraph* (2 August) called it 'a senseless award' that the home secretary's 'basic political instincts ought to have warned him against'.

Judging by the way the press laid into him this summer, a casual observer might assume that Silcott has been retried and reconvicted of the Blakelock murder. But the conviction was quashed in November 1991 and remains so. The recent outpouring of vitriol was occasioned, not by Silcott appearing in the dock, but by the trial and acquittal in July of the two police officers who put him in the frame, detective chief superintendent Graham Melvin and former detective inspector Maxwell Dingle.

Scientific tests have shown that Silcott's interview notes were tampered with. Taking this incontrovertible fact as a starting point, the Melvin-Dingle trial should have been about *who* altered the records. It served instead as an opportunity to regurgitate all the unsubstantiated allegations against Silcott, in complete disregard of the facts.

Silcott was arrested on 12 October 1985, six days after the Broadwater Farm riot. Melvin and Dingle interrogated him five times in 24 hours. During the fifth round, Silcott was alleged to have said: 'You ain't got enough evidence. Those kids won't give evidence in court. No one else will talk to you. You can't keep me away from them.' He never signed the police notes of these remarks, and always denied ever having made them.

On the strength of these uncorroborated, unconfirmed and unconvincing words, and these words

alone, Silcott was sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment. No witness testified against him in court. There was no photographic or forensic evidence. Silcott confessed to nothing. The authorities could not even prove that he was in Tottenham on the night of the violence.

Before the Old Bailey jury retired to consider their verdict, however, Silcott had already been tried by the media and convicted. The 44-day trial of the Tottenham Three took place in a lynch-mob atmosphere, fuelled by fantastic press reports about rioters pecking at Blakelock's body 'like vultures' and planning to parade the PC's head on a pole. Any black face would have fitted the frame. Silcott was duly convicted, and the media celebrated. The *Daily Star* claimed he 'ruled the lawless Broadwater Farm jungle with a reign of terror'. The *Sun* told a tall story of how a balaclava-clad Silcott scared Princess Di when she graced the Farm with a Royal visit. 'They have crucified my son', lamented William Silcott.

Later concoction

Silcott was sentenced to 30 years in March 1987. His co-defendants, Mark Braithwaite and Enghin Raghip, got life. Their appeal was turned down, but in 1991 they tried again, after tests using electrostatic deposition analysis indicated that Silcott's alleged remarks were indeed 'a later concoction' inserted in police notes. The court of appeal judged their convictions unsafe. Braithwaite and Raghip were released, although Silcott continued a life sentence for the murder of boxer Anthony Smith in Hackney in 1984 (his appeal against this conviction is pending). Superintendent Melvin was suspended from duty while awaiting trial for perjury and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

At the Old Bailey in July, Melvin and Dingle chose not to take the stand. Instead their barrister, Richard Ferguson QC, tried to convince the jury that Silcott was guilty all the time. Ferguson offered written statements from 14 alleged witnesses, who told police they had seen Silcott hack Blakelock to death, but who were said to be absent from the court 'through fear'.

On the strength of these written statements, the detectives were acquitted and Silcott was, by implication, reconvicted. Yet it was all a tissue of lies. There were no new witnesses in court, nor were those who gave the statements absent 'through fear'.

Fact and fantasy

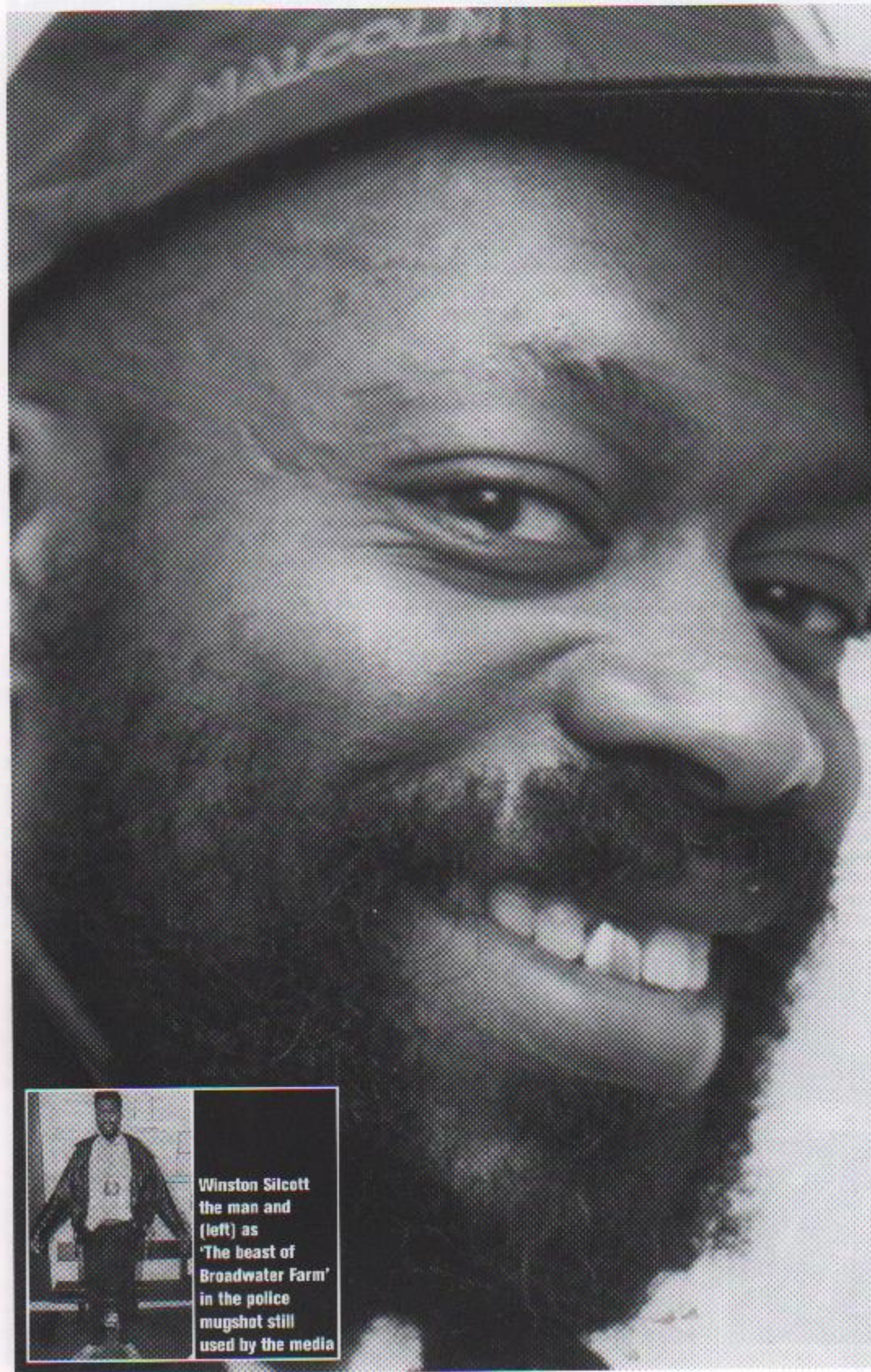
The ages of some of the 'new witnesses' were given as 13, 15 and 18. If their testimony had really been 'new evidence' in July 1994, these people would have been aged four, six and nine when Blakelock was killed in 1985. But, far from being new evidence, the lurid allegations against Silcott read out in July were contained in statements that were made to the police by teenage 'witnesses' before the original trial in February 1987. Then, they had been thrown out by the judge as inadmissible 'fantasy', prompted by improper questioning of frightened, underage youths held incommunicado by bullying police officers. Seven years on, it seems, fantasy is accepted as hard evidence.

The court heard a handful of genuinely new statements in July. These were either of a general nature—Silcott 'hated the police' (he has never claimed to be a member of a police support group); or of dubious character—a former cellmate alleged that Silcott boasted about stabbing Blakelock. Such statements are hardly grounds for what was, in effect, a retrial.

Aware that written statements read out in court are not subject to cross-examination, the detectives' defence lawyers simply recycled ancient fantasies, and the press duly reported them as new evidence against Silcott. In the *Observer*, David Rose punched holes in the 'new evidence':

'Some of the worst allegations came from "statement H". Described as the words of a boy of 13, it says Silcott was "hacking the geezer to pieces all over...they were like vultures". To anyone familiar with the case, these words were instantly recognisable. They came from the interview notes of Jason Hill, one of the youths tried with Silcott and acquitted. Hill was held

Silcott show-trial: the sequel



Winston Silcott
the man and
(left) as
'The beast of
Broadwater Farm'
in the police
mugshot still
used by the media

incommunicado for three days, illegally denied access to his parents, a solicitor or a social worker. His clothes were confiscated and he was detained and interrogated wearing only underpants and a blanket, which by the time he began his fantastic confession was stained with flecks of his vomit.' (31 July 1994)

Rose pointed out that Mr Justice Hodgson had thrown out Hill's statement and reprimanded Superintendent Melvin for 'improprieties, and serious ones' in obtaining it. Recounting his interrogation by Melvin at the time of Silcott's successful appeal in 1991, Hill admitted, 'I would have confessed to anything. I would even have confessed to being the Yorkshire Ripper'.

Rose took the trouble to track down Hill, now 22. Had he stayed away from Melvin's trial 'through fear'? Hardly, said Hill: 'the first I knew they were going to use my statement was when it was suddenly flashed up on telly. It is disgraceful...I never was a witness to the killing and I'm not one now. I thought this case was about claims of forged police papers. What did my statement have to do with that?'

Shifting spotlight

Recycling the fantasies of frightened youths held and intimidated in custody has allowed the authorities and the media to shift the spotlight away from the dirty dealings of the police, and back to Silcott, the man they love to hate. It allows columnists like the *Sun's* Richard Littlejohn (1 August 1994) to indulge in more fantasies, of 'a witch-hunt' against 'distinguished dedicated coppers'. In a grotesque inversion of reality, Littlejohn complimented the *Mail on Sunday's* Chester Stern, who 'so splendidly described' the case against Melvin and Dingle as 'a show-trial in the grand tradition of Stalin, Ho Chi Minh and Chairman Mao'.

In fact, Silcott is the one who was fitted up by the police and the media, and has now been subjected to a second show-trial on the basis of fantastic 'evidence' which was kicked out of court more than seven years ago.

At the end of one of the few intelligent articles to date on the ►



second Silcott show-trial, Rose pondered 'the real mystery' of 'how the Crown and the judge, after days of secret hearings in chambers, can have allowed the policemen's lawyers to use these statements at all, let alone with the preamble that their authors were too frightened to give evidence'.

For a decade, Silcott has been paraded as the public image of criminal black youth

The Crown, the judges, the police and the media all played their part in fitting up Silcott, and it would be too embarrassing, even now, to admit this outright. All the more so, because the Silcott case has a symbolic significance. For the best part of a decade, Silcott has been paraded as the public image of criminal black youth. By reaffirming his guilt, and presenting the police as innocent victims, the authorities are seeking to vindicate their strategy of hunting down the black youth of Broadwater Farm as a race of murderous criminals.

The riot of October 1985 followed the death of Cynthia Jarrett, who collapsed and died after police burst into her flat without a warrant. (The name of Cynthia Jarrett has not been mentioned once in the coverage of Silcott's 'blood money'.) Her death was the last straw for a community which had already suffered sustained police harassment.

On Sunday 6 October, working to a plan held in readiness in the safe of Wood Green police station, a double-shift of 400 riot police invaded the estate to pre-empt protests against the death of Jarrett. Broadwater Farm exploded in anger, and PC Keith Blakelock was killed in the ensuing conflagration.

For two months after the riot, there were never less than 1000 police officers on Broadwater Farm. In the week beginning 7 October there were 9165 officers on the estate. Over a six-month period, police raided 271 flats—a third of the total number of dwellings. There were 369 arrests. Virtually every black male between the ages of 15 and 25 was picked up. Many of those arrested were held in isolation. Like Hill, they were bullied and threatened until they 'confessed'. White youths were told 'don't be a nigger-lover': shop the blacks and you can go free.

The violent intimidation of Broadwater Farm residents was not the work of an isolated detective, acting beyond his brief. It was a deliberate strategy deployed at every level of the Metropolitan Police, from the beat officers who twisted testicles to the (then) commissioner Kenneth Newman, who declared: 'There is a psychological hang-up in this country about the use of force by the police. I have fewer hang-ups than most.'

Silcott's 44-day appearance at the Old Bailey was the *coup de theatre*. But his was not the only Broadwater Farm show-trial. From police station to the dock to character assassination in the media, the conveyor-belt of British justice brought 167 youths to an 18-month series of show-trials. Judges dished out 200 years of prison time; 38 defendants were jailed on the flimsiest of evidence. In one typical case, Simon MacMinn was sentenced to seven years for allegedly throwing stones and stealing two cans of Coke. MacMinn said he made his 'confession' under duress. There was no eyewitness or forensic evidence. The judge told him he had to bear part of the 'collective responsibility' for the violence on the Farm.

Even when Silcott, Braithwaite and Raghip were acquitted in November 1991, there was no let

up in the campaign to criminalise Broadwater Farm, and, by implication, black youth all over Britain. Never mind the culpability of the officers who framed the Tottenham Three and others, the press wanted to know who *really* killed Blakelock. Demands that Tottenham youth should bear 'collective responsibility' were voiced even more loudly. When Blakelock's widow declared 'anyone on Broadwater Farm who turned out that night is guilty', the all-embracing character of her remarks was reproduced throughout the media.

'Soft target'

A decade ago, black youth framed by the police often sought protection from collective organisations such as the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign. Such organisations no longer exist or tend to be inactive. Those seeking redress against the police are today more likely to sue for civil damages for wrongful arrest. This is a strategy of last resort, but, in the wake of the furore over damages paid to Silcott, Metropolitan commissioner Sir Paul Condon could not resist the opportunity to attack it. At the press launch of his annual report for 1993-94, he warned that litigation against the police is sometimes 'cynical and manipulating': 'it would seem there are some firms of solicitors who specialise in suing the Met...in the past we have been seen as a soft target, and some people have exploited the system.'

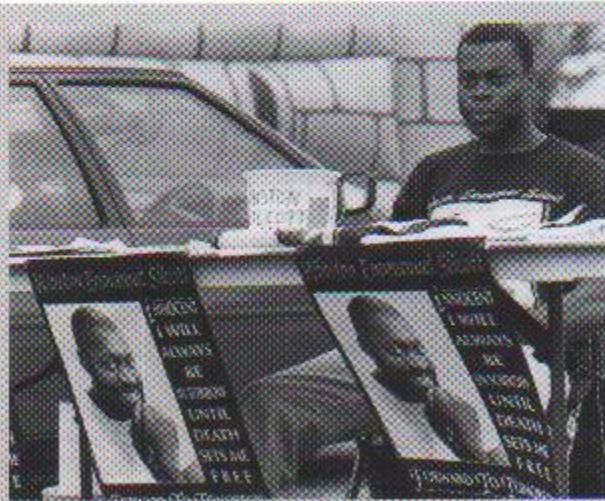
Condon must inhabit the same topsy-turvy world as Littlejohn. It is black youth who have been targeted by the Met, while Silcott has been the object of cynical manipulation on the part of every section of the establishment. As Winston Silcott himself put it in a recent statement issued from his cell in Swaleside prison, 'there is no such thing as British justice. At the end of the day, it's just how they manipulate things'.

'The issue has always been racism'

The Silcott family is not surprised by what has happened. 'We have never expected justice from the courts in this country', said George Silcott, brother of Winston. 'The issue has always been one of racism and that is how we are fighting it. Forensic experts showed that pages and pages of the police officers' notebooks were doctored, yet those officers were found not guilty. We knew that would be the signal for them to retry Winston, and they'll keep doing it until they get the result they want.'

'All of this has just made us more determined. Everything they throw at us has pulled the family together and made us even more determined to fight on. We fought hard for the appeal for the Tottenham Three, then we worked hard to win it. We will challenge the latest media lies about Winston, and we will fight until he is released.'

If you were in prison then you would want a brother like George.
Mark Butler



PHOTOS: WINSTON; DAVID JACKSON; (GEORGE) NORTH; LONDON GROUP

Tories off the rails

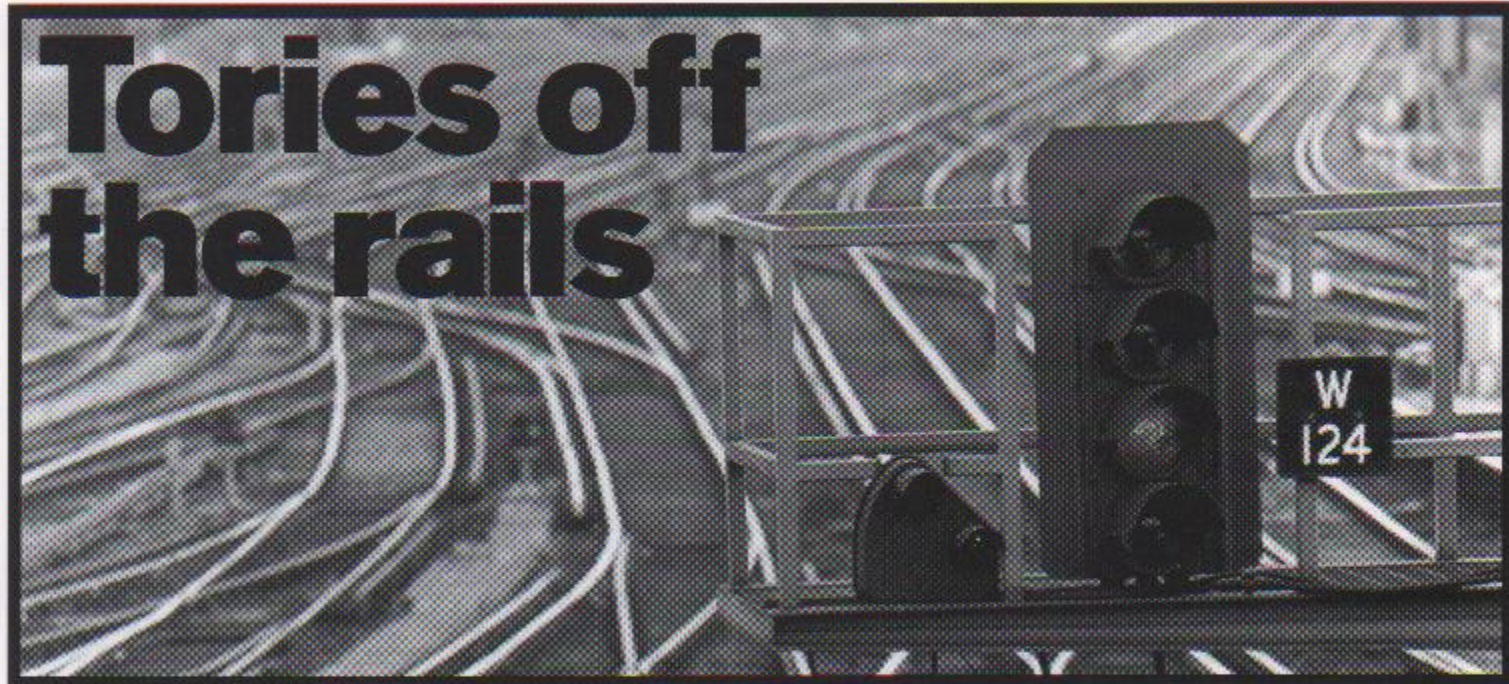


PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

Alan Harding sees the summer's rail strikes as a snapshot of the state of the nation

Flying back from a week's holiday in Verona, the pilot came on the intercom and reminded us that when we got to Gatwick there would be no trains because of the signalmen's strike. There was a subdued groan and then everyone went back to their pocket-sized piece of salmon. I had the distinct impression that I—the striker's friend—was more put out than most on the plane. My humour was not improved when I discovered that the alternative bus route back to London went via Chessington Zoo and spent the best part of an hour crawling through south London suburbs.

You could put my fellow passengers' response down to British stoicism but that would be to miss the point. The fact is that most people's bitterness over the summer's rail strikes has been directed against the government, not the signalmen—a response out of step with the rabid anti-union atmosphere of the past 20 years. 'Another fine mess you've got us in', says the man on the Clapham Junction platform—but this time he's talking to his Tory MP not the ticket-collector on the gate.

At the time of writing, the dispute is still on. However it ends, it has provided a kind of snapshot of the balance of forces in British society today. The government is in disarray, the middle classes are grumbling at the government, and the working class is too disorganised to take proper advantage.

The government's inability to sort out the signalmen is especially poignant given that in 1982 the Tories had one of their early union-bashing triumphs over Aslef the traidrivers' union. The image of troops returning from the Falklands draping a banner over the side of their ship with the slogan 'Call off the rail strike or we'll call an air-strike' marked a high point of success for the authorities in the Thatcher era. In the heyday of the Falklands Factor, any

opponent, however innocuous, could be branded an 'enemy within' and swept away.

How different from today. It wasn't until the dispute neared the end of its second month that management even got around to thinking about sacking the signalmen and starting again from scratch. The Railtrack bosses are suffering from an acute form of the general malaise and incoherence now afflicting the British establishment. The rail privatisation plans which aim to make a quick buck for the City at the expense of a coordinated transport system are so irrational, so contradictory and so indefensible that they have sapped the morale of management and ministers alike. How else can you explain Railtrack chairman Bob Horton's bizarre offer to take a £74 000 pay cut and donate it to charity if the signalmen would end their strikes?

The government must have been even more confused when a commuter backlash against the railworkers failed to materialise. Long-suffering travellers on the nation's suburban railinks are not noted for a tradition of solidarity with transport workers. Keen to vent their spleen on the first available target, they are more likely to blame lazy workers than the lack of investment for the appalling service they endure. But not this time around. Instead, passengers from Surbiton and Chelmsford have saved the worst of their anger for the Tories.

Only when their own bosses put the screws on to get them to work did the nation's commuters start to worry about the strike, but in terms which reflected middle class disenchantment with the Tory government more than the union-bashing mood of the eighties.

The rail dispute became a focus for the deeply felt sense of disaffection among Conservative voters which now threatens a meltdown for John Major's government.

With even the most diehard Tory on the defensive, supporters of the 'Fightback' campaign

arguing for solidarity with the signalmen in railway carriages around London only had to suggest that it was not unreasonable to be dissatisfied with £150 a week to gain at least the passive support of most commuters.

The ease with which gaining support or at least acquiescence was possible is an indictment of the RMT union leadership's inability to win the dispute quickly and convincingly. With management unable to develop a strategy, and the middle classes either neutral or more hostile to the government, the union should really have been able to score a notable success. Instead, throughout the course of the action, the RMT leaders stressed that they were ready to accommodate management's concerns and compromise their members' demands.

From the start of the dispute, Jimmy Knapp and the rest of the RMT leadership were caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, they were under pressure from signalmen to organise effective action in support of the demand for a decent wage. On the other, however, they were under pressure from the Tony Blair-style labour movement of the 1990s to look harmless and do nothing that might endanger public sympathy. The two proved mutually incapacitating.

For instance, the traidrivers could have given telling support for the signalmen simply by refusing to drive when signal boxes were manned by untrained staff. That would have closed the rail system down on strike days and upped the pressure on management considerably. But in its concern to keep the lid on the dispute, the RMT refused to allow the drivers to make even that elementary show of solidarity.

The union has not brought together the collective strength of the workforce, but instead left each individual signalman as isolated as their job function makes them. A victory was there for the taking, yet the signalmen can only expect to end up with a few scraps from the table. Many things have changed in Britain in the past few years—but, as yet, the effectiveness of resistance to attacks on jobs, pay and working conditions is not one of them. ●

Dying for a job

Work really can damage your health—and for many of us it's getting worse, says Fiona Foster

As kids our Dad kept telling us that accidents don't happen, they are caused. I still believe that today and I know Stephen's accident could have been avoided.' Denise Lynch has good cause to be bitter. Her brother, 39-year old Stephen Wright, was one of eight men who suffered violent deaths while building the British side of the Channel Tunnel.

Stephen was a heating and plumbing engineer. Three weeks before his death, all Channel workers were told that under new deregulated working conditions they were now General Operatives who would have to do any job they were given. This along with 16-hour shifts, a ban on unions and poor safety standards angered many of the workers, but they had little choice but to cooperate. 'Anyone who challenged working conditions was out. It was shut up or put up', says Denise, whose own husband had to carry on working at the tunnel even after Stephen's death because the family needed the money.

'Accidental death'

Stephen was killed on Easter Saturday 1990, when a huge steel pipe slipped from a crane and hit him straight in the face. He died instantly. The inquest heard that Stephen wouldn't have been doing that job before the deregulation, that the job should have been done by three people rather than two and that the sea wall where Stephen was working should have been completely closed at that time. Yet the inquest delivered a verdict of accidental death, and production at Euro Tunnel steamed on.

When Denise wrote to Sir Alistair Morton, the head of Euro Tunnel, asking for a small monument to be erected in remembrance of the workers killed, he told her that 'time moves on—not backwards'. 'If only', says Denise wistfully, 'it seems to get harder being without Stephen. I feel like his death was a life sentence for our family'.

In the five years up to 1992, 3513 people were killed in workplace accidents. Nearly 200 000 suffered serious injuries at work (including amputations, third degree burns, etc), and nearly one million workers suffered minor injuries. In the past year alone 249 people have lost their lives at work.

Even these alarming figures hide the full extent of danger at work. The government sponsored Health and Safety Executive (HSE) estimates that two thirds of non-fatal accidents at work go unreported. And these statistics also exclude the estimated 10 000 workers who every year die a slow, painful death from the effects of industrial diseases like asbestosis.

While most people killed at work are employed in industry or construction there is no safe haven where workers are guaranteed health and safety. Nearly 90 per cent of office workers who use VDUs for more than six hours a day experience visual problems. Thousands of workers who use computers now suffer from Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), which can cause permanent and disabling damage to muscles and tendons. A recent survey shows that 42 per cent of employers still do not allow employees to take the breaks necessary to avoid injury.

Faced with the choice of improving safety at work or increasing productivity, most employers simply ignore safety regulations. A 1993 survey revealed that only 23 per cent of employers complied with new regulations based on European Health and Safety directives, and nearly half of UK employers failed to comply with the 1988 Control of Substances Hazardous to Health regulations, described as the key health and safety law of the decade.

Not a crime

Those killed at work often meet their deaths in horribly violent circumstances—crushed, electrocuted, asphyxiated or burned alive. Yet while the HSE admits that up to 90 per cent of accidents at work could be prevented, letting people die for the want of decent safety measures in the workplace is not seen as criminal behaviour in a system committed to removing all obstacles to competition in the market.

In fact deaths at work are the only deaths in suspicious circumstances dealt with outside the criminal justice system. Once the police have established that the worker was killed through management negligence rather than murdered by a colleague, the case is passed to the Health and Safety Executive who carry out their own investigation. While the HSE can refer

cases to a magistrates court, it has long been attacked by relatives of dead workers for too readily accepting the employers' defence. Even where prosecutions do proceed, the worst penalty is a fine which is covered by the company's insurance. The average fine last year was £683.

No justice

The HSE can refer cases to the Crown Prosecution Service. But only one company director has ever been charged with manslaughter and he walked free after receiving a short suspended sentence and a company fine. The man killed in this case was 25-year old George Kenyan, dragged head first into a shredding machine in 1988. The machine's 20-50 inch blades rotated 1200 times a minute. It was discovered that the accident happened because the employers had sabotaged the machine to enable them to double production. After the trial George's father and sister issued a statement: 'They had to scrape George out of the machine and bury him in a coffin with almost nothing in it. We want justice. All we have had is £3100 which is an insult for a life.'

But normal notions of justice do not apply to the relationship between employer and employees. Indeed the health and safety laws in the UK are based on the premise that employers should be immune from punishment for unsafe working conditions. The Robens Report of 1972 which led to the setting up of the HSE stated that 'the typical infringement arises rather through carelessness, oversight, lack of knowledge or means of adequate supervision or sheer inefficiency. In such circumstances the process of prosecution and punishment is largely an irrelevance.'

The role of the HSE, with its £211m government grant is to ensure that workers' demands for health and safety do not threaten employers' needs to maximise profits. The newly appointed chairman of the HSE, Frank Davies CBE (also the Director of BTR, a UK-based firm known by its employees in South Africa as Blood, Tears and Repression), immediately sought to reassure employers that their profits are safe in his hands:

'I am conscious that while people want to be safe they also want to be

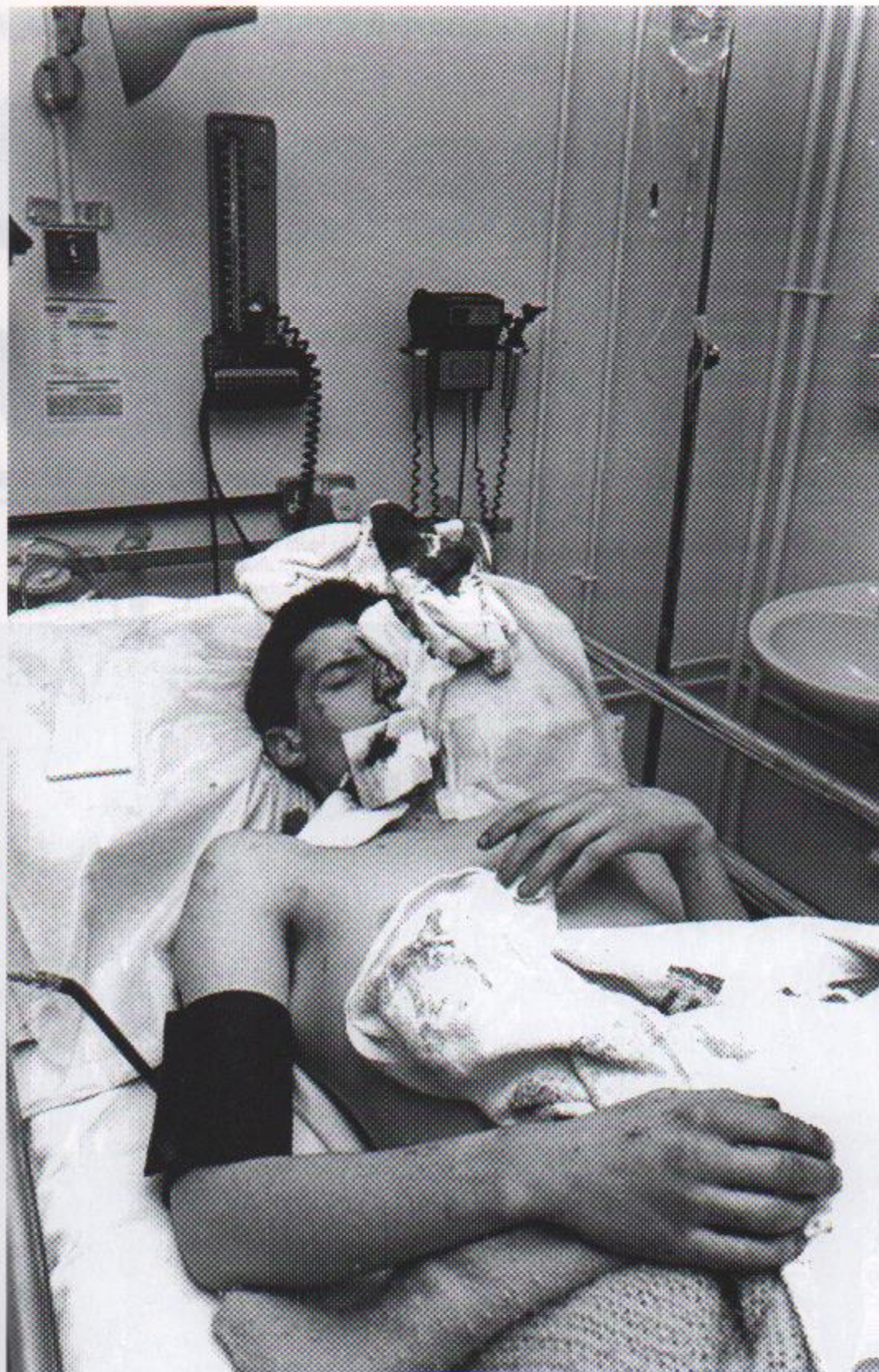


PHOTO: SIMON WOFFELK

In the five years up to 1992, 200 000 suffered serious injuries at work

prosperous. During my time as chairman I shall strive to ensure that the Commission seeks a proper balance between these two needs.'

At the end of May, the government and the HSE announced the scrapping of 100 health-and-safety regulations as part of a new deregulation bill aimed at removing 'burdens on business'.

The chronic state of the British economy now means that Britain is

forced to compete with third world countries by promoting itself as a low-wage, low-skill economy. The government recently advertised in a leading German business paper urging investment in Britain on the basis that 'the wage and social costs in Great Britain are significantly lower than in Germany'.

Maureen Brennan learned all about the 'social costs' of the corner-cutting by British employers

when her 19-year old son Michael was killed at work. 'People will go on being killed because of greed and the attitude of bosses that workers are dispensable.' Maureen hasn't always had such strong views. 'It was me that made him go and get a job on the sites rather than going on the dole. I thought I was sending him out to live, not to die.' Michael's real passion was football. The trophies he won are stacked on shelves in Maureen's living room alongside photographs of Michael in his boxing gear, Michael holding his baby niece and Michael with the whole family.

Michael was killed in April 1990 when he was catapulted into a trench by the dumper he was driving which then fell on top of him. At the inquest, the Brennan family heard how Michael should never have been driving the dumper, that the vehicle was so defective that the driver had to keep one hand permanently on the handbrake, that the dumper was overloaded and that there were no regulation 'stoppers' on the ramp to prevent the dumper falling into the trench. Yet despite all this, and the fact that there had been another death and other injuries on the same site in the same year, the company avoided any sanction by going into liquidation—before setting up again under a new name.

For Maureen Brennan the fact that her son's death was so avoidable made it harder to cope with: 'Until Michael died I always believed in fate. That you go when you're meant to go. Maybe if Michael had died of cancer I would still believe that, but now I can't.' What really amazes Maureen is that the authorities expect her to accept the way Michael died. The HEA has advised her to give up her fight for justice and grieve in another way. 'I really think that they all thought, he's only a 19-year old navy, nobody will care.'

In answer to a parliamentary question, John Major recently stated that he was happy to report that deaths on building sites are now running at a record low of 92 a year. In fact the small decrease on past death rates is entirely accounted for by the massive shakeout in jobs in the construction industry. Far from eliminating the risk of death at work, the government's deregulation policies are likely to make things worse.

Frank Furedi examines why Western commentators have turned the Rwandan tragedy

At the heart of Rwanda's dark



The media's denigration of Rwanda has revived Victorian caricatures of blood-lust and depravity in the Dark Continent

into a symbol of evil and the horror of the human condition

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Rwanda has become the Western media's all-purpose symbol of bestiality, terror and human evil. The bloody civil war and refugee crisis in Rwanda have been presented as the antithesis of civilisation—a throwback to the age of barbarism. It is a tale of horrors, and of incomprehensible horrors at that, since it seems to make no sense whatsoever to European or American eyes. According to many highly sensationalised accounts, evil, in an unusually undiluted form, now stalks not only Rwanda, but the entire Dark Continent of Africa.

Many Western commentators seem disturbed not so much about Rwanda itself, but about what they believe they have learned about their own societies through looking at Rwanda. These are second-rate imitators of Joseph Conrad's hero in *Heart of Darkness*, convinced that they have discovered something profound about the horror of the human condition by observing events in Rwanda. The pessimism which permeates Western societies has combined with images of the conflict in Africa to bring about a new version of the collapse-of-civilisation panic. Our worst fears are recycled, inflated and then relocated on African territory.

'There is a Rwanda in all of us', observes Barbara Amiel of the *Sunday Times* (31 July 1994). The beast that is within us all, whether in Rwanda or Britain, was also the theme of Nick Gordon's 'Could it happen here?' (*Sunday Times*, 31 July 1994). According to leading radical German intellectual Hans Magnus Enzensberger, most ordinary people are only too easily capable of the depravity of Rwandan murderers. He writes of the meaningless violence carried out by thugs everywhere from the housing estates of Paris, France to the shanties of Mogadishu, Somalia, and cites an anonymous Parisian social worker in his support:

'They have destroyed everything: letter-boxes, doors, stairways. The health centre where their younger brothers and sisters receive free medical treatment has been demolished and looted. They recognise no rules of any sort. They smash doctors' and dentists' surgeries to pieces and tear down their schools.' (*Guardian*, 9 July 1994)

It seems that the 'underclass' of Western societies, like its Rwandan counterparts, is motivated by impulses beyond rational comprehension. Somehow it has crossed over the boundary that separates human civilisation from a world of beasts and blood-lust.

It is obvious that the prophets of doom are not simply talking about Rwanda. Rather, Rwanda has provided them with an opportunity to explore the dark side of humanity at home as much as abroad. The intense hatred which many elite journalists feel for the domestic underclass which they have to pick their way past on the way to work can finally be expressed openly through the metaphor of Rwanda. The discussion of the contemporary regression into barbarism has a double purpose. It is as much about restraining the underclass on the neighbouring council estate as it is about sorting out the savages in Africa.

Crusade against evil

The media furore about Rwanda is really a moral drama, which implicitly exhorts Western civilisation to renew itself through a crusade against the evil that stalks its own inner cities just as much as it terrorises that faraway Dark Continent. However, since it is easier to send soldiers and aid workers to intervene in African camps than in Hackney housing estates, the emphasis of Western commentators is on the need to intervene abroad.

In the past, representations of African culture sought to elaborate a vision of violence and horror for the benefit of a Western audience. Many texts dwelt at length on such practices as ritual murder, depraved secret societies and cannibalism. Africa's history was portrayed as a permanent dark ages, where the vast majority apparently lived in constant terror of the most horrible forces imaginable.

According to imperial accounts, colonialism saved Africa from itself. It brought order to an otherwise chaotic continent and allowed its people to live—for the first time—without fear and apprehension of the dark forces that had ruined the lives of their ancestors. These stories of Africa's

bloody past were periodically complemented by new representations of atrocities and inhuman deeds. A whole generation of the British and Western public was fed a diet of horror stories about what the Mau Mau rebels did during the early 1950s in Kenya. The Mau Mau's bestial practices were flagged up as a pointed reminder of what the African was really like deep down—and, of course, as a justification for the acts of colonial repression carried out by the British administration.

The Western campaign to portray Africa's past as a moral wasteland was temporarily suspended in the sixties. For a brief period, the stories of ritual murder and incomprehensible savagery stood compromised. Instead, African societies fighting to establish their own independence and dignity pointed an accusing finger at the barbarism of the imperial powers. The mood of anti-colonialism helped inspire more objective accounts of the African experience. However this reaction proved to be a short interlude. By the eighties, the dreams of independent African nations had collapsed and the international movement against imperialism had disintegrated. The combined effect was to allow the return of the rhetoric of the colonial era. That is why Rwanda can now be treated as 'another Mau Mau'.

'Conflict was ingrained in precolonial Africa', writes Barbara Amiel in her discussion of Rwanda. From this perspective 'colonialism was a giant peacekeeping movement for India and Africa'. There is a devastatingly simple logic at work. The end of colonialism necessarily implies the withdrawal of the only force that could keep the peace. The bloody conflict in Rwanda is the penalty that Africans pay for forcing European powers to withdraw from their continent. In the world according to Amiel, the famines, massacres, divisions and degradations that colonialism brought to Africa and Asia are erased from the history books, and the empires emerge as the only hope for humanity.

Other contributors are also of the view that the drama of Rwanda is the result of the revenge of the past. That peculiar African attraction for ghastly violence is seen as the motive force in what is most often described as a tribalist conflict. The symbol of horror has been reserved for the Hutu, that section of Rwandan society closely associated with the ousted regime and blamed for the bloodbath.

Descriptions of the actions of the Hutu people easily match the ►



propaganda that was once thrown against the Mau Mau. One *Daily Telegraph* journalist described a group of Hutu laughing as they casually dismembered their living Tutsi victim (22 July 1994). His colleague, writing for the *Guardian*, noted that there are 'horror stories aplenty in Rwanda. The body of a mother pulled

The Hutu are barely considered human by European standards

out of Lake Victoria with a child bound to each limb, the Belgian paratroopers found dead with their penises rammed into their mouths' (30 July 1994).

Other accounts have dealt with the absence of any Hutu remorse for the genocide that they have perpetrated on an innocent people. Clearly, the Hutu are an intensely evil race.

The most insidious accounts go so far as to deprive the Hutu of any moral qualities at all. It has been suggested that the Hutu people have been turned into brainwashed zombies driven to kill by some primitive religion. They are indicted for having no sense of right and wrong. According to Nick Gordon, the Hutu are natural liars:

'In Rwanda, deceit and the nurturing of hatred is far more institutionalised and sophisticated than in Europe. There the process of dehumanisation begins at birth.' (*Sunday Times*, 31 July 1994)

So deceit is 'far more institutionalised' in Africa than it is in Europe, a continent where every government is currently embroiled in corruption scandals of one sort or another. It is a sign of the times that a Western journalist can seriously claim that the practice of deceit in Rwanda is more 'sophisticated' than in the part of the world that invented the lie machines of the mass media and total propaganda. Such a claim is only a prelude to the moral condemnation of a people that has been 'dehumanised' at birth. Clearly the Hutu can barely be considered human by European standards.

Nick Gordon portrays a society where deception and dishonesty are the most highly esteemed values. He has reported that the Rwandans 'found it more natural to tell lies than tell the truth': 'In fact, the Kinyarwanda dictionary does not include a word that is equivalent to our concept of truth, and it is said that

a Rwandan boy comes of age when he can lie convincingly to his grandmother.' Like nineteenth-century accounts of the alleged African obsession with ritual murder, contemporary tales about Rwanda summon up images of a morally depraved people descending into hell.

Such people have no redeeming features. Left to their own devices they can only destroy. They require an outside force to save them from themselves—once again.

Predictably, the stories of horror from Rwanda serve as an incitement for foreign intervention. The calls for humanitarian aid for the victims are only the flipside of the demand to rid the world of the evil that is perpetrated in Africa. So the aid agencies insist that military force is required to carry out their missions, and liberal journalists like David Beresford call for the United Nations to stage 'a new Nuremberg' to put the Hutu butchers on trial for crimes against humanity (*Guardian*, 30 July 1994). Just as the old caricatures of African barbarism are recycled as the problem of the nineties, so the demand goes up for a revamped version of the old imperial solutions. The leading American magazine *Newsweek* is only one of many influential voices to have talked about how 'the world is groping for an acceptable form of what might be called "The New Colonialism"' (1 August 1994).

Moral renewal

In responding to this challenge, the crisis-ridden governments of the West can rediscover themselves as sources of moral authority with a highly developed sense of purpose. This reaction is quite understandable. It is far easier to experience moral renewal by sending a few soldiers, doctors and aid workers to the refugee camps of Goma than it is by trying to tackle the intractable problems of the ruined cities of Europe. Reviving the image of the great powers as the saviours of uncivilised peoples is the cheapest way to rebuild the authority of those who rule Western nations. The calls for a return to colonialism are motivated at least as much by a sense of the West's need for moral rehabilitation as by any calculations of the geopolitical advantages to be gained by intervening in Africa.

It is ironic that the people of Rwanda should stand accused of not knowing right from wrong. The denigration of their moral qualities by Western commentators represents a serious act of bad faith on two counts.

First, it entirely misrepresents the character of Rwandan society and its problems. The terrible violence seen on the world's TV screens is not

a symptom of some moral shortcoming, but of real shortages of the basic necessities of life. In a society reduced to the most dire state of poverty by the workings of the world economy, the struggle for survival is always brutal and violence is never far below the surface.

One eyewitness account from a refugee camp in Zaire described Hutu militiamen as having 'a blind hatred of Tutsis'. But the one 23-year old member of a Hutu militia whom it quoted thought he had a far more down-to-earth motive for fighting. 'We knew the RPF [the mainly Tutsi Rwanda Patriotic Front] wanted to take all the good jobs', he told journalist Chris McGreal, 'The Tutsis have a lot of land, but with their foreign money the RPF were going to buy up the rest. But if we defended ourselves then there would be more land for us and more jobs. I don't have a job and I want a job' (*Guardian*, 4 August 1994). That sounds less like the spirit of evil than the dog-eat-dog ethos of the market, transposed to the Rwandan conditions of desperate poverty.

Imperialism ignored

Second, the denigration of Rwanda assumes the moral high ground at a time when even the elites of our societies suspect the worst about Western civilisation. The very fact that the West needs to intervene in Rwanda in order to discover some moral authority suggests that we are living in a society which is singularly incapable of generating any such sense of legitimacy on its own account.

There is another falsehood perpetrated by the Western press. The responsibility of the imperialist powers for the carnage in Rwanda is pointedly overlooked. Explaining the violence away as a consequence of ancient tribal conflicts serves those who prefer to ignore the manipulation of Rwandan society by foreign powers. It ignores the century-old great power rivalry between the Belgians, the French and the British in that part of the world, which has sown deep divisions among the peoples of the region. And it sidesteps the issue of how the current conflict was ignited by the rivalries between the French, who supported the old regime, and the Americans and British, who backed the rebel RPF.

On closer inspection, it seems that in one sense at least the Western media is right. The conflict in Rwanda and the decomposition of European inner cities do have something in common. The same system of power relations bears responsibility for both.

Frank Furedi is the author of *The New Ideology of Imperialism*—see opposite for details.

The New Ideology of Imperialism

Frank
Füredi



The New Ideology of Imperialism examines the intellectual and political background to the newfound enthusiasm of Western governments for interventions into the affairs of third world countries. Using original archive material, Frank Füredi persuasively demonstrates that behind the talk of humanitarianism lies a fear of third world nationalism that is as irrational and racist as the outlook of nineteenth-century imperialism.

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Detail from *Flekk*, 1991
by Anthony Gormley:
Salvatore Ala Gallery,
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Who's afraid of population growth?

The big United Nations conference on population and development opens in Cairo in September. Amanda Macintosh thinks the current fixation with population is not about addressing the real problems of the third world, but overcoming insecurities in the West

Nobody knows how many people there will be on Earth by the end of the twenty-first century; estimates vary wildly, from six billion to 28 billion. But everybody agrees that it will be too many. Population growth is always seen as a problem today, each forecast laden with dire warnings of an apocalyptic future.

The population issue hits the top of the international agenda in September, at the huge United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo. Not only is this the largest population conference ever, but just about every participant shares the view that population growth in the third world is at the root of modern society's problems. The only disagreement to emerge in the run-up to the conference involved an unholy alliance of Iran and the Vatican trying to remove any mention of abortion from the final declaration.

180 a minute

Cairo marks the culmination of the trend for population to become a major theme in world politics. Each international summit in the past three years has found time to talk about it. The UN General Assembly has created a special United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), with its own population calculator showing the total world population rising by 180 every minute.

Concern with third world population growth can now crop up anywhere, in debates about issues from the environment to immigration.

At a recent meeting about the Scott inquiry into the arms-for-Iraq scandal, former Labour chancellor Denis Healey even sought to blame instability in the Middle East on overpopulation.

The press pack for Cairo spells out the problems which the expanding world population is now held responsible for: 'Population growth, migration and urbanisation are bound up with poverty, wasteful patterns of consumption and production, unsustainable use of natural resources, environmental degradation and social and gender inequalities.'

According to the UNEPA's annual *State of the World's Population*

report, 'because of population growth, the numbers of poor are going up'. The nub of the argument is that the more people there are in the world, the less there will be to go round. It is on this basis that 'population pressure' is now widely held to be responsible for global shortages in water, food and housing.

All of this will be taken for granted at Cairo. Yet there is no real basis for blaming population growth for these problems. Take hunger. Even the *State of the World's Population* report has to concede that 'there is no overall global shortage of food, and that with equitable distribution there should be sufficient to meet all needs for the foreseeable future'. Indeed it has been calculated that even if the world's population reached 28 billion it would still be possible to feed everyone by applying existing methods of technology. Future technological innovations ought to make this situation even more manageable. Whether someone starves or not does not depend on how many people are with him, but in which society he happens to live. Two million people could easily starve in Rwanda, but 18m can be fed every day in Tokyo. (For the full facts about 'overpopulation', see page 34.)

But if population growth is not the root of the major problems facing the world, why is there such a powerful consensus insisting that it is? Is everyone at the Cairo conference just mistaken?

Heart of the West

In reality the obsession with population growth does not come from studying demographic data or counting the number of people in Africa and Asia. The source of the fixation with rising numbers is not to be found in the third world at all, but at the heart of the developed nations of the West. Through the prism of a debate about population control, the crisis inside Western societies is being projected outwards onto the third world. The Western preoccupation with population can be understood as a displacement activity; inflating a substitute issue in order to avoid tackling a real one which is too hard to contemplate.

The problem that Western elites would prefer not to face is their sense of failure at home. Almost every major city in the developed world is a ghetto of the unemployed and the homeless, surrounded by derelict factories and empty shops. A pall of social and economic decline and decay hangs over the West.

There are no big ideas about the regeneration of society. The world is in the fourth year of an economic depression, yet the very notion that governments can do anything significant to reverse economic stagnation is now considered naive and outdated. Instead of an optimistic outlook that sees society moving forwards, Western elites have become imbued with a sense of *limits*. Unable to come to terms with the failures of the capitalist system, they seek instead to ascribe their problems to natural factors. Everywhere they look today, the Western authorities see society coming up against supposedly natural limits: limits of economic growth, limits of human capabilities, limits of the Earth's resources.

This pessimistic outlook provides the lens through which people in the West view the world. The incapacity of the capitalist world economy to resolve its difficulties is reinterpreted as humanity's inability to overcome natural barriers. So the numbers of humans have to be controlled. The mood of conservatism is so strong that it can fly in the face of the facts. For instance, population experts and environmentalists will often concede that there is no set limit on the potential of humanity to feed the projected populations of the next century. Yet they still insist that there are too many impassable barriers in the way. The UNFPA is sure that equitable distribution is simply not feasible. Paul Harrison's *The Third Revolution* admits that feeding the world is possible; but concludes that this simply could not happen, and in any case pollution of the environment will get us first.

This predisposition to conservatism takes on a sinister meaning in the context of a competitive world market. If there is a limit to the available ►



resources in the world, then somebody's gain is another's loss. Consequently, people outside of the West are viewed with deep suspicion as possible scroungers, or even invaders, illustrated by the enormous interest in the supposed problem of mass migration from the third world and the East.

The only way to improve things for women in the third world is to address the problem of poverty, not population

For Richard Ottaway, chair of the Parliamentary All-Party Group on Population and Development, population growth is 'the main cause of poverty, environmental decline, and we anticipate in future, migration'.

John Guillebaud, Britain's first Professor of Family Planning, has spelled out the message of doom in blunt terms: 'No wall will be high enough as people see the enticements of the consumer society and vote with their feet. No wall will be high enough to keep the hordes out.' The implication is clear; if Westerners want to preserve 'the enticements of the consumer society' for themselves, the third world 'hordes' will have to be contained, partly through population-control policies.

The insecurities of the Western elites having been diverted onto the third world, the campaign for population control is driven on by concerns about race. Only a fifth of the world's population is white, leading to a sense of disgust on the part of developed nations that they are under siege from inferior peoples. This is reflected in the current fear-ridden debate about 'the browning of America', and in the high-profile scares about Europe being invaded and terrorised by Islamic fundamentalists from the Arab world.

Many influential authors of our age touch upon this racial concern with population. In his pessimistic tract *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, Paul Kennedy questions whether, given the growth of third world population, 'Western values' can survive against the irrational, illiberal influence of other cultures. In his description of a journey through Delhi in *The Population Bomb*, Paul Ehrlich exposes the emotional fears underlying the concern of Western intellectuals with population growth in the third world:

'My wife and daughter and I were returning to our hotel in an ancient taxi. The seats were hopping with fleas....The streets seemed alive with

people. People eating, people washing, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, and screaming. People thrusting their hands through the taxi window, begging. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people, people.'

Or, the clearly disgusted Ehrlich might just as well have said, animals, animals, animals, animals.

Once the issue of population growth is understood in racially loaded terms it is only a short step to seeing the Western 'way of life' threatened by an invasion of the teeming masses. One UN diplomat has compared the threat posed to the West by migration from the 'overcrowded' third world to the Japanese invasion of British held Singapore in 1941. Like the Japanese, he notes, the modern 'invading armies' of the third world poor will 'also arrive on bicycles and on foot', but they will be 'moving without commanders or orders, and seeping slowly through porous borders' (K Mahbubani, 'The West and the rest', *National Interest*, Summer 1992). Scratch the surface of the debate about population, and it begins to look more like a war between the Western nations and the rest.

Of course, this is not the terms in which the discussion will take place at ICPD '94. The agenda in Cairo is all about rights, choice and responsibilities. There is a consensus that forced population control is out, and that giving women the choice provided by family planning is in. In the 1990s, feminism provides much of the terminology for the population discussions. But it is worth asking, what difference does this change of language make in practice for the people of the third world?

Imposed agenda

Evert Ketting of the International Planned Parenthood Federation notes that the concept of 'population' often creates 'shame and guilt' among European family planners. But he reassures the guilt-ridden that 'the population question...does not simply concentrate any more on growing numbers of world population. The issue of population has gradually been given a much broader meaning'. However, given that nobody at Cairo is arguing for an expansion of the world's population, it seems safe to assume that the answer to 'the population question' will still be a demand for control, even if it is presented as an empowering family planning initiative.

Under the guise of handing out rights and responsibilities to women, the UN and other Western-run agencies are imposing their own population agenda on third world societies. For instance, family planning projects

in the third world are meant to be the way through which people can exercise choice. If parents choose to have fewer children there will be plenty of contraceptives on hand to help them. But if they choose to have more children, they are rather less likely to receive encouragement.

In many third world societies, children are a matter of life or death. In the absence of any welfare provision or pension plans, parents have large families to try to ensure some security when they are too old to work. Having children in this context is not seen as a choice at all, but as the difference between starving and not starving. The only way to improve things for women in the third world is to address the problem of poverty, not of population. But that issue is not even on the agenda today, as demands to reduce the numbers of births dominate the international discussion.

Still blackmail

One of the battle cries of family planning campaigners is that every child should be a wanted child. This too has been bounced onto the third world. But what determines whether a child is wanted in the impoverished societies of Africa or Asia? The comfortably off couple in suburban England will accept their new baby regardless of its sex, but a baby girl can spell economic disaster for a family in rural India. A son means an insurance policy for their old age; a daughter might mean only the expense of a marriage dowry. The notion of wanted children as we know it simply does not make sense in such impoverished societies—except as another externally imposed demand for population control.

Back in the seventies, rumours abounded that coercive family planning projects bribed people with transistor radios and even cans of Coca-Cola to undergo sterilisation. These days the population lobby has distanced itself from that coercive image. But health projects still blackmail women in the third world, bombarding them with the message that it is their right to make the responsible choice to limit their family size. These rights and choices turn out to be worth less than cheap radios and Coke.

Rights are granted on the understanding that people live according to the Western agenda on population. This was once known as coercion. In the name of human rights and women's emancipation, third world peoples are being pressed to accept the notion that they are a threat to civilisation on earth. Population projects are a diversion to settle the minds of those who rule the West. They have nothing to do with solving the problems of the third world.

Non-Growth NGO Organisations

Aid agencies, charities and other radical non-governmental organisations (NGOs) once denounced population control programmes as racist interference in the third world. Yet now, says Helen Simons, many of them will endorse similar ideas under the banners of empowering women and protecting the environment

Visit Cairo's crowded streets in September and you could bump into anybody from a Greenpeace coordinator to a Conservative government minister. Organisers of the UN Conference on Population and Development taking place in that city are particularly proud of the breadth of support for their initiative from right across the political spectrum. It seems that population control is a concept whose time has finally arrived.

Consensus on population control has been a long time coming. The UN tried to hold its first conference on the issue 20 years ago in August 1974, in Bucharest, an event heavily promoted by the US government. It ended in shambles, as delegates from Latin America, Africa and the Soviet bloc denounced the whole notion of controlling the population of the third world as racist and imperialist. Ten years later it seemed UN officials were still swimming against the tide. Their second attempt at an international conference on population control in 1984 also backfired, as the Reagan administration blocked the way in order to placate the US anti-abortion lobby.

In Cairo, however, UN officials are confident that the rest of the world will finally endorse their

population programmes into the next century. Since the debacle of Bucharest, the population control lobbies at the UN, the World Bank and within Western capitals have carefully attempted to take the sting out of the notion of holding down the numbers of people in the third world. They have done much to repackage population control as an issue of third world development rather than a matter of imperialist interference. Now they hope to harvest the fruits of this work.

The UN can now claim that even its fiercest critics in the development field have not only muted their criticisms of population control programmes, but have to some extent even been brought onside. The most radical charities and aid agencies—known collectively as non-governmental organisations (NGOs)—now share some of the UN bureaucrats' concerns on the issue. Far from rejecting the Cairo event as a racist forum, the NGOs have all applied for delegate status and will be major participants in the conference proceedings.

So how is it that the population control lobby has so effectively incorporated its opponents? Why are those who in the past often led demonstrations against Western interference in third world affairs now willing to sit round a

conference table with their old adversaries and discuss the most appropriate forms of intervention? To answer this we have to look at how both the NGOs and the issue of population control have changed over the past three decades.

Traditionally the issue of population control divided the NGO world. While there have always been charities that embraced the campaign to curb population growth—Marie Stopes International, the International Planned Parenthood Federation or, more recently, Population Concern—other NGOs have been more suspicious.

In the sixties, when the matter was first debated within the leading NGOs, there was no automatic support for the policy even outside Catholic organisations. Many of the more radical NGOs objected to the policy on the basis that it diverted attention from the real problem in the third world, which was too much poverty rather than too many people. Others, noting the impact of population programmes in Asia, saw the policy as nothing short of blackmail and coercion directed against the peoples of the third world.

Even those who lent support to population projects recognised that the issue did not command universal support. Oxfam, for example, ▶

A 'family planning motivator' in Nepal: making the message of population control a less bitter pill to swallow

◀ which was one of the first of the more critical NGOs to support population projects, did so only after much debate and controversy. When the policy was finally adopted Oxfam continued to allow donors to opt out of population projects by specifying that their donations could not be used for this purpose.

But while the NGOs were suspicious of population control policies they could not remain immune to the influence of the population lobby. Indeed, once that lobby started to couch its arguments in a different language, many of the more radical NGOs found population policies not just more acceptable, but positively desirable.

This shift was made possible by the population lobby's recognition that it could key into some of the concerns of its critics in the NGO sphere. While the NGOs were often hostile to the influence of the West in developing countries, their feminist and radical left agendas made them no great fans of either third world governments or backward aspects of third world society. For example, many of the most radical people in NGO circles criticised third world societies for being male dominated. Women of the third world were often seen to bear the brunt of degradation and poverty. Frequently Latin American society was denounced as 'macho' while African women were seen as disempowered and marginalised.

Gradually these became acceptable ways to criticise the third world even within radical third worldist circles. While population control was being dismissed at the UN as a racist and interventionist policy in the seventies, the NGOs gradually began to act on their own critique of third world societies. Increasingly gender became the buzzword in development circles. Development projects were re-examined to ensure that they were 'women-centred'. Women's empowerment and women's needs in health, childcare and work became a priority concern for radical NGOs in the development field.

It was against this backdrop, in 1974, that the first UN conference in Bucharest failed. US policy-makers, who had heavily backed the conference, were forced to re-evaluate how they could win support for their population control policies directed against the third world. In December of the same year the US National Security Council published a secret report on the matter. It is possible to trace from there the origins of the new language and new institutions that would be cultivated to promote population policies in the future.

The US report warned against any provocative action that could give the appearance that 'the policy was directed against the Less Developed Countries'. Instead of promoting the issue themselves, the US authorities should seek to use their leverage in more neutral bodies like the UN and other multilateral institutions, to assist officials of developing countries 'in integrating population factors in national plans, particularly

as they relate to health services, education, agricultural resources and development'. The National Security Council report suggested that the USA should also attempt to 'relate population policies and family planning programs to major sectors of development: health, nutrition, agriculture, education, social services, organised labour, women's activities and community development' ('Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for US Security and Overseas Interests', National security study memorandum 200, 10 December 1974). In other words, population control should be repackaged to appeal to its critics.

The report spelled out the cynical motives behind these presentational changes in US policy: 'the US can help to minimize charges of an imperialist motivation behind its support of population activities by repeatedly asserting that such support derives from a concern with: (a) the right of the individual to determine freely and responsibly their number and spacing of children...and (b) the fundamental and economic development of poor countries.'

The image of population control policies was no longer to be anti-third world. Instead it would be about giving the people of the third world—especially women—basic rights in family planning. Once this shift had been made, it became possible to present population control as a legitimate concern in development circles.

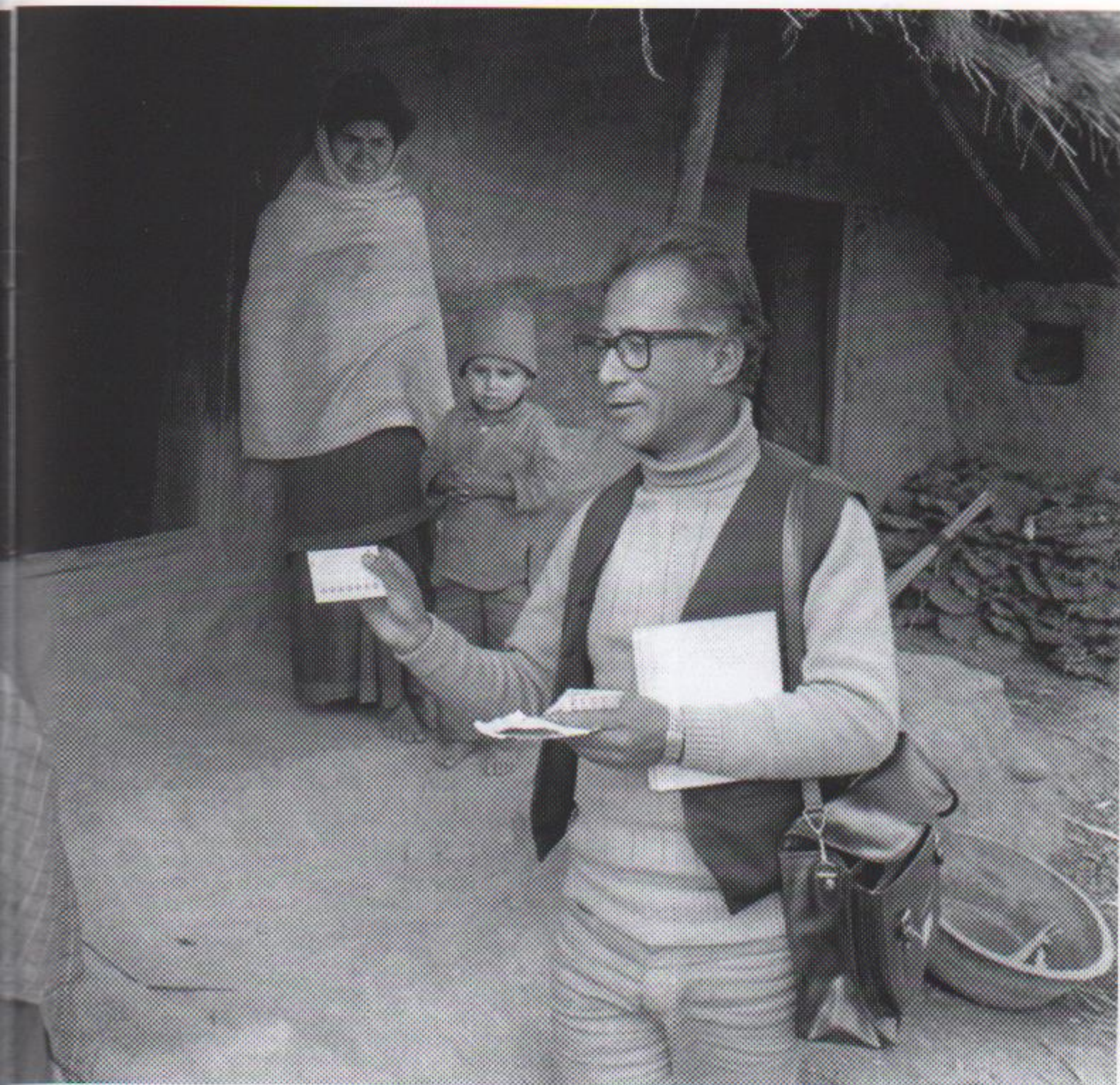
Over the past 20 years NGOs have lent vital credibility to third world family planning projects. While many still shy away from schemes that smack too overtly of population management, family planning, child spacing, maternal health and women's education are all positively endorsed. This endorsement from the increasingly influential NGOs has provided an important platform for the population control lobby. Today the biggest NGOs have more money and more clout than some African states.

Over the past two decades, Western population policy-makers have become expert in presenting their policies in politically correct language, as reports commissioned for the US Agency for International Development confirm. Back in 1981, for example, one report argued that population activities 'should be integrated with maternal and child healthcare delivery' because projects that 'focused too narrowly on family planning as a solution' only increased suspicions in the host country. By the end of the eighties another report was advising that 'in some countries (particularly in Africa), family planning as a fertility reduction measure may not be acceptable for cultural or political reasons. At the same time, the use of family planning to space births for maternal/child health reasons may be quite acceptable. In such cases child survival presentations can be an effective policy tool' (quoted in *Ambassadors of Colonialism*, Information Project for Africa, 1993).

The NGOs have been encouraged by generous official funding. Since the mid-seventies



much of the aid from Western governments, the World Bank and the European Union has been channelled through NGOs. The donor agencies have used their financial clout to influence NGO policy. Sometimes this means offering the most generous grants to NGOs which are prepared to toe the line on population control. So the World Bank and Britain's Overseas Development Agency now offer 100 per cent funding only to these population projects. In other cases the influence is more subtle. The World Bank has been known to 'piggy-back' population policies on to other projects. One small agricultural credit union in Bangladesh received backing once it made its loans conditional on borrowers undertaking to adopt good family planning methods.



Nor have the NGOs been reluctant partners in this relationship. In the eighties, when environmentalism became a preoccupation of many NGOs, it was logical that the problem of population size should be openly discussed. Discussing population was no longer seen as racist by the environmentally inclined NGOs. Rather it became the logical preoccupation of those who saw third world crises through the prism of limited resources and abuses of the planet. If the problem really was that there was too little to go round then, who could deny that the most obvious solution to the problem was to limit the number of mouths to feed?

Now that the ground has been well prepared and the arguments carefully rehearsed, it seems likely that the UN will finally pull off its popula-

tion conference. While there will be differences in emphasis from many of the participants, there will be large areas upon which all feel able to agree.

When the British All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development consulted the leading British-based NGOs in the run-up to Cairo, they found much on which they could all agree. In summarising the 13 participating NGOs' evidence, the MPs could state that all of them 'acknowledged that population growth rates present a problem for the globe and its inhabitants'. ('The Well-Spent Pound: An Assessment of Aid Agency Priorities for Population Activity', All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, 1993).

There was little to separate the NGOs except perhaps on the preferred method of controlling population growth. 'Many of the NGOs saw women's education and empowerment as the first step towards the socio-economic climate which engenders lower fertility. Others put the provision of contraceptives first.' If the only matter of contention at Cairo is about who, how and when to dish out the contraceptives, the population lobby in the UN, the USA, UK and elsewhere have every reason to be confident about the outcome of the conference. They can rest assured that, wrapped up in the language of women's empowerment and environmental concern, their old arguments about there being too many black babies in the world will be widely endorsed this time around. ●



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

FUTURES

The problems we face have nothing to do
with human numbers, says John Gillott

Too many people?

Are there really too many people in the world? The central assumption of the current discussion on population is that humanity cannot continue to live without severe dislocations if human numbers carry on rising as they are. Today's environmental and social problems are widely seen as an indication that there are already too many people on Earth, and as an intimation of the disaster that awaits if action to curb population growth is not taken now. The final communiqué from the Science Summit, a gathering of many of the world's Academies of Science in 1993, is typical of today's discussions: 'In our judgement, humanity's ability to deal successfully with its social, economic, and environmental problems will require the achievement of zero population growth within the lifetime of our children.'

When the Reverend Thomas Malthus argued that England was fully populated in 1798 his focus was on the relationship between population and agricultural production. Today, it is recognised that Malthus got it wrong: new technologies and farming methods increased production and provided food for a rapidly expanding population in England in the nineteenth century. However, according to many writers, Malthus' basic idea was correct, he simply got the timing wrong. Technological innovation, they say, has finally run its course, and population growth is now running up against limits set by nature.

Malthus was largely concerned with one issue—poverty, which he argued was caused by population growth. Writers today focus on a wider range of issues, often environmental, and usually global in scope. The Science Summit named population growth as a major cause of 'severe environmental stress' including 'the growing loss of biodiversity, increasing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing deforestation worldwide, stratospheric ozone depletion, acid rain, loss of top-soil, and shortages of water, food, and fuel-wood in many parts of the world'.

There are evidently many problems in the world today. Over a billion people live in absolute poverty; many more lack adequate housing; and natural systems on which humanity depends are being depleted or are changing in ways harmful to us. But population growth is responsible for none of these things. The hard evidence simply does not back

up the argument that there are too many people. The notion that humanity is pushing up against natural limits, coming ever closer to the day of reckoning, is rubbish. The fact is that we live in a world of potential plenty, kept from our grasp by the limitations on human inventiveness which are imposed by the laws of the capitalist world economy.

Because of its importance to human life, the issue of food production is still central to the debate about population. It provides a useful case study of the issues.

According to Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute, writing in the 1994 edition of its influential *State of the World*, 'achieving a humane balance between food and people now depends more on family planners than on farmers'. As evidence for this he notes that while food production increased at a faster rate globally than population from 1940 to 1985, since 1985 the opposite trend has set in as food output has stagnated. For Brown, this shows there will soon be too many people to feed.

An examination of the state of agriculture shows this prognosis up as unwarranted pessimism. For a start, there is no shortage of land. Only half the land that could be used to grow crops is currently used. And much of the land that is used is farmed at a very low level of productivity. To grasp the scale of under-use, it is not necessary to hypothesise about future technological innovations. If today's best Western practices were used in the third world, it is estimated that the third world alone could feed 32 billion people, which is more than the highest projected population of the whole world by the end of the twenty-first century. In other words, if only part of the globe were efficiently farmed today it would more than meet the needs of the whole world's population a century into the future.

Viewed in this light, the Malthusian perspective makes no more sense today than it did in the last century, when Frederick Engels criticised natural limits: 'It is ridiculous to speak of overpopulation while the valley of the Mississippi alone contains enough waste land to accommodate the whole population of Europe, and while altogether only one-third of the earth can be described as cultivated, and while the productivity of this third could be increased sixfold and more merely

by applying improvements which are known already.'

Engels' reference to America conjures up images of vast open spaces, of land unused and under-used. People today feel that they live in an overcrowded world by comparison. When it comes to the third world, the image is one of starving multitudes pushing to escape. However, not only is Engels' point about under-use of land still appropriate, so is the imagery of emptiness.

That TV advert is right—all the people in the world could be crammed onto the Isle of Wight. It would be a tight squeeze, admittedly. But consider this: if all the people in the world lived in America, it would be less densely populated than Belgium is today. Africa, a continent that in fact has plenty of fertile land, has a population density one quarter that of Europe. No wonder the African Academy of Sciences chose to dissociate itself from the statement issued by the Science Summit, by insisting that 'for Africa, population remains an important resource for development, without which the continent's natural resources will remain latent and unexplored'.

In the award-winning study *The Third Revolution*, Paul Harrison argues that Western methods of intensive farming are unsustainable because they deplete the soil and cause a loss of top-soil. This view is based on bad science, and dodgy data.

There is nothing in the nature of soil which stops it being used indefinitely. It is merely a combination of crushed rocks, water and nutrients. As long as these elements are replenished, there need be no loss of fertility and no erosion. Back in the fifteenth century it was learned that crop rotation and a fallow period would do the trick. In modern times, fertilizers make this less necessary, and allow for a much greater output, although a little of the old methods is still a good thing. However, the capitalist market, with its demands to compete and make ▶

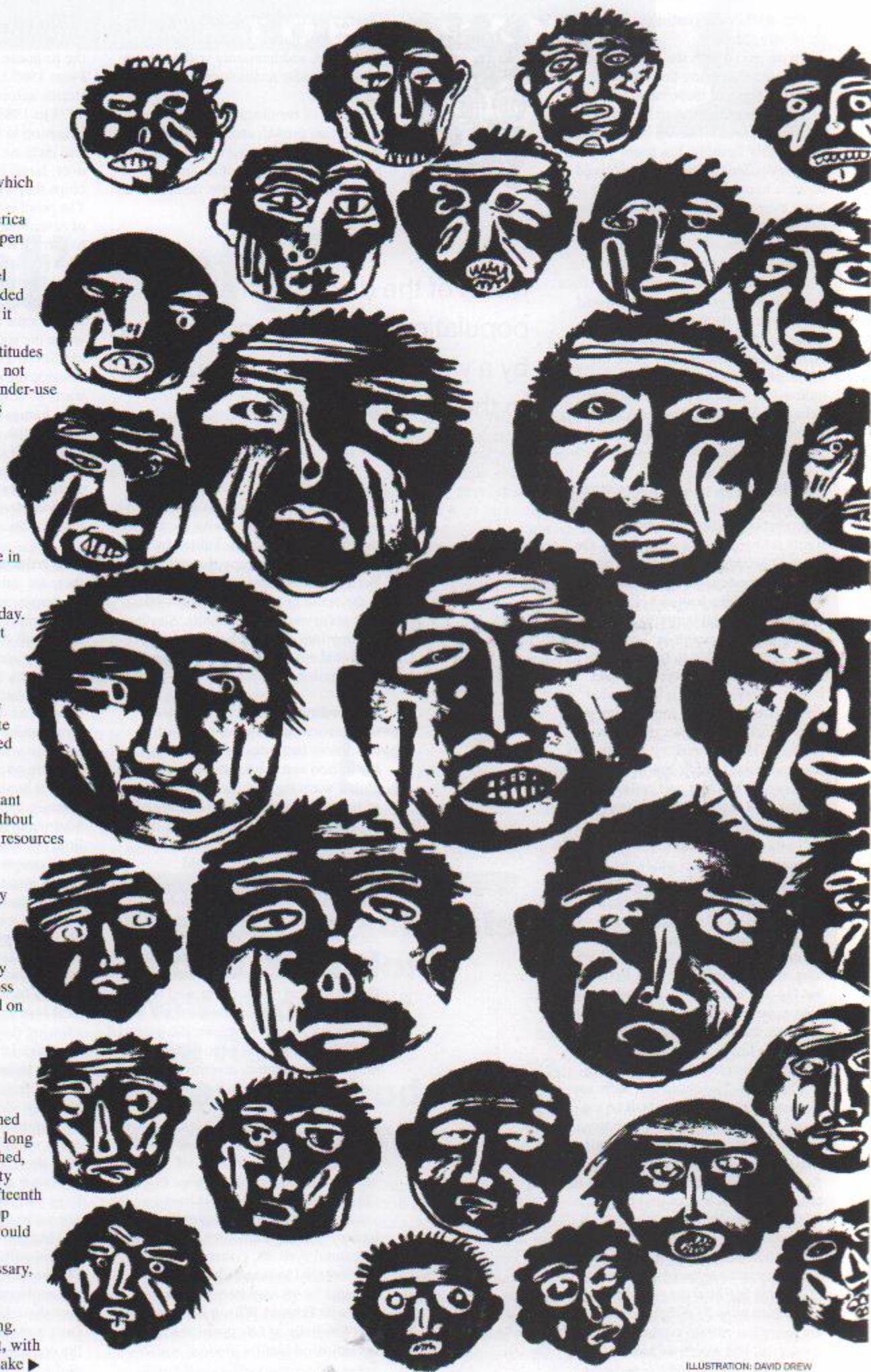


ILLUSTRATION: DAVID DREW

profits at all costs, continually overrides these safeguards.

In the mid-1980s the US Congress recognised that many farmers were breaking some of these basic rules of soil management. And they are still. The reason? The US economy, and particularly farming, has spent years in deep recession, forcing profit-starved farmers to cut corners and produce more even when sense dictates a change of crop or a break. Despite protestations from Congress, so long as capitalist economics hold sway little is likely to change. The situation is worse in Africa because of the pressures of the world economy and the (greater) backwardness of capitalism there. African states continually plant the same crop for export—such as cotton—in order to pay off massive debts to international bankers, which leads to a lack of land for food, and a rapid deterioration of the soil.

The fact that agricultural problems are caused by the laws imposed by capitalist economics and not any limits set by nature is revealed by the contrast between the American and African experience. Agronomist Harold Dregne classifies land as being severely eroded if potential output is reduced by more than 50 per cent. In North America 7 per cent of land is in this category. In Africa, it is 17 per cent. In other words, American soil is less eroded than Africa's. Yet US food output per acre of land is *five times* more than Africa's. The difference is clearly not due to natural factors, but to the higher levels of technology and better fertilisers available to the agribusinesses of the USA.

In its 1993 statement, the African Academy of Sciences made the key point about natural limits and human abilities: 'whether or not the Earth is finite will depend on the extent to which science and technology is able to transform the resources available for humanity. There is only one Earth—yes; but the potential for transforming it is not necessarily finite.'

Since human inventiveness knows no limits, the very notion of an approaching day of reckoning is misplaced. The claim that there are too many people now, or will be too many at the end of the next century, makes no more sense than saying that five million is too many people, or 500. Any figure is totally arbitrary since the crucial factor is human inventiveness—a factor generally ignored in today's discussions.

As indicated above, it is not necessary to imagine new technologies in order to see how the world today could feed over 30 billion people, six times the current population of the world. But won't we have a severe problem if and when the population



reaches such a figure? Only if you believe that human inventiveness has ended, and humanity will not have developed new technologies to expand its powers.

Much of the discussion about population growth and natural limits is underpinned by a view which reduces humanity to the level of an animal. Paul Ehrlich, for example, dismisses the

Much of the discussion about population growth is underpinned by a view which reduces humanity to the level of an animal

potential for technological innovation to solve human problems with the assertion that 'overpopulation is defined by the animals that occupy the turf'. For Ehrlich, the starvation of humans is the result of overpopulation—just as it is for over-sexed rabbits. Similar assumptions arise in the discussion of global environmental problems and population growth.

According to the 2050 Project, a collaboration between the World Resources Institute, the Brookings Institution and the Santa Fe Institute, global warming and the destruction of biodiversity threaten the future of sustainable human life. A major factor in these changes, they say, 'is the impending surge in the world population'. In fact it is an open question as to what impact global warming will have on aspects of nature, such as agriculture, on which humanity depends. It is also an open question whether biodiversity is threatened to the extent that many claim, and what consequences such changes might have. One thing is sure, however: the potential problems are perceived to be terrible only because human inventiveness is ignored.

In his new book, *The Quark and the Jaguar*, Murray Gell-Mann, a major influence on the 2050 Project, puts a premium on conservation of biodiversity and the avoidance of global climate change. His case is based on the assumption that human inventiveness is limited because humanity is a prisoner of natural systems, rather than having the potential to manipulate those systems for its own benefit. Harvard biologist Edward Wilson in his book *The Diversity of Life* dismisses human invention on similar grounds and argues for conservation at all costs.

The past, however, shows us that invention not conservation is the response of humanity to problems. From 1965 to 1985 new hybrid rice strains helped double output; from 1975 to 1988 Saudi Arabia used irrigation to farm 20 times more land and increase wheat output 1000 times over; Israel is currently developing crops that will grow using less water. The point is that necessity is the mother of invention, if you have the resources to carry it through. So Israel, awash with US dollars and technology, is more likely to develop new crops than Jordan. And oil-rich Saudi Arabia has become a net exporter of wheat, while the stagnant economy of the old Soviet Union had to import wheat towards the end, despite having vast tracts of much better land. In the same way, humanity as a whole will be able to deal with global environmental change—if it is not encumbered by an economic system that puts profit before human need and negates any long-term planning through the anarchy of the market.

The mindset which imagines that there are natural limits to human growth is a barrier to dealing with the real limits which capitalist society imposes on human inventiveness and needs. Global warming and biodiversity loss may well pose a severe problem to humanity. But only because society limits what people can do in response. And it is these limitations which are ignored by those who focus on the supposed problem of population growth and present humanity as little better than animals. In this they follow Malthus, who wrote that human institutions had little influence 'in comparison with those deeper-seated causes of evil, which result from the laws of nature, and the passions of mankind'.

When it comes to the discussion of third world population, the mindset of natural limits ends up justifying the marginalisation of Africa and much of Asia from the world economy. Paul Harrison dismisses the data showing that the third world alone could feed 32 billion people using known technology on the grounds that each region should be self-sustaining. But why adopt such a narrow-minded assumption? It is as arbitrary as saying every village, every street, should look after itself. In the realm of practical politics it amounts to accepting that large parts of the third world will remain in a ghetto of poverty and hunger.

Not only do the modern Malthusians share the same assumptions as the old parson, they also share his contempt for the masses. Only now, in an age of global concern, the contempt is for the masses of the globe, and not just England.



What's left?

Martin Jacques', says the contents page of the *Sunday Times Magazine*, 'is a political writer and former editor of *Marxism Today*. He interviewed Tony Blair over a white wine and a healthy salad. For the first time in 20 years, Jacques says, he can write with enthusiasm about the British left'.

A few years ago, Jacques 'interviewed' Karl Marx himself, in a self-serving article for the *Financial Times* entitled 'A glass of red, Mr Marx?', in which, as well as discussing wine, he put the grateful 'philosopher' (as he describes Marx) straight on a number of issues, such as the superiority of the capitalist market as a vehicle for achieving individual fulfilment. Needless to say, Marx deferred to his arguments.

Martin Jacques is no stranger to the realms of fantasy, then. All the same, it seems odd that such a prominent 'Islington Person' should choose to categorise Tony Blair (the *most* prominent IP) as part of the 'British left'. Indeed, it's hard to know what the phrase 'British left' means nowadays.

The activities of the Labour Party in my neck of the woods offer little evidence of left-wing extremism—when it won control of Croydon council in the May elections, the party activists had to abandon their televised chorus of 'The Red Flag' because nobody knew the words. Even Woodrow Wyatt (later the *News of the World's* 'Voice of Reason') and George Brown (later of the *Sunday Express*) used to sing along with that old favourite at party conferences.

True, the Labour MP Barbara Roche has made a stand on deportations—but only to complain about the use of private security firms instead of the police for capturing immigrants. 'One must assume that the Home Office uses companies like these because it wants cheap deportation, regardless of the consequences', she complains. You can see her point—why settle for Group 4 letting them slip through its fingers when, for a few extra bob and a roll of masking tape, the police will deliver a good clean kill?

The main focus of 'the British left' these days, of course, is the fight against fascism. A recent documentary about the Isle of Dogs election opened with a warning from Labour councillor Julia Mainwaring that 'if the BNP win it could be another Yugoslavia'. The tale had a happy ending, with no outbreak of war. Labour beat the BNP and the new Labour administration's first act was to take down the sullied Union flags from the town hall—so that they could be cleaned.

Since the battle for Millwall, fascist-hunters have turned their attention elsewhere, staging counter-demonstrations around the country at which the BNP has invariably failed to show. Now the net has been cast wider, to include right-wing Italian cabinet ministers who have come to our shores to take tea with Douglas Hurd. (And don't forget that he

was known as 'Hitler' Hurd at Eton—know what I mean...)

Laughable overreaction, you might say, but think again. The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. Papers recently discovered at the Public Records Office show that in 1941 top government minds were convinced that, after abandoning their Operation Sealion invasion plan, the Nazis were busy digging their way to Britain under the sea. If only the powers that be were equally sensitive to the dangers today. Clearly something needs to be done urgently.

I hereby propose an alliance of anti-Nazis and all other patriots, along with the ratepayers of Kent and various environmental groups. Freshly washed Union flags and sharpened pitchforks should be issued at a prearranged assembly point. The Channel Tunnel must be sealed off forthwith, before a single German Nazi or Italian fascist (most of whom probably have rabies too) sneaks in under our noses while old England slumbers.

Single mothers, as Tony Blair would agree, are to blame for most things that are wrong with the world, so I'm sure he will join me in applauding the efforts of Basildon councillors to rectify the scandalous monument to lax morals that disgraces the town centre, causing decent people to hurry by, covering the eyes of their children.

I refer, of course, to the infamous 'mother and child' statue, which stands defiantly alone, with no sign of the errant partner. The good news is that a companion 'father' statue is currently being erected, to set a better example. Let's hope this example can be followed by the left-wing churches, with their brazen 'Madonna and child' icons and rowdy flocks of ageing 'spinsters'.

And while they're about it, they might care to add to the woefully inadequate dog laws. Existing legislation deals with the physical dangers posed by violent breeds, but what about the moral dimension?

Pioneering Swedish research cited in *Dogs Today* points strongly to a conclusion that many of us have long suspected: dogs raised by 'single' bitches are more likely to behave badly than those raised by a proper male-and-female couple. 'Dog consultant', Nina Roegner said that Victor, the daddy dog in the study, played an active part in the puppies' upbringing.

One word of caution, though. There is a dark side to family life, and all too often it involves child abuse: Nina reports that the puppies 'confused Winnie's teats and Victor's genitals'. Confused them? A likely story—I wouldn't take Victor's word on that one. Get some social workers out there at once.

The Labour activists had to abandon their chorus of 'The Red Flag' because nobody knew the words

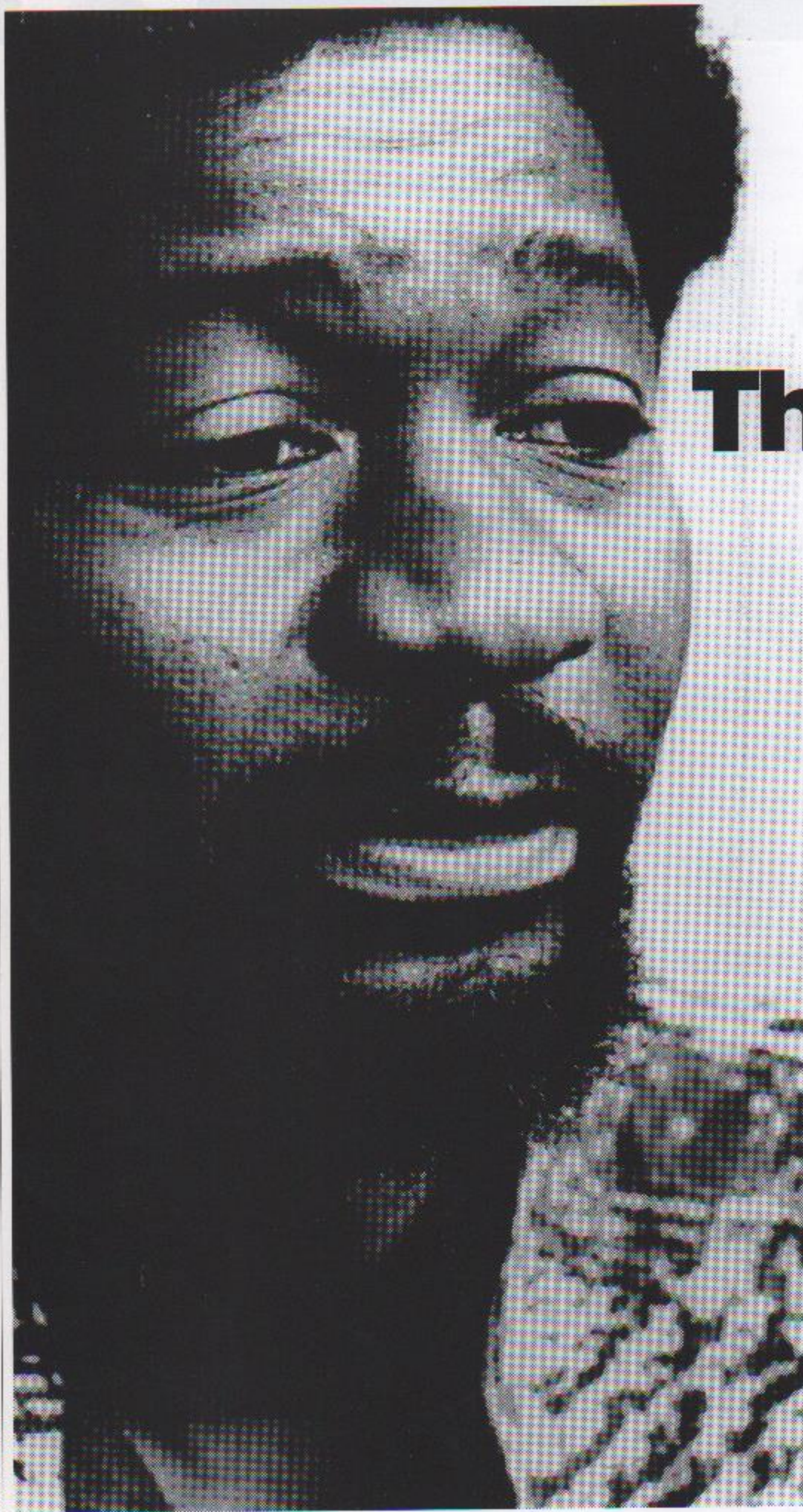


PHOTO: METHUEN

Through

It would be understandable if Wole Soyinka was thinking of retiring. His published work—over 30 volumes of plays, poems, novels and essays—spans 40 years of a passionate engagement with the political life of his native Nigeria. He is a living legend throughout Africa. His Nobel Prize in 1986 confirmed his international status. He has little left to prove. But Wole Soyinka is not a man to rest on his laurels.

When I caught up with Soyinka in London he was taking time out from the struggle for democracy in Nigeria to launch his latest book, the autobiographical *Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years (A Memoir 1946-65)*. Recounting Nigerian history from the end of the Second World War up to the eve of civil war in 1967, *Ibadan* is one of Soyinka's most ambitious works. It builds on two previous autobiographical works, *Ake: The Years of Childhood* (1981) and *Isara* (1989), and links international events with personal experiences, exploring broad social themes of racism, prejudice and political corruption.

Ibadan charts the transformation from boy to man of Maren, Soyinka's *alter ego*: from his confrontations with French immigration officers, through the trauma of being black in Britain, and finally to conflict with those at the centre of the *penkelemes* (a Yoruba term meaning a peculiar mess)—corrupt politicians and the military. The book uses *faction*—a merging of fact and fiction—and the third person to tell its true story. 'This is to desubjectivise from the persona of Wole Soyinka', Soyinka explained to me. 'I do not consider my experiences to be unique. This is what everybody from my background went through.'

Soyinka shows how the consciousness of modern Africa has been conditioned by its relationship to the West. One event which had a profound impact on

Nigerian novelist
Wole Soyinka is one of
the world's leading writers.

Emmanuel Oliver talked to him about Africa,
politics and art

African eyes

African and third world consciousness was the Allied bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. In *Ibadan* Soyinka recalls how his aunt Beere, 'faced off the British District Officer and denounced the use of the "yellow Japs" as guinea pigs for the atomic bomb, rather than their fellow white Germans, whose crimes were definitely more deserving of atomic solution'.

For the young Soyinka, the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan became a reference point and a metaphor for colonial relations. 'It was a thing which stayed with me as a child', Soyinka told me, 'and with certain other observations informed my attitude towards European society'. What does he think of today's panic about nuclear proliferation and the attempt to restrict the spread of nuclear weapons to third world countries? 'There is a great deal of double standards in the play of the European world in its relationship with the rest of the world', commented Soyinka.

Soyinka's Africa is one that is seldom glimpsed by Western audiences. Most people in the West tend to view African society as tribal and African art as primitive. 'There is lots of interest in the arts from Africa', says Soyinka, 'but it is usually shunted into the area of exotica, primitive art, traditional art, tribal art'. Perhaps the desire for art as anthropology reflects the overwhelming contemporary political representations of Africa as a collection of primitive, tribal societies.

Soyinka does not tolerate such ideas. *Ibadan's* vivid descriptions of political struggles jar with contemporary images of a continent consumed by ethnic blood lust and one that cannot escape from its primitive self. Because of Soyinka's rejection of the Western views of the 'dark continent', critics have often found it difficult to absorb his work, their political sensibilities preparing them for more

passive representations of Africa.

Reading *Ibadan*, it is plain that African society is as complex as any Western society and far removed from the one-dimensional images of Somalia or Rwanda shown on our TV screens. *Ibadan* is populated by university directors, regional heads of government, political parties, urban labourers, academics, military figures and local politicians. Who among these is responsible for Africa's present crisis? Soyinka is emphatic on this point:

'I belong firmly to the school which locates Africa's problems in the political leadership rather than external factors. All our leaders, with a few exceptions, were content to step into the shoes of the departing colonial masters and formulate alliances to ensure the perpetuation of themselves with little cabals and cliques. It is the fruit of this bitter seed that is setting our teeth on edge today.'

Soyinka's arguments are increasingly popular among African scholars and activists. It has become fashionable to reproach African leaders for their failures and to separate their obvious shortcomings from a wider global context. Although it is impossible to overlook Africa's own catalogue of failure, ignoring the international context in which African leaders operate helps to absolve the various Western powers, which have constantly intervened in African societies to impose and remove governments over the past 50 years, from any responsibility for the current crisis.

Soyinka's criticisms of Africa's failures are one-sided. But at least he sees the solution in the future, not the past, in contrast to the influential views of critics such as Basil Davidson. Davidson, an eminent Africanist, locates the failure of post-colonial Africa in the legacy of the nation state. He argues that the European impo-

sition of the nation state destroyed traditional African society and with it any hope of peace and progress. He lionises the pre-colonial past and belittles the experience of independent statehood. For Soyinka, the key to the future lies not in a return to pre-colonial ways, but in a clean break with the past. This can only come about if the 'desperate need for new thinking', about which Soyinka talked incessantly, can be achieved.

An African country which is really in need of new thinking is Soyinka's Nigeria. So it comes as a surprise to hear that Soyinka supports Basorun MKO Abiola, the president-elect of Nigeria. Abiola's background, as a supporter of military government in 1985, hardly marks him out as a new broom. Soyinka justifies his support on the grounds that all over Africa old enemies are making peace—most strikingly Nelson Mandela and FW De Klerk in South Africa. 'The gap between Mandela and De Klerk is a million times wider than the gap between the millionaire tycoon and the Progressives. The immediate task is to get rid of the common enemy.' This sounds less like new thinking than low expectations.

In 1977, Soyinka wrote that 'Art should expose, reflect, even magnify the decadent, rotten underbelly of a society that has lost its direction...in the confidence that sooner or later society will recognise itself.' If art and literature seek to expose and reflect not simply the decadence of African military dictators, but also that of Western governments, the World Bank and all the other actors in the African tragedy, then they will have made a good start. ●

Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years (A Memoir 1946-65) is published by Methuen, £20 hbk

Neil Davenport bemoans the conformity of today's pop culture

Sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll! Is all my brain and body needs', sang Ian Dury back in 1978. Rock and roll was always about hedonism, rebellion and attitude. But no longer. Today's bands and music journos seem to have as much attitude as a Sunday-school vicar. Instead of challenging society's taboos they are more often than not endorsing old-fashioned moral strictures about the dangers of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll.

Today's music press is more likely to give a lecture about the dangers of sex than to go looking for it. As the NME's 'Real World' editor commented, 'Aids is one thing to cost you your youth'. And this from a newspaper that landed itself in hot water for its notorious 'Sex! Sex! Sex!' cover in 1986.

In fact it is this kind of moral claptrap that will cost you your youth. Telling young people that casual sex is dangerous is the sort of advice normally given by the Barbara Cartlands of this world rather than the editor of the NME. Unfortunately it is not uncommon in today's pop culture.

Take Riot Grrls, a clique of indie bands which combines the energy of punk with the art-rock of Sonic Youth. Their fierce condemnation of society's treatment of women has led the music press to acclaim them as the revolutionary voice of the indie scene. Yet behind the searing rage and situationist slogans lies a view of women as 'ickle girls' who need protecting from men and from sex. The image Riot Grrls project is not one of 'Grrl Power', as they like to think, but of wall-flowers who will burst into tears if you try to chat them up. This pathetic molly-coddling is the reason why men are not allowed in at Riot Grrl Gigs. What is the point of going to gigs if trying to get off with someone is frowned upon?

When it comes to drugs, even legal highs are now out in the new culture of conformity. *Select* magazine pulped and reprinted its July edition because management decided that a three-page feature on 'legal highs' was 'a little close to the edge'. The magazine's editors were worried 'whether we were doing the right thing morally' in encouraging young people to enjoy themselves. Time was when rock stars celebrated their decadent lifestyles and when even Paul McCartney was the victim of a drugs bust. Now experimentation even with legal substances is frowned upon. Next they'll be banning lager ads.

As for rock 'n' roll, the moral lectures our parents were given about Presley

and the Stones, are now echoed by today's pop stars in their condemnation of the sex and violence of rap. If journalists from the *Sunday Telegraph* start demonising black rappers then it sounds a bit suspicious. But if you get a radical Riot Grr, like Ajali Bhatia, to slate Ice-T's 'The Ice Opinion' as being a 'dangerously sexist influence', then it becomes okay to finger black American rap as morally unacceptable.

From articulating reckless abandon to becoming the moral guardians of youth, the music press has, disappointingly, fallen into line with the conformist culture of the nineties. Music journalists who once happily wrote about which singers they would like to shag are now in a state of guilt and shame over their sex crimes. This descent into dull respectability is well illustrated by the coverage given

to Nick Kent's recent autobiographical book, *The Dark Stuff*. Unlike most music journalists Kent once looked as cool and glamorous as the people he raved about. He first started writing for the NME in 1972 and immediately began to sweep aside the likes of John Lennon and Jethro Tull in favour of the adrenalin rush of the Stooges, MC5 and the New York Dolls.

At that time Kent was condemned only by the most conservative of fellow journalists, who told him that 'I was immoral for writing about this music and taking drugs and having a good time'. Now he is held up as an example, even by the bad boys of rock, of the dangers of excess, of what happens if you indulge in too much sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll. 'We are both examples', said Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards recently, 'of people to avoid'.

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So, farewell then

This is my goodbye letter, not just to *Living Marxism*, but also to Britain. I'm off to live in northern Spain in a few weeks. I said I would and now I am. As Spanish TV looks even worse than British TV I'll be taking a case of tapes with me. So, if anyone has any thoughts about what should go in there, you could write to me care of this magazine.

When I look back over the past four years as your TV correspondent, the highlights seem obvious: the first series of *The Simpsons*; the 'events' of Eastern Europe and the release of Mandela, happening live on my screen—later repeating themselves as farce in the pursuit of OJ Simpson; Ireland's defeat of Italy in the World Cup; the spontaneous combustion of *Emmerdale Farm*; David Icke announcing his deity; Raquel's discovery of Des' infidelity.

Most of the lows come from the British drama departments which are supposed to be renowned the world over. You would have to search long and hard through the trash networks of Italy and Brazil to find worse than *Anna Lee*, *The Canonile Lawn*, *GBH* or *Blackeyes*.

The overall impression I get from the last four years is of a nation whose view of the nature of things is essentially superstitious. The 'commonsense' view is that power is located elsewhere, in the hands

of a corporate conspiring 'they' who are unaccountable and with whom you cannot fight. The feeling of helplessness is reproduced in the modern idea of crime as a kind of ongoing mindless riot just outside your door. The whole of middle class Britain seems to think itself under siege—a feeling that was created by Nick Ross and exploited by *Cracker*, a series that could have been designed by Michael Howard.

The human subject is increasingly defined not as a creature of reason, but as one of memory, a victim of memory in fact. The most potent voice now belongs not to the person with ideas or courage, but to the one who has suffered the most and therefore gained the most 'credibility'. The newest and most potent strands of TV are the ones that allow real people to display and to 'share' their suffering. Television itself has become hooked on its own memories. The successful reruns of *Thunderbirds* were like nothing so much as an aged, regretful parent showing you old photographs and saying, 'see we did have some good times, you just don't remember'.

Behind all this is the pernicious idea that 'people never really change'—as though long after Damascus St Paul still slipped out from time to time to gut the odd Christian. The truth is people are constantly recreating themselves and the past is all over and done. Goodbye and Party on, Party. ●

Some thoughts of 'TV's Mr Frank'

On the trend for MPs to turn up on non-political programmes:

'There was a time when politicians were regarded as eminent. Suddenly the whole political caste seems to be aspiring to the condition of Lionel Blair... Tony Blair was apparently seen on *That's My Dog*. What does this mean? It means that conventional politics has atrophied to the point where politicians no longer have anything to say except "Hello", over and over again, like latch-key children ringing local radio phone-ins, sending greetings to "anyone who knows me", finding some proof of their own existence in the answering echoes of hyperreality, like those forlorn dog-owners who stand in the middle of fields and wave at trains, hoping that we will wave back and reassure them that they really are there.' ('MPTV', July 1993)

On TV coverage of Torvill and Dean's defeat:

'After Tonya and Nancy, 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.

('Why do they do that?' April 1994)

On Alan Whicker's documentary about the world's most expensive package tour costing £27 000 per person:

'These people had indeed worked hard all their lives and now had come in sight of the End and realised that somehow they had missed the point. Life had passed them by and now they were whizzing around the globe trying to catch

up with it. It was a grotesque, existential version of *Treasure Hunt*: "Hello, Annabel, I'm in the Parthenon now. I'm looking around but still no clue as to why I worked so hard all my life."

'A hundred and fifty million people work in tourism, mostly getting paid in beads and shells. Once subject nations were forced to build monuments to their masters' magnificence. Now they are required to stand in front of those monuments and smile for their masters' cameras. Do these people watch the videos they make? Do they force other people to watch them? The pleasure of a good holiday is as incommunicable as that of a happy dream or great sex, yet tourists spend most of their energies documenting themselves, compiling the evidence. Modern tourism—like the building of the pyramids—is essentially commemorative. The act of lifting the camera to the eye is a ritual *momento mori*, a reminder that this must pass. But it is also an attempt to stop it passing, to "capture the moment forever", to gain from Fast Foto what Cheops bought in stone. Look upon my snaps, ye mighty and despair.'

('Whicker's lost world', September 1992)



Mike Atherton's crime was to undermine English cricket's sense of moral superiority, says Kenan Malik

People are sniggering', former England batsman Allan Lamb complained in the wake of the scandal over England cricket captain Mike Atherton's dirty pocket. 'Other countries—Pakistan especially—are shouting their mouths off, calling England "cheats". They're having a field day.'

Having the 'wogs' laugh at us clearly isn't cricket. Lamb, together with that bastion of integrity the *Daily Mirror*, has spent the past two years crusading against 'cheating' Pakistanis. Then, suddenly, thanks to Atherton's dirty fingers Lamb's moral fervour began to look somewhat tarnished. As Lamb admitted, Atherton's actions 'have left England wide open'. No wonder the *Times*, the *Telegraph* and the rest were in a tizz about the Atherton affair.

Not that Lamb would dream of accusing Atherton of cheating. 'I admit that the TV evidence against him looks bad', Lamb wrote ruefully. But, he continued, 'I accuse him of nothing more than being foolish and a little stupid. I cannot believe he is a cheat'. Atherton is an Englishman. And we all know that an Englishman doesn't cheat. Foreigners may lie, tamper with the ball, or flout the rules. An Englishman, however, merely has a dirty pocket.

What the ball tampering row has shown is that the real values of cricket are not those of fair play and gentlemanly conduct, but those of racism and hypocrisy. Atherton's true crime, in the eyes of the cricketing establishment, was not that he looked suspiciously as if he was tampering with the ball, but that he undermined the smug sense of moral superiority that pervades English cricket. He set the natives a bad example. How can we tell the Pakistanis to play the white man, when the white man appears to be playing like a Pakistani? As England supremo Ray Illingworth put it with unwitting accuracy, the England cricket captain must be seen to be 'whiter than white'.

In fact, whatever the authorities may want us to believe, cheating is a normal part of cricket. There cannot be a game, whether on the village green or on the hallowed turf at Lord's, in which players do not attempt to doctor the ball. Former Yorkshire and England opening batsman Geoff Boycott admitted in the wake of the Atherton controversy that 'I have seen players in teams I've played in tampering with the ball', including 'lifting the seam'

and 'using lip salve and sun cream'. According to former Derbyshire and England fast bowler Mike Hendrick, 'every fast bowler and swing bowler I ever bowled with or against did it'. England all-rounder Derek Pringle, and his New Zealand namesake Chris, have both publicly admitted to doctoring the ball—the latter during a Test match in Pakistan.

So long as English players—or those from 'kith-and-kin' countries like New Zealand—were doing it, and doing it discreetly, nobody seemed overly worried. It was only when the Pakistan team, spearheaded by their brilliant fast bowlers Waqar Younis and Wasim Akram, humiliated England two years ago that the press got all hot and bothered. Geoff Boycott said at the time that Waqar and Wasim could 'have bowled England out with a pair of oranges'. But as far as the rest of the English press was concerned, just as Englishmen are incapable of cheating, so Pakistanis were incapable of winning without cheating.

Led by a clique of embittered former England players such as Lamb and Ian Botham, the press launched a witch-hunt against Waqar and Wasim, accusing them of playing dirty. Suddenly ball-tampering became an international issue. When former Pakistani captain Imran Khan admitted earlier this year in his autobiography that he had once, in a county game for Sussex, used a bottle top illegally to scratch a cricket ball, it was all the proof the English press needed that all Pakistanis were cheats.

What the row has revealed is that it is not what you do, but who does it that causes controversy. When white players tamper with the ball, and openly admit to it, there is no witch-hunt. When Pakistanis are alleged to do it, it makes international headlines. For the old duffers of the Lord's Long Room, allowing the 'fuzzy wuzzies' to tamper with the ball simply isn't on.

When all is said and done, however, one fact still remains. Whatever you may do to a ball, it still requires a touch of magic to deliver it with the devastating pace and accuracy of a Wasim or a Waqar. Pakistan—and indeed the West Indies, Australia and South Africa—may well be able to bowl England out with a pair of oranges. England, however, bowl as if that's all they've got in their pockets. Whatever Atherton may have done to the ball, the fact is that England lost the game to South Africa—and by a record margin.

'Whiter than white'

MARXIST

REVIEW OF BOOKS

Charles Longford examines the critique of the realist theory of international relations

Realism v the real world

The Empire of Civil Society, Justin Rosenberg, Verso, £12.95 pbk

Diplomacy, Henry Kissinger, Simon & Schuster, £25 hbk

In these uncritical times it is rare to come across books which are willing to challenge existing orthodoxies. One welcome exception, however, is Justin Rosenberg's *The Empire of Civil Society* which mounts a provocative critique of the realist theory of international relations—a theory which has dominated the discipline of International Relations since it was first studied as a social science, and which has informed the foreign policies of the most powerful capitalist states this century.

Rosenberg summarises the three distinctive characteristics of the realist theory of international relations: that international politics is about the interaction between sovereign states in isolation from domestic politics; that these relations are anarchic, since they take place in the absence of regulation by a supranational authority; and that this results in a set of 'compulsions generic to relations between states which works, through the complex operation of the balance of power, to determine how states behave internationally' (p10). For realism, in other words, understanding the balance of power is the key to explaining international relations.

Diplomacy a new book by Richard Nixon's secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, is a striking example of the realist theory that Rosenberg is criticising. The opening sentence invokes a supposedly 'natural law' to explain how countries with power try to dominate the international system. In the twenty-first century, according to Kissinger, American leaders will have to explain to their public a concept of 'national interests and explain how that interest is served—in Europe and in Asia—by the maintenance of the balance of power' (p811). The entire book (when it is not casting Kissinger as *the* statesman of the twentieth century) is a catalogue of every 'realist' prejudice taken to task in *The Empire of Civil Society*.

Rosenberg is rather stunned that anyone can take the

'balance of power' theory seriously. He makes the point that by looking at particular structures of modern social relations in isolation from each other, the realists treat nations as if they were self-sufficient actors with distinct properties.

Rosenberg's argument with realism is that, despite its claims, it is not a social theory which can explain the world of states. He sees the study of International Relations as just one of several academic disciplines which are founded upon the artificial separation of politics and economics—constituting itself as the exclusive study of political relations between states.

Rosenberg argues that the concentration upon the balance of power between states hides 'the historic novelty of these forms and the specific social relations which constitute them' (p4). The body blow Rosenberg delivers to realism here is profound. In his view, capitalist social relations provide the real content of international relations. He shows that this approach will not only furnish a rigorous analysis of the global system, but explain why international relations take on the appearance of a balance of power. It is this surface appearance which realism positively embraces and elevates to 'the level of a general theory embodying the acknowledged common sense of the age' (p90).

Realists like Kissinger see the modern international political system as a states-system organised by anarchy rather than empires organised by a central command. By contrast, Rosenberg shows that international power relations have a duality which gives rise to the peculiar forms of modern society. What Rosenberg calls the 'empire of civil society' arises where the international social power of capitalism defends its private political power in the global extraction and accumulation of profit through the public world of sovereign states. ▶

International Relations theory treats this historically specific form of society as if it were natural and fixed for all time. Because it separates the discrete sphere of political relations between states from the socio-economic relations underlying these phenomena, realism can never satisfactorily explain its own theories concerning power and the balance of power.

Rosenberg makes the strong point that whenever realism tries to theorise the international system, it sees only an 'empty, purely political struggle for domination':

'The fruits of power lie elsewhere. All that breaks surface in the public political sphere is the mechanisms of domination; and no amount of mapping the patterns and rehearsing the internal logic of these mechanics will ever tell us either what the balance of power is about at any given point, or why modern geopolitics assumes this distinctive, impersonal form.' (p141)

The irony Rosenberg exposes here is that realists do not really have a theory of the balance of power. As he says, this is a remarkable failure considering that realism's 'entire claim to authority' is based upon this being the only possible international theory.

Realism's capacity to explain international relations is reduced to ahistorical analogies about human nature existing in conditions of a Hobbesian state of nature, where there is no authority above society, and, therefore, where pre-social urges produce power struggles to dominate.

In International Relations theories, the separation of politics and economics is given authority through recourse to misconceived examples from history, starting with Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, which are mobilised to 'prove' that the struggle for political domination by man over man is inherent in the human condition and, as a result, here to stay.

The irony Rosenberg exposes is that realists do not really have a theory of the balance of power

Rosenberg recognises that exposing realism in this way is not going far enough. He argues that what is necessary is to show that the 'abstracted competitive logic which haunts the purely political sphere, is itself a social form whose surface appearance belies the reality of what it accomplishes' (p142). Rosenberg is seeking a social theory which can explain why the persistence of anarchy in international relations is not 'pre-social', but the 'geopolitical form of capitalist modernity' (p155).

In Henry Kissinger's *Diplomacy*, by contrast, Americans are told to look 'to the era before Woodrow Wilson and the "American Century" for clues about the decades to come' (p810). Kissinger would like to present American diplomacy in the twentieth century as a continuum stretching back from today through the Cold War to the interwar years and earlier. In fact his book exposes the flexibility of realism and its adaptability as what Rosenberg calls the 'conservative ideology of the exercise of modern state power' (p30).

Kissinger (the realist) is willing to admit that America

is no longer the hegemonic power that it was in the post-war years. That is why the idea of a balance of power, less familiar to a generation of Americans used to unchallenged world authority, has become even more important in International Relations theory. But the return of the balance of power concept must be squared with the more idealistic terms in which American foreign policy interests have traditionally been expressed. For example, how can the hyperbole about a global crusade for democracy be matched with the USA's attempt to form a Pacific alliance with the repressive Chinese regime?

The problem for Kissinger is that for America to preserve equilibrium in important regions of the world, its partners 'cannot always be chosen on the basis of moral considerations alone. A clear definition of the national interest needs to be an equally essential guide to American policy' (p811). Getting around this difficulty necessitates a little rewriting of America's diplomatic history in a way that exposes the cynical motives behind realism.

Kissinger is forced to present Cold War realism as a continuation of Wilsonian Idealism

International Relations realists after the Second World War always contrasted themselves with the prewar 'idealist' ascendancy in foreign policy-making associated with president Woodrow Wilson. It was Wilson's attempt to interpret foreign policy in terms of moral principles like national self-determination which, the realists alleged, led inevitably to the disaster of the Second World War itself. But with the warm glow of hindsight these old debates are forgotten. Today Kissinger seriously argues that 'America's brave commitment to containing communism' had its roots in the idealism of Woodrow Wilson (p808). In reality, the architect of the Cold War policy of containment, George Kennan, was a rabid realist who explicitly justified his policy as a rejection of the 'legalist-moralism' of Wilson.

Kissinger knows this. His purpose is quite simple: because America faces a New World Order in which it can no longer dictate terms, nor present its national interests as the universal moral mission of saving the free world from communism, Kissinger must rewrite the past to legitimise future realism. He is forced to present Cold War realism as a continuation of Wilsonian idealism so that the pragmatic manoeuvres that are required today can more easily be dressed up as part of a long tradition of American moral leadership. Calling on the past in this way, Kissinger hopes will confer legitimacy on a state whose foreign policy is anybody's guess. At the same time, Kissinger is inevitably drawn to the realist theory of International Relations. Realism's dehistoricised categories produce unfalsifiable hypotheses about past conduct, and so legitimise an unlimited range of practical suggestions for the present. *Diplomacy* as a realist history is nothing more than a description of past diplomatic conduct.

Kissinger confirms what Rosenberg suggests: that realism has always depended upon idealism as the counterpoint to its legitimacy. However, by making the critique of realism the focus of his critique, Rosenberg is

conferring legitimacy upon this theory of International Relations which—as Kissinger shows—it does not deserve.

While *The Empire of Civil Society* will certainly ruffle the feathers of realism's upholders, it fails to nail its quarry. Rosenberg's valiant effort to apply a 'historical materialist' approach to international relations, is a labour of Sisyphus: having rolled the realist boulder to the top of the hill, he allows it to roll back down again.

The reason for this is that Rosenberg has a conflict of interests which he resolves at the expense of historical materialism. His concern is to reorient International Relations as a discipline in line with the common goal of the social sciences.

What starts out with such promise falters because his concern with International Relations as a discipline gets in the way of him following through the real implications of a Marxist analysis of international relations, which would relegate the discipline of International Relations to the dustbin of history.

As a result, historical materialism is presented as having some incisive points to make about realism's vacuous pretensions to intellectual and scientific rigour, but as having little else to commend it in its own right.

Rosenberg develops his argument by emphasising what he calls Marx's theory of anarchy. He shows how Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, of the blind operation of market forces behind the backs of men can lay the basis of a theory of world politics. Market relations produce anarchy; and for Rosenberg, as for Marx, these anarchical relations are the form through which the social relations of capitalist domination express themselves.

At this level of abstraction Rosenberg correctly draws out the implications for international relations by arguing that the balance of power and the invisible hand of the market provide the 'social forms through which the new kinds of power peculiar to value relations operate in the international system' (p155).

Rosenberg's concern with reorienting International Relations as an academic discipline gets in the way

Unfortunately Rosenberg's use of Marx is a bit like a trip to the supermarket. He wanders through the material, shopping bag on his arm, picking and choosing from the rich offerings only that which serves his purpose, while discarding that which does not.

The result is Rosenberg's discovery of what he calls Marx's theory of anarchy, which he applies in a way that is contrary to Marx's method and which, as a result, reduces his argument to that of analogy. The discrete area of study Rosenberg wants to map out for International Relations is already to be found, not in a Marxist theory of anarchy, but in Marx's theory of capitalist accumulation of which the exposition of commodity fetishism is only a part.

What a contemporary theory of international relations needs is a contemporary theory of imperialism—a task begun by Marx and developed by Lenin in his *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. The phenomena that many International Relations scholars have written so much about during this century—monopolies,

multinationals, joint-stock companies, the nature of the world market—Marx had already logically derived from his analysis of the general nature of capital.

In fact, Marx anticipated what Lenin was later to codify as imperialism, through this approach. He showed that as capital came up against the inherent barriers to further expansion it would be forced to modify its own laws. The mechanisms employed to overcome those barriers—from the centralisation and concentration of capital, to state intervention and global expansion—produced the phenomena which International Relations has studied but has been unable to explain. Marx did not derive these from the analysis of a particular historical period, but from the general nature of capital.

What a contemporary theory of international relations needs is a contemporary theory of imperialism

Lenin, on the other hand, advanced this method by examining the particular mechanisms capital employed to overcome its internal problems at the time he was writing. He showed that the drive to dominate the world market was not episodic nor optional, but had become intrinsic to the survival of the system in the imperialist epoch which opened around the turn of the century.

In relation to Rosenberg's project, the important point to grasp is that Lenin's *Imperialism* elaborated Marx's discussion of capitalist stagnation in relation to the historical period when further expansion came up against the limitations of capitalist accumulation on a national scale. Lenin did not reduce the full development of this phase of capital to a simple, timeless definition. Instead, he argued that imperialism was a system of measures that capitalism assumed to counter the effects of crisis. As a theory, it was open-ended precisely because imperialism did not alter or modify the general nature of capital, but threw up new mechanisms which sought to expand accumulation while annulling its contradictory effects. The challenge posed for a contemporary historical materialist approach is to develop this analysis through an investigation of the mechanisms capital is employing today to cope with its slump, and assessing the effects these are having globally.

The real problem with Rosenberg's approach is that by setting out to reorient International Relations as a discipline he is predisposed to not see the wood for the trees. Everything in his book points to the necessity of destroying International Relations as a discipline and developing an approach which not only can explain the international system today, but can reveal the theories of realism as nothing more than an apology for the capitalist system.

In the end it seems as if both authors have engaged in a labour of Sisyphus. Kissinger has rolled the past up the hill only to find that he has exposed the impasse facing the American establishment which could come crashing down if pushed; Rosenberg has pushed the realist boulder to the top of the hill, where instead of crashing it down the other side, he has allowed it to roll back, ensuring that palpable rubbish like *Diplomacy* will still be taken seriously.

The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda, Amitai Etzioni, Crown, £17.95 hbk

Pop sociologist Amitai Etzioni has been peddling theories of the world with a combination of fake profundity and homely wisdom since the sixties. Most recently he has pushed his way into the forefront of the self-consciously styled 'communitarian movement'. With their journal *The Responsive Community*, Etzioni's clique of feel-gooders have been lecturing anyone who will listen at their left-right teach-ins that the days of acquisitive individualism are over and it is time for some moral values instead. By translating the less readable ideas of moral philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and Michael Sandel, Etzioni has sold the package to American republicans like Jack Kemp, as well as landing a job as a speech-writer for president Bill Clinton. In this country Tony Blair has been boning up on *The Spirit of Community* along with the rest of his front bench.

The idea of communitarianism is that society must be more than the contract that more individualistic thinkers see it as: hence communitarianism as opposed to contractarianism. It does not take a lot to see that this is a fairly insubstantial idea and the communitarians have an irritating habit of coming out with the most hackneyed ideas as if they had never been heard before. Hillary Clinton boasted last year that she was 'one of the first people who wrote about the way that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand', citing an article written in 1973 (*Newsweek*, 15 February 1993). Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre might reasonably challenge her, not least for her ignorance of Edmund Burke, GWF Hegel or Thomas Carlyle, all of whom made the connection rather earlier.

But reading between the lines of Etzioni's *The Spirit of Community* it can be seen that the desire to link rights to responsibilities is about making rights proportional to responsibilities, which is to say turning rights into privileges, to be exercised only by those whose contribution justifies it. Etzioni's favourite example, the school demonstrates how this can work. Middle class children have always enjoyed disproportionate spending on education, justified by virtue of the way that their parents involve themselves through voluntary work on the PTA and the school governing bodies. Etzioni holds this subsidy to the middle classes up as an ideal form of rights made proportional to responsibilities.

James Heartfield

Life after God, Douglas Coupland, Simon & Schuster, £8.99 pbk

'You are the first generation raised without religion', warns Douglas Coupland. His latest offering, *Life after God*, is a collection of short stories proselytising for a DIY spirituality: 'something to believe in after there is nothing left to believe in...we have religious impulses—we must—and yet into what cracks do these impulses flow in a world without religion? It is something I think about every day. Sometimes I think it is the only thing I should be thinking about.'

Judging by these stories, Coupland's religious impulses seem to flow into mountain lakes, a night in the desert, poignant moments with children, and a sense of loss over broken relationships. Like all converts, he experiences his new-found spirituality as if it were startlingly fresh. The light of the Damascene road has blinded him to the fact that other writers have trod the same path many times before. Coupland represents not the first, but the fourth or fifth generation to explore a non-theistic spirituality. No wonder his sacred places are as familiar as Christmas cards.

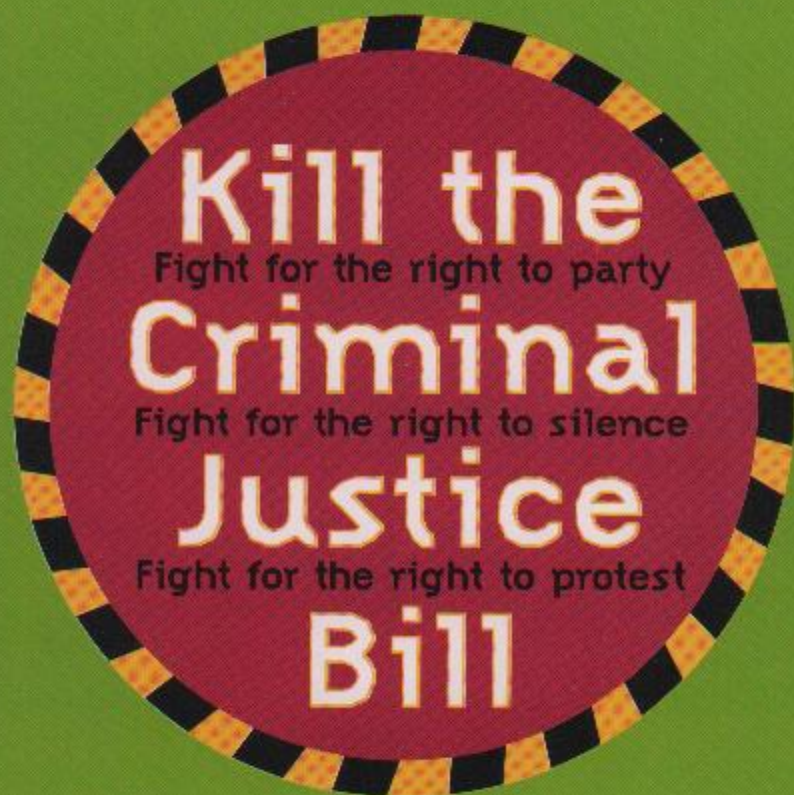
Life after Death has attracted considerable comment because it seems to go against the grain of Coupland's earlier work. This, after all, is the wry 32-year old Canadian who shot to fame in 1991 with *Generation X: Tales of an Accelerated Culture*. A book that spawned a thousand headlines, *Generation X* encapsulated the jaded outlook of the slacker: youth rebellion is passé and the ironic quip is the greatest contribution to the collective insignificance of humanity.

Despite extensive commentary on the contrast between *Generation X* and *Life after God*, the similarities between the two books are more important than their differences. Both *Generation X* and *Life after God* consist of a series of brittle vignettes narrated by Holden Caulfield-soundalikes. Everyone is drifting with the tide, at the same time seeking to escape the superficiality of modern times. In both books, Coupland shows a melancholic disdain for human society. That *Life after God* should ascribe profundity to a higher power is therefore entirely consistent with the low opinion of humanity expressed in *Generation X*. The rationale is as follows: if individuals are so much detritus, and yet aspire to something better, the origin of these aspirations can only be outside society, ie, spirituality.

Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh are two among many writers whose anti-people outlook culminated in the projection of spiritual fantasies. Now Coupland has joined their ranks (if Waugh is an officer among such writers, Coupland is just about fit to be his batman). The reinvention of God is a frustrating aspect of the second half of the twentieth century. But in a society bereft of rationality, we should not be surprised when the human potential is falsely ascribed to such a fantastic source.

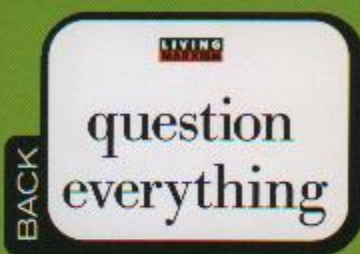
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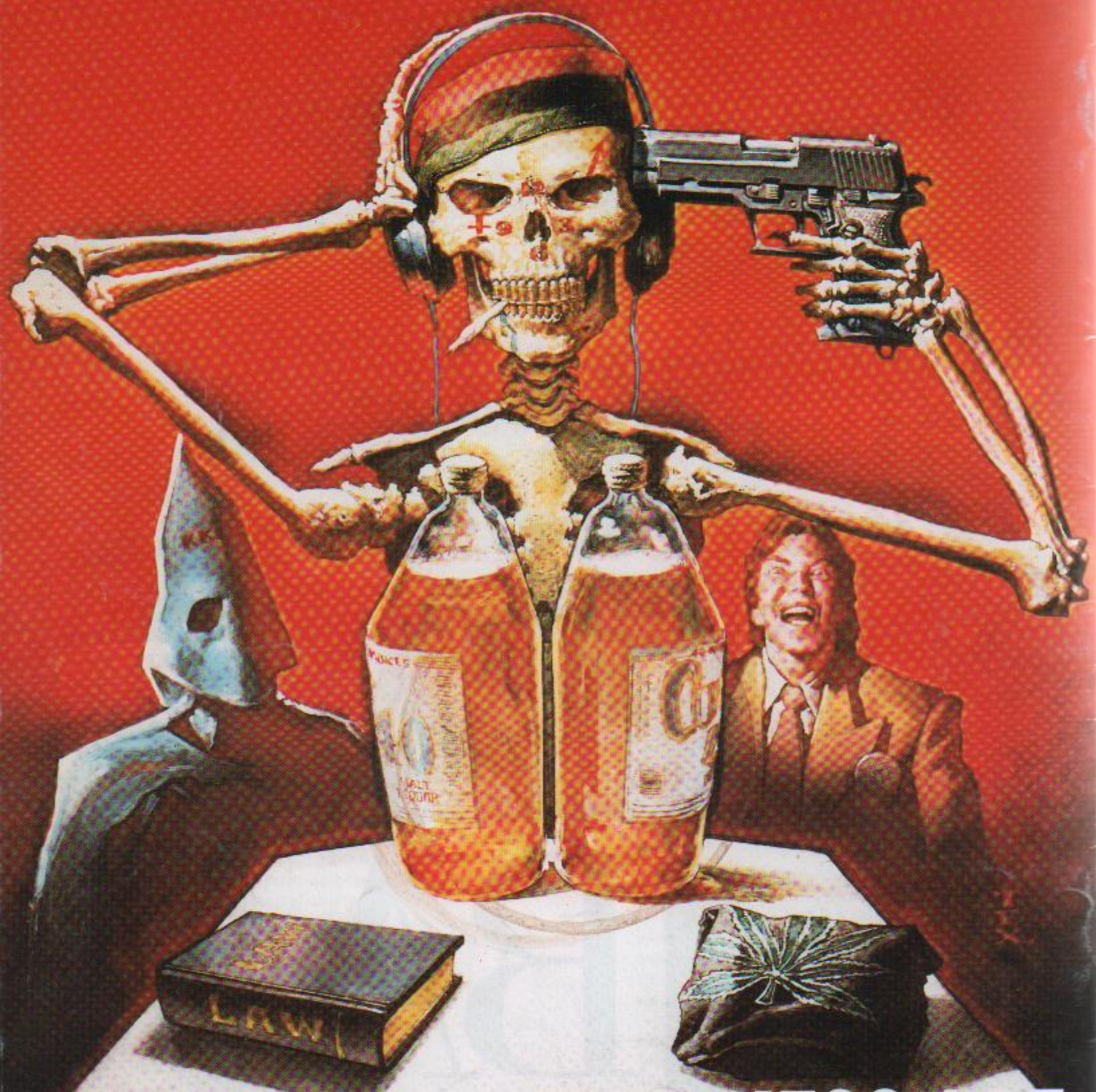
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