

LIVING MARXISM

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interview with
the censor centre
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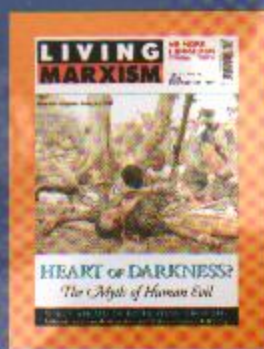
WESTERN IMAGES OF JAPAN:
FROM VJ-DAY TO THE KOBE EARTHQUAKE

THE SPIRIT OF HIROSHIMA LIVES ON

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The spirit of Hiroshima lives on

Japan has been a problem for the Western elites throughout the twentieth century. A major capitalist power, yes; but not quite one of the club. Not, in short, a white man.

The Japanese have long been depicted as a race apart, an 'oriental' people with strange, and often brutal, cultural practices which are said to be at odds with the civilised values of the West. The racial double standard by which the Western nations judged Japan was forcefully demonstrated in August 1945, when the Americans—with full British backing—dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing around 200 000 Japanese.

Fifty years on, Japan, the Asian powerhouse is once again seen as a major international competitor and problem by Europe and America. As the analysis of contemporary images of Japan in this month's *Living Marxism* demonstrates, the spirit of Hiroshima—of depicting the Japanese as 'our' cultural inferiors—lives on in the Western imagination.

If we want to ensure that there are No More Hiroshimas, this kind of racial thinking is the first thing we need to take on.

Forever enemy aliens

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As the fiftieth anniversary of VJ-Day approaches, journalists and politicians in Britain and the USA still seem to be at war with Japan. Phil Hammond asks why.

Gloating at Kobe's graveside

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Western governments and commentators seized upon the tragedy of the Kobe earthquake as a rare opportunity to look down upon modern Japan, argues Daniel Nassim.

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Mick Hume

Eric Cantona and the thought police

Even if you could not care less about football, you should be worried by the wider implications of the Cantona affair.

The debate about what is to be done with Eric Cantona and the Crystal Palace fan he clashed with has got nothing to do with sport. The incident has been turned into a political football, and used to support demands for more controls to be imposed throughout society. It has been used to argue that there is a need to control not only what people are allowed to do today, but what they are allowed to say and even to think.

Why did the equivalent of a pub fight at a football match become a major national issue? The Cantona affair has been set up as a medieval morality play for our times, a battle between the forces of good and evil, with a cast of thousands.

On the side of wrong stand both the evil French thug and the nasty English racist he kicked, Matthew Simmons. Caught in the middle are 'the real victims'—innocent elderly ladies and small children whose lives are said to have been ruined by the fact that they witnessed, live or on TV, five seconds of unarmed combat. And on the side of right, ready to do battle against the barbarians, stands an army of worthies: policemen, TV and press pundits, Tory and Labour MPs, and university psychologists among them.

Cantona was paraded before the nation as if he were a kind of war criminal; indeed the grave and sanctimonious tone of the TV coverage sometimes made it difficult to tell where the Auschwitz anniversary programmes ended and the Cantona exposés began. His fall provided a rare opportunity for those whose professions are held in low

public esteem—journalists, politicians, football officials—to seize the moral high ground and affirm their own British decency by pillorying the French folk-devil.

Liberal MP David Alton called Cantona's act a sign of 'the violent society in which we live, where elderly people are afraid to travel on public transport', conjuring up images of Big Eric karate-kicking his way through a Manchester tram. In a feature headed 'The "savagery generation" hits Britain', the *Sunday Times* quoted a children's author claiming that 'since the Eric Cantona incident I have watched young boys directing kung-fu kicks at people in the streets'. She blamed TV images of such violence for having 'made it acceptable'.

Never mind the fact that the entire political and media establishment had just united in a public campaign to insist that it is legitimate, and even laudable, for a paratrooper to blow away teenage joyriders; what really makes violence acceptable today is apparently a combination of untutored footballer and uncensored television. And all agreed that Something Must Be Done.

Outraged commentators came up with a predictable array of law and order-style measures. Some wanted Cantona banned for life, jailed or even deported. But the more typically 1990s response—and the far more worrying one—was that something more must be done to discipline Cantona *inside his head*.

Professor Cary Cooper of Manchester University said football clubs should hire psychologists like him to teach players how to behave. John Williams of the Centre for Football Research at Leicester University was reported as claiming that Manchester

United's lack of supervision and discipline had turned Cantona into 'an untamed animal who feels abandoned and unloved'.

What was needed, the experts agreed, was professional counselling to change the way Cantona thinks and acts, an intensive course of treatment, from somebody with a certificate in a frame, designed to modify his personality. These responses are indicative of the times in which we live, when it is assumed that nobody can cope without 'professional help'. Today there is an entire industry seeking to shape how people react and respond to the problems of life. They call it therapy or stress management. Surely a more honest and accurate name for this fashionable practice is mind control, the work of thought police. It is, after all, an attempt to dictate attitudes which will conform to the standards set by self-appointed guardians of the public good.

As with all schools of mind control, from ancient creeds to Stalinist dogma, the new religion of counselling and psychotherapy demands that the subject undergo a cathartic experience. The accused must cleanse themselves of their sins in public, and show the world that they have seen the error of their past ways (that is, they have swallowed the new orthodoxy). A notable example of how this works is what happened to another footballer, Paul Merson of Arsenal, after he sold the newspapers the story that he was addicted to cocaine (he wasn't), and that he drank and gambled too much (like many in his profession).

Merson was packed off on a six-week course of therapy, counselling and self-analysis at a retreat. This is the modern equivalent of being locked up and interrogated by the torturers of the Inquisition,

and it broke him just as surely. He returned to beg forgiveness and break down in tears at a press conference presided over by the cardinals of the Football Association. The experts and authorities were well pleased with this act of contrition; as one football pundit put it, 'purging his soul' was the prerequisite for Merson playing again, although what exactly any of this had to do with his ability to kick a ball remains unclear. Cantona's reluctance to join Merson in the public confessional is one reason why he has met with so much criticism and demands for stern disciplinary action.

If the attempt to impose this kind of pseudo-religious mind control and conformity was confined to professional sportsmen, it would be objectionable enough. But it is not. When the focus of the Cantona affair switched to the behaviour of Matthew Simmons and the rest of the football crowd, it became clear that the powers that be would now like to send in the thought police against anybody who steps out of line.

The deep hostility which the establishment feels towards (non-celebrity) football fans made it inevitable that the demands for something to be done would quickly broaden out to include the crowd. Tory Party chairman Jeremy Hanley was among the first to cite the provocative language used by Matthew Simmons as a key problem that needed to be dealt with. Labour Party sports spokesman Tom Pendry joined in to demand that 'voicing obscenities' at football matches be made a criminal offence.

The authorities had to concede that the techniques used to watch and control football crowds are already well advanced; even the *Times* correspondent likened the regime at big matches to 'a police state'. The trouble now, the experts announced, is that the fans are still hooligans inside their heads.

'The same sorts of people go to matches', said one detective from the

Football Intelligence Unit, 'the hatred is still there'. It was just that, since the police now 'control the opportunities for violence', the hatred had to come out in 'abuse and taunting' instead. Countless other reports referred to the faces of fans being 'twisted in hate'. The practice of showing your feelings to opposing fans, players, referees and your own team, which almost every football spectator knows is an integral part of the game and one of the main reasons why many people go to matches, is now seen by those in authority as just another form of crowd violence.

The official definition of football hooliganism today not only targets what people do, but what they say and sing and think too—the 'hatred' which the mystics of the police force and the press claim they can see in the fans' hearts. In which case, what is required is not just more policemen and stewards to ensure that fans sit peacefully in their seats, but more thought police to control what they are thinking about and saying while they are at it. Gary Lineker has already proposed that fans could form a 'neighbourhood watch', presumably to earwig what the bloke sitting next to them is shouting. And if Matthew Simmons is convicted of any offence in relation to the Cantona incident, he can expect to join the Frenchman in the counselling and therapy dungeons of the criminal justice system.

The campaign to control what people can legitimately say, or even the faces they can pull, at football matches or in any other public place is a dangerously censorious development. Yet the dangers have been obscured by the introduction of the issue of racism. By accusing people like Simmons of being racists, the authorities have given a radical twist to the crackdown. In response, anti-fascist groups have taken on board the demand to impose more controls and bans on those accused of racist abuse. This is a big mistake.

Of course, racial discrimination and prejudice are major problems in Britain. But

have you ever noticed that when racism is discussed as a public issue, it is always little men like Matthew Simmons who are identified as the problem; meanwhile, those with the real power to make the lives of black people and immigrants a misery, men like Tory Home Secretary Michael Howard, with his crusade against asylum-seekers, rarely warrant a mention. Clearly, something else is being expressed here other than a concern for racial equality.

For journalists, policemen, politicians and other experts today, 'racist' is usually a codeword for the working class. In the sophisticated nineties, it is no longer considered acceptable to refer to 'the great unwashed' or 'council house scum'. But it is all right for the professional classes to brand these people as morally inferior by accusing them of racism, and so lend some right-on legitimacy to demands for more control of the lower orders. Anti-racists who accept this discussion at face value and echo calls for more bans on fans accused of racism are playing into the hands of people whose motives are purely authoritarian.

The Cantona affair has brought together many different strands of the culture of conformity and control now on the way to being institutionalised by the authorities, the media and the 'caring professionals' in contemporary Britain. The manner in which they are seeking to sanitise life inside football grounds, up to and including sluicing out the spectators' minds, is symbolic of the kind of regime they would like to impose on society as a whole. The fact that none of this has attracted any coherent public opposition is a worrying sign of how far they might be able to go in making their mind-control fantasies come true.

The campaign to drive out dissent and ban anything which the high priests of the new religion find 'offensive' is a major problem of the moment. It almost makes the same people's attempt to drive the best footballer in Britain out of the game seem insignificant. Almost.

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

Reds and greens

John Gillott ('The dangers of "sustainable development"', February) writes that predictions about the future of natural resources are overly negative. But the pessimism of many environmental studies is deliberate. It is meant to spur governments and Western middle classes into action through shock tactics.

Gillott ignores the fact that many environmentalists are aware that the need for better resource management conflicts with the demands of the free market. It is agreed that such a radical reorganisation would only be possible under a different economic system. Far from opposing social change, their scientific research is giving credence to what Marxists have always said, namely that capitalism is not natural, and more importantly, that the free market is inherently self-destructive and a barrier to progress. The discussion around 'sustainable development' is an ideal opportunity to prove the necessity of a planned global economy.

It is vital to distinguish between the radical scientific theory and the Western governments' version of 'sustainable development', and to work with environmentalists in highlighting the destructive consequences of global capitalism and encouraging debate about the future. I only hope that *Living Marxism* will rise to the challenge instead of characteristically dismissing any non-Marxist ideas as merely part of capitalist ideology.

A Thomas Norwich

As a left-wing green, I expect to find common cause with Marxists in resisting capitalism's corrosive effects on people and the planet. However, I was much disappointed upon reading 'The petrol pollution scam' by John Gillott (December 1994). The mixture of road lobby apologetics and misdirected cynicism about green ideas left me with a bitter taste in my mouth.

Gillott sees a cynical plot by environmentalists to deprive working people of access to cars. The cynical ones are the Tory politicians who will use a green excuse to raise taxes and do nothing about the underlying problems, as in the case of VAT on domestic fuel. True environmentalists point to the need to reduce dependence on cars by bringing shops, workplaces, hospitals, etc. closer to people.

Contrary to your belief, we don't sit around in stripped-pine kitchens cooking up new ways of shitting on the working class from a great height. We have a sincere concern for the world we live in, and can see that the pursuit of profit poses the greatest threat to it. An inability to give people any credit for positive motives turns them off and delays the realisation of a society based on meeting needs not greeds.

Ged London N7

Give livestock a voice

My February copy of *Living Marxism* found itself being thrown on the floor. Why? Because I'd just read James Heartfield's article ('Where's the beef?').

Heartfield's compassion is clearly rationed. He gives enormous amounts to the human race while animals get practically nothing. This attitude I find sad, not to mention somewhat paradoxical.

Yes, we should be passionate about the suffering that human beings endure, but surely we can spare some time for the welfare of animals. Being intellectually superior to animals does not give us the right to treat them badly and exploit them. After all, we don't eat or exploit those in the human race who are intellectually inferior such as sufferers of Downs Syndrome. Animals are capable of suffering—they feel pain. They need human compassion because they (unlike humans) have no voice to express their unhappiness. I believe that the Shoreham protesters deserve praise for giving the livestock a voice.

Moreover, Heartfield should not compartmentalise people's attitudes. Caring for animals does not necessarily signify a disregard for human problems. Does Heartfield know that the Shoreham protesters had given up on the human race? Did he ask them?

Furthermore it is quite simply ridiculous to describe livestock protests as a 'reactionary cause' just because some conservatives are known to share the same opinion. If anyone is being 'reactionary' it is Heartfield. His lack of concern for animals fits in nicely with the attitudes that prevail in the ranks of Tory fox-hunters, not to mention Prince Charles.

Let's have a revolution, not just for humans, but for the entire eco-system, animals and all.
Edward Thomhill (vegetarian revolutionary)
Manchester

Responsible communities

If the next Labour government could expect to take over the running of a prosperous, cohesive society, then Mick Hume's criticisms of Tony Blair might be worth listening to ('Labour would be even worse', February). But Blair and his incoming ministers will have to compensate for the parlous state of Britain, eaten away by 15 years of corrosive individualism. New Labour is right for our times because it is learning to show today's atomised individuals—the legacy of Thatcherism—how to mould themselves into communities, and in doing so, how to remake the fabric of British society. We all share an obligation to play a part in this.

It seems that, just when everyone else has come to realise the mistakes of the past 15 years, *Living Marxism* is finally catching up

with Thatcherism. Your defence of individual rights is, in effect, championing the right to be anti-social (and pro-market). Meanwhile the real progressives are setting examples of how the different interests of various individuals and groups can be reconciled through the recognition of the importance of social responsibilities.

And yes, that will mean more public cameras to protect the victims of crime, a far-reaching reassessment of our 50-year welfare state, to ensure a balance between rights and responsibilities. If we want control of our own lives, we're going to have to take responsibility for the social spaces we inhabit.

Lee Harrison York

Who's harassing whom?

Mrs J Porcelli (letters, January) describes a decade ago she took ground-breaking action against male colleagues who were sexually harassing her in an attempt to oust her from her job. She also explains that she did not get support from management or her union.

Times have changed. Today's managers and union officials cannot stop talking about sexual harassment. In the process they have redefined sexual harassment to mean something very different from the problem Mrs Porcelli and others first raised as a workplace issue. Nowadays talking or even looking at someone 'inappropriately' can be enough to bring about a charge of sexual harassment.

Managers have manoeuvred themselves into a position where they can manipulate their concern over sexual harassment and use it as an opportunity to monitor, regulate and ultimately discipline the workforce. Protection from sexual harassment is even used as justification for the redeployment of women workers. This situation gives rise to the idea of the office as an unsafe environment full of predatory males and unwilling women. When women are seen as feeble creatures in need of the protection of their very employers who still pay them, on average one third less than men, this is cause for concern rather than celebration.

Meanwhile union officials go along with the preoccupation with sexual harassment, while at the same time ignoring the problems of pay and working conditions which they are supposed to deal with. In other words, the unions are highlighting issues which set their members against each other, at the expense of those which express our common interests in winning concessions from management.

No doubt there still are instances, like Mrs Porcelli's, where an individual woman can see no alternative to using the courts and tribunals to get themselves out of an unbearable situation. But the wider implications of the focus on sexual harassment are very dangerous. Mrs Porcelli may not have been fooled.

Any 5 for only 10

but when other people start thinking that sexual harassment litigation is truly liberating for women, management know they've got it made.
Juliet Connor Hackney, London

UK not OK

Mick Kennedy ('Changed utterly: Ireland after the ceasefire', February) correctly points out that partition is the 'form through which the British exercised domination over Ireland as a whole', and that partition may be replaced by less direct methods of 'British intervention and influence'.

The British state flexes its powers throughout the British Isles via the mechanism of the United Kingdom. The complete dismemberment of the United Kingdom would remove the institutions through which the ruling class wields control. It would not prevent the ruling class finding new ways to control their former subject peoples, but it would certainly make their task more difficult. The United Kingdom is no more an eternal monolith than was the wider British Empire, and empires have, of late, displayed a heart-warming propensity for collapse.

There is no need to pause to develop a 'new critique' and 'await the emergence of new forms of struggle' (and slating Democratic Left for joining the latest Dublin coalition seems a trifle disingenuous when followed by this least revolutionary of exhortations—wait and see). The Welsh and Scottish independence movements are alive and well, and deserving of the support of socialists everywhere. Welsh and Scottish independence would hasten the cause of freedom in Ireland and in England's very last colony—England.

Pedr Vickery Clifton, Bristol

Chechnya: the Western factor

One question which was not fully answered in your coverage of the war in Chechnya ('A Russian bombshell', February) is 'why now?'. What I saw in Azerbaijan in January suggests that the influence of the USA, Britain and Germany played a large part.

Russia's loss of control in areas like Azerbaijan has been made obvious by the growing influence of other countries, mainly the Western powers. Many people in Azerbaijan believe that the intervention in Chechnya was an attempt to address the waning of Russian influence throughout the 'near abroad'.

Six weeks before the war in Chechnya began, an oil deal worth \$9 billion was signed in Azerbaijan, ensuring long-term US and British influence. It is impossible for Russia to compete with sources of investment like these. The deal also involves Turkey and possibly Iran—Russia's regional rivals. German diplomatic activity has recently been stepped up, alongside German financial interest. Azerbaijan is now receiving the attentions of Western non-governmental organisations.

The ousting of Russia from Azerbaijan is even visible in the bazaars. Food is increasingly brought in from Turkey and Iran, rather than Russia or Ukraine.

The OSCE and Nato conferences recently underlined their commitment to involving Eastern Europe (another area of traditional Russian influence) in Western structures. The OSCE's involvement in the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh was reaffirmed, and there were criticisms of 'Russian neo-imperialism' in the region.

The new Russian elite could not stand by and watch as its backyard is pulled steadily into the sphere of influence of Western powers. It sent troops into Chechnya in an attempt to confirm its own sphere of influence, but only demonstrated its loss of control.

Rob Matthews London

Rewriting Vygotsky

I enjoyed Helene Guldberg's review of recent work on Vygotsky ('Psyche and society', February). I think it's worth looking a little more closely at the quality of this revival. As Helene put it, Vygotsky's broader perspective is being lost in his assimilation to mainstream psychology.

For example, one of the few books to acknowledge Vygotsky's Marxism, René van der Veer and Jaan Valsiner's pretentiously titled *Understanding Vygotsky*, drips with anti-Marxist prejudice. It treats Vygotsky's belief in 'the Utopian statements of leading Soviet ideologists' as the personal misfortune of a man born at the wrong time. Even when Vygotsky's 'holistic' approach is embraced, this can easily be phrased in terms of cultural relativity.

There is no doubt that Vygotsky and his colleagues are momentous figures not only in psychology, but also, I think, in Marxism. It is important for Marxists working in psychology to keep watch over his 'assimilation', and to be clear about the relevance of the Marxist

method—to its economic core!—to the field of psychology. And we should not relegate ourselves to being cheerleaders—be critical.
Ivan Uemlianin PhD Y Felinheli, Gwynedd

That sinking feeling

Your report on the construction of the Kansai Airport in Osaka Bay ('A cathedral for the new millennium', February) was a useful reminder of the possibilities of human achievement. But Sheila Phillips skips over the criticisms about the island sinking into the bay, and as a consequence misses an important point. After all, what use is a runway with potholes?

The pressure to meet completion deadlines meant that insufficient time was given for the seabed to settle under the weight of the man-made island. The concerns of the engineers were overridden in the race to get the airport earning a profitable return. Kansai is being billed as the most expensive terminal in the world—and that's just to cross the toll bridge to get there. More importantly, Kansai is yet another example of how developers are not primarily interested in the long-term infrastructural or architectural gains, but are driven by the yen for a fast buck.

Dave Cowlard Sheffield

Positively boring pop

In criticising the fickle nature of pop music, 'Don Van Vliet' (letters, February) unwittingly spells out what is good about it. The fact that musicians become bored with particular styles and sounds, and want to create something new, is surely a positive endorsement of human creativity. Some people may find the outcome abhorrent, but as a feature of modern society it will merit some coverage in the Living section.
Neil Davenport Manchester

More Scope

Congratulations to Toby Banks ('Spastic: what's in a word?', December) for his Nostradamus-like prediction that the word 'Scope', which I have recently tested out on my boyfriend, is indeed the nineties incarnation of 'spastic'—as in, 'you Scope', or 'Ee's a right bleedin' Scope', etc, etc.

Here's to the invincible progress of language; if only politics were as capricious.

Victoria Child London W11

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 fax (0171) 278 9844 e-mail lm@camintl.org

Does porn 'damage' women?

Amanda Macintosh takes issue with a recent twist in the argument for censoring pornography

Anti-pornography campaigners have always had a formidable range of arguments for banning pornography, but recently a new one has come to the fore: that the porn industry damages and brutalises the women who work in it.

The argument that pornography should be banned, or at least heavily censored, has traditionally been made on the grounds that it distorts the minds of the men who read or watch it, and so degrades women. Pornography, we have been told, warps the view male readers have of women. It is supposed to reinforce the perception that women exist only for their sexual gratification. Anti-pornography campaigners have argued that this leads to sexual assault and rape—'Porn is the theory, rape is the practice'—and that the stories, common to all the top-shelf magazines, in which women fight off amorous men but succumb to passion when they realise there is no escape, fuel the belief that when a woman says 'no' she really means 'yes'.

At the very least, it has been argued, porn encourages men to compare their partners to touched-up pictures of glamorous models—a comparison which is unlikely to be favourable to the real women at home. Women, we have been told are intimidated by pornography. It is supposed to degrade our sexuality, and to turn us into sex objects. Pornography is widely regarded as offensive to women, and there are even those who have argued that it is responsible for women's inferior status in society.

Over the past couple of years, however, some prominent members

of the anti-porn lobby have shifted the emphasis of their attack on pornography away from the people looking at it and on to the women they are looking at. They now argue that, even if it cannot be proved that pornography creates problems for society in general, there can be no doubt that in one way or another it 'damages' the women who are filmed, taped or photographed.

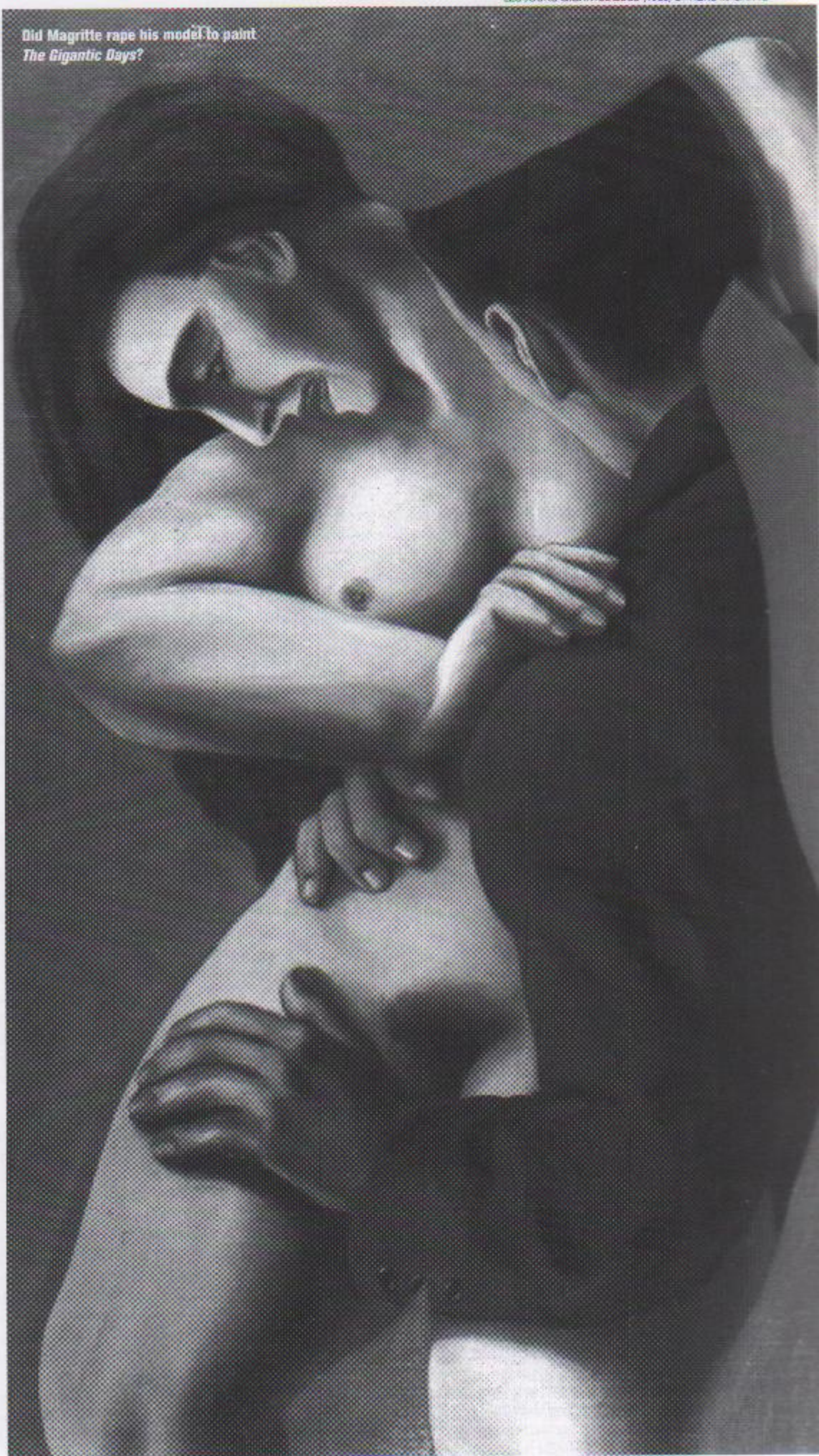
Diana Russell's book, *Against Pornography: The Evidence of Harm* (1993) set out this case most substantially. Russell, a former professor of sociology and international authority on domestic violence, outraged many anti-porn campaigners by publishing pages of images of women involved in violent porn to demonstrate the damage being done. The book received rave reviews from American feminists such as Gloria Steinem, who insisted that the author had 'given us the ultimate proof of the impact and reality of pornography'. However, the argument Russell makes against the genre is nothing short of bizarre.

Russell treats the pictures in her book as though they were images of actual events rather than film stills and photo fantasies. She assumes that the act portrayed is actually taking place, and that therefore the women involved must really be damaged. A male porn actor playing the part of a sadist is described as being 'on the point of cutting a woman's breast', a woman in a mocked-up bondage sequence is crying 'with a look of real agony'. A photograph of a woman with a bottle

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

TABOOS

Did Magritte rape his model to paint *The Gigantic Days*?



to her vagina is captioned 'Rape with a wine bottle appears imminent'.

Images of a bondage fantasy are described with the caution, 'there is no way of knowing whether this woman was actually raped'. And of course we don't know. But then, why should we assume she is being raped? We don't usually assume, when we see films or pictures, that the image is the reality. No one assumes that a Tarantino film leaves people mutilated, and there seems to be no evidence that a photo-shoot for *Hustler* leaves people injured either. Yet Russell stretches her case so far that she even uses cartoons and line drawings as examples of the suffering women undergo in the making of porn. Her exhibit 58 is a very bad line drawing from an 'unknown source', of a woman having a needle pushed into her breast. Russell comments that 'the pain resulting from the needle torture is very evident on her face'. The author seems completely incapable of accepting that of course it would be—because the artist drew it there!

In the two years since the publication of Russell's book, the porn-stars-as-victims argument has crept into the mainstream of anti-porn ideas. Late last year, both the liberal *Guardian* and the Tory *Daily Express* published shock-horror exposés of the damage that porn does to those in front of the cameras. Both were written by Nick Davies who, in a series of *Guardian* articles illustrated by pictures taken from Russell's book, laid out the case that 'the debate has been spinning around the wrong axis': ▶

'The real issue with pornography—the real reason why it might be outlawed—is not the harm which it may or may not do to its consumers, but the damage inflicted on those who are involved in its production. For its consumers, pornography is fantasy. For those who are being filmed, the reverse is true. The images of hardcore pornography now are, in truth, records of crime—rape, bodily harm, child abuse.' (*Guardian Weekend*, 26 November 1994)



ludicrous to argue that film portrayals of criminal acts should be banned. It would certainly lead to very boring viewing—many of the best films currently on release involve criminal acts of undeniable brutality. The anguish on Tim Roth's face as he bleeds to death in *Reservoir Dogs* is far more convincing than any of Diana Russell's stills.

How will banning porn help women driven to pose by poverty?

The argument that porn is a problem because women are damaged in the making of it is a convenient shift of emphasis for many critics of pornography. Those who have traditionally tried to intensify censorship on the grounds that porn is damaging to those who read it have run into various problems. The alleged causal relationship between porn and violence against women remains unproven. Furthermore, sexually explicit literature is becoming increasingly mainstream. The new lines of female and gay erotica—sold quite casually on the shelves of WH Smiths—illustrate just how acceptable sexual images have become. Those who call for the banning of sexually explicit magazines are increasingly forced to justify themselves to organisations such as Feminists Against Censorship, which insists that women can be just as turned on by images of bondage as men. Even a glossy women's magazine like *Company* has carried an article suggesting that the banning of pornography is simply censorship motivated by prudery.

The argument that women are damaged in the making of porn is a useful way to side-step both the lack of proof that porn encourages men to be violent, and the claim that calls for censorship are motivated by prudery. As Gloria Steinem asserts in her endorsement of Russell's book, in tones that defy disagreement, 'anyone who believes it to be less harmful than Nazi, Ku Klux Klan, and other hate/atrocities literature, or who imagines its opponents to be anti-sex or pro-censorship, must face the facts and images in *Against Pornography*'. In other words, the harm which is caused to women involved in pornography is deemed so serious that it must override all other considerations such as fear of censorship.

Yet even in their own terms, Davies and Russell make a poor case for banning pornography. Even if we accept their contentious argument that women really are beaten or raped or mutilated in the making of some underground porn films—surely it is these acts themselves that are abhorrent, and they are already criminalised. If the women are acting, they have no case at all. It would be

Davies and Russell insist that women only become involved in porn under duress—either because they have been coerced or because they have been conned. This, Davies insists, is true even when women may have willingly cooperated in a display of sexual exhibitionism. Even the 'Readers' wives' sections of magazines like *Escort* and *Fiesta* are presented as sources of 'damage' to the women who appear in them. Women's pictures, he alleges, are sent by vengeful men, and published without the woman's consent. *Fiesta* and *Escort* claim that this complaint is apocryphal, and that before 'Readers' wives' are published they insist on consent forms signed by the subjects of the photo and the photographer, and proof that the 'wife' is over 16. They claim that demand to appear is so high from willing women that the last thing they need to do is to collude in conning those who are unwilling. Of course, they would say that—but the same point is made from the mouths of a collection of readers' wives recently interviewed in *Options* magazine.

It may well be true that, apart from women who are thrilled by exhibitionism, most women involved in the porn industry are coerced in one fashion—they are coerced by poverty. But the truly damaging problem which needs to be addressed here is the pervasiveness of poverty, not the odd bit of pornography.

Even the spokesman for *Escort* admits that the majority of women working for the soft porn 'top-shelf' mags are trying to supplement their income support, and while many are disgusted at the thought of spreading their legs for a living, they are more likely to see the job as a source of income than damage. In a society where more than five million women have an independent income of less than £25 a week, it is unsurprising that

many women do resort to work they find degrading, disgusting and demoralising—whether the work be 'modelling' for porn mags or cleaning. The solution to their problems lies in providing decent jobs with decent wages—not outlawing the job of last resort. It is hard to see how banning porn will help women driven to pose by their poverty.

The 'pornography damages the women in it' argument is dishonest because it is a cynical attempt to hide demands for censorship behind concern for women. If the likes of Davies and Russell were primarily concerned about 'damage to women', you would imagine that the issue of pornography would be well down their agenda. For example, according to the Royal College of Nursing, there are currently 27 000 nurses and midwives in the UK suffering from back injuries sustained at work. Out of the current nursing workforce of 450 000, around 72 000 have had to take time off because of back injuries. These women are undeniably damaged by the work they do. Davies claims one example of a woman accidentally killed during the making of a porn film. In 1992, 589 women died in accidents in the home.

Seen in this light, the anti-porn campaigners concern for women seems badly misdirected. If they genuinely want to prevent further damage and injury to women, why concentrate on something which actually damages and injures very few, if any, women when compared with some everyday occupations.

Looked at in this way, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that anti-porn campaigners like Diana Russell, and the journalists who support their arguments like Nick Davies, are motivated more by their own distaste for particular images than by their claimed concern for the welfare of women in general. Their insistence that women are damaged in the making of porn is more an attempt to find a feminist justification for their opposition to sexual images which they personally find offensive. They are entitled to dislike porn; but they should not be allowed to dress up their personal distaste as an important political issue.

Insisting that women in pornography are the victims of violence, and calling on us to rally to their defence, is at root an attempt to sidestep the central argument: that demanding porn be banned is a dangerous step which legitimises a climate of censorship in society. Gloria Steinem may feel that the claims made by Russell and Davies are the strongest arguments yet against porn, but in fact they are no argument at all.



Whose advertising standards?

The censors are at it again—this time they have advertising in their sights. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has revised its rules, strengthening its code on 'offensive' adverts and warning particularly that race, religion, sex, sexual orientation and disability are beyond the pale. The ASA is concerned that the creative imagination is getting out of hand. They are worried that the shock-horror Benetton ads might set a standard.

According to the ASA, adverts are about more than selling products and promoting the interests of those who commission them. 'Adverts', said an ASA spokesman, 'should be prepared with a sense of responsibility to consumers and to society'. This apparently means more than keeping claims accurate—it now seems to include a responsibility to convey worthy messages. This may seem like a step forward—protection against racism, sexism and so on. But I am more inclined to see it as nothing more than a nineties version of bad old-fashioned censorship and control.

The ASA has displayed an increasing tendency to censor ads which it deems offensive—although its criteria seem rather bizarre. Last year Allied Dunbar had an ad featuring a shot from the bottom of an open grave banned, because it was deemed to be in bad taste. What is new about the latest structures is the explicit manner in which the ASA has tabled its agenda: to promote what the wise men and women of the authority consider worthy, and rule out that which they consider irresponsible.

The Independent Television Commission (ITC) has gone even further. In the same week that the ASA announced its guidelines, the ITC waded in to check the actions of food advertisers.

In an announcement that sounded—in content and in tone—like a B-movie parody of Stalinist propaganda, the ITC announced that in future food manufacturers will have to produce ads which conform to the message in the government's *Health of the Nation* strategy. This, you might remember, is the document which lectures us on the need to reduce our intake of fatty foods in order to reduce our risk of heart disease and cancer.

The commission edict states that advertising should 'not undermine progress towards national dietary improvement by misleading or confusing consumers or by setting bad examples, particularly to children'. It insists that advertising must not 'encourage or condone excessive consumption of any food'. Apparently this means that it would be OK to show someone eating a bar of chocolate, but not someone eating two. The one where Harry Enfield fills a shopping trolley with Dime bars has been cited as an illustration of the kind of ad that will be for the chop unless it is amended to indicate that the 'purchase was not for individual use'. Advertisers will be banned from encouraging children to eat between meals as this causes tooth decay, and advertisements for slimming products will not be permitted to address people under 18.

I found it almost scary that these comments were reported by the *Guardian* (and, for that matter, the *Times*) without comment, except from those who felt the guidelines did not go far enough. The only

paper that editorialised at the time against this blatant propagandising was the *Tory Telegraph*, which likened the restrictions to those imposed in the war, and observed that Britons will not put up with indoctrination. By the weekend the Sunday papers had sussed the potential for a 'nanny state tells us what to eat again' story. But even then, the main complaint was that the ASA and ITC are stupid and naive because they overrate the effect advertising has.

Only *Sunday Times* columnist, Stephen Armstrong, hit the nail on the head when he commented on the 'direct link between the British Board of Film Classification dragging its heels on giving *Natural Born Killers* a certificate and the long hard look that regulators are giving to controversial advertising' (29 January 1995). Got it in one! The reason that

Natural Born Killers caused the censors so much trouble was not its violence and brutality, but its unapologetic amorality.

Promoting moral lifestyles is a big concern for the government. It would like us to believe that if we led conventional heterosexual married lives, ate healthy food, worked hard for our wages and were responsible citizens then our problems would be solved. Banning images of unhealthy eating may seem unconnected to banning a celebration of anarchy but it is a logical step along the

same road. If you really believe our lives are influenced by screen images, it makes sense to control what appears on those screens. If you can reduce people's propensity to violence by censoring images of violence—and, despite the lack of any evidence, there is a general consensus that you can—then why can't you influence people's dietary habits by censoring images of 'unhealthy eating'.

The problem is that once you start a discussion about the morality of advertisements, it immediately raises the question of which moral standards the images should conform to. Are the preferred standards of the worthies who sit on the ASA or the ITC the same as ours?

I, for one, find the Benetton ads—which have apparently provoked this discussion—unremarkable. On the other hand, I think the latest advert by the Health Education Authority is wildly irresponsible. It is a picture of two middle-aged men holding hands, with a caption reminding middle-aged married women that they cannot be complacent about HIV because their husband may be having an affair with another man.

The number of women who are likely to contract HIV in this way is negligible—the number who are likely to be freaked out by such an advert is many times higher. But I can safely predict that nobody at the ASA will raise an eyebrow at the dishonesty and panic-mongering of this ad. After all, it portrays what they would consider a good moral message: sex outside marriage is dangerous, and adulterous buggery is doubly so.

Perhaps we should be encouraged to see that the establishment is now so shaky that it fears a mere Benetton poster or Dime bar ad will be sufficient to undermine Christian morals and prevent the government attaining its *Health of the Nation* targets. But it could make for some very boring advertisements.

The advertising rules sound like a parody of Stalinist propaganda

Forever enemy aliens

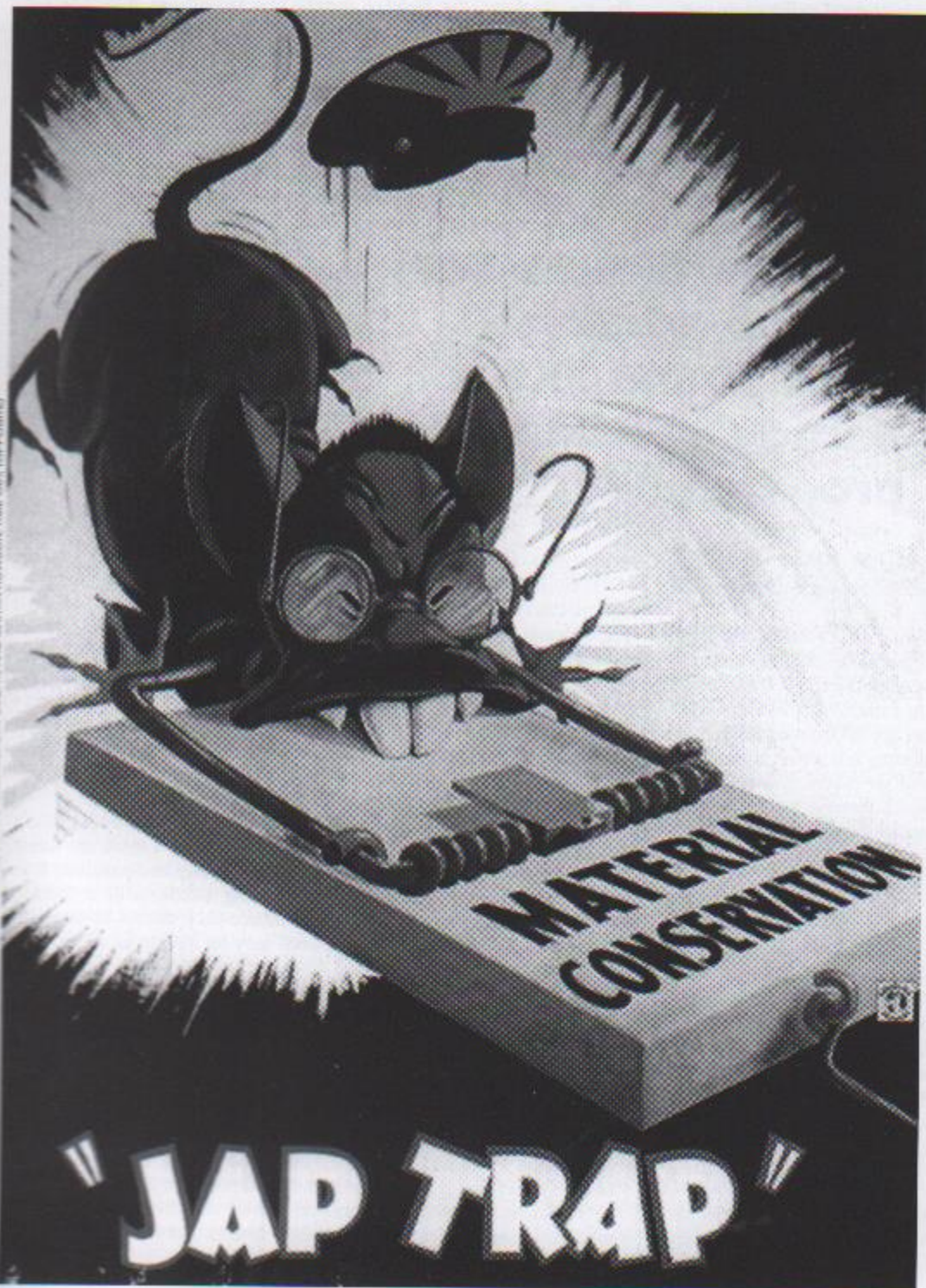
As the fiftieth anniversary of VJ-Day approaches, journalists and politicians in Britain and the USA still seem to be at war with Japan. Phil Hammond asks why

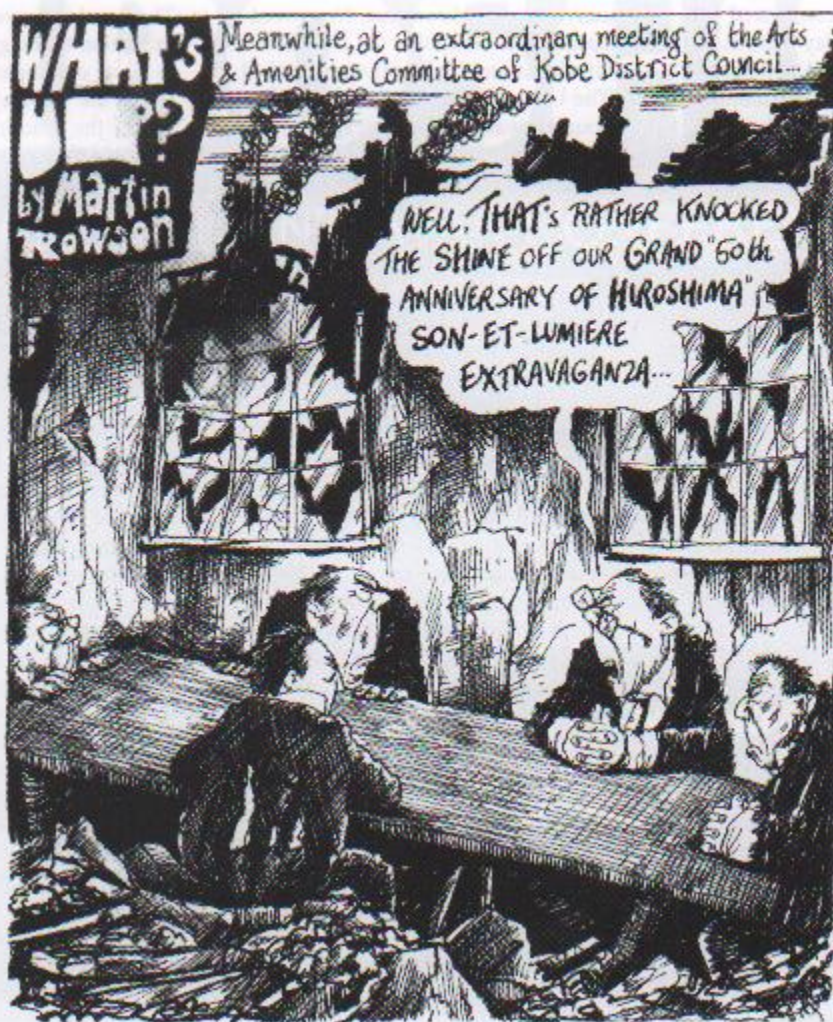
If you thought last year's interminable coverage of the D-Day anniversary was bad enough—the kind of media saturation that some dubbed 'Operation Overboard'—then be warned. You ain't seen nothing yet. Politicians and journalists have already waded in for this year's extended wallow in Second World War nostalgia. Amid the latest bout of anniversary fever, a clear distinction is emerging in the treatment of Germany and Japan by journalists and politicians. While there is more of a 'forgive-and-forget' attitude towards Germany, British and American commentators appear to be still fighting the war when it comes to Japan.

The agenda was set by John Major in January when he announced that, while for VE-Day 'the theme is reconciliation, a celebration of 50 years of peace in Europe and hope for the future', the VJ-Day commemorations 'will have quite a different theme' (Downing Street Press Office, 11 January 1995). In contrast to the spirit of reconciliation, peace and hope which is—officially at least—supposed to mark the end of the European war, August's Pacific war anniversaries will be characterised by a solemn remembrance of sacrifice.

The different tone of the two occasions is reflected by the government's decision not to invite any Japanese representative to the VJ-Day ceremonies, in contrast to the invitation extended to German chancellor Helmut Kohl to attend the VE-Day commemorations. The *Daily Mail* positively delighted in this decision, declaring that 'there is a huge difference in the way we are treating these once mortal enemies. Rightly so'. (6 January 1995) The *Mail*—which ran this story as a front-page item, placed it at the top of its editorial column, and carried a feature article by Geoffrey Wheatcroft on it—argued that 'John Major had no choice but to snub Japan'.

However, the stated reasons for this double standard do not make much sense. The least convincing argument is that Japan's wartime record is worse than that of Germany. As Air-Vice Marshall Sir Bernard Chacksfield, chairman of the Burma Star





Jap-baiting
1940s-style from
the US government
(left),
and 1990s-style
from London
magazine *Time Out*
(above)

Association, put it: 'I am a Christian, and I can forgive a lot. But the feeling among our veterans is that the Japanese in war were very different from the Germans.' (Quoted in *Sunday Times*, 15 January 1995) No doubt Allied prisoners of the Japanese had serious problems, but their treatment can hardly said to have been worse than the Nazis' extermination of six million Jews.

Incapable of remorse

The other justification for excluding Japan is the one offered by the *Daily Mail*: unlike Germany, which 'has done its best to atone' for the war, Japan 'shamefully...has still not found the honour or the honesty to confront its barbaric past' (6 January 1995). This supposed lack of an apology indicated to the *Daily Mail* that Japan 'still has an awful lot to learn about basic human decency'. A week later, the *Mail* carried an article by a former POW, who argued that: 'Apologising has never come easily to the Japanese. In the Orient, an apology means a loss of face and terrific humiliation. It is not a part of the Japanese psyche and perhaps it never will be.' (13 January 1995) Similarly, for the *Guardian's* Tokyo correspondent, Kevin Rafferty, the Japanese are 'the people without guilt'. As conclusive proof of his case,

Rafferty offered an anonymous quote from 'one Japanese': 'No, we don't feel guilt about the war—that is a Judeo-Christian concept.' (14 January 1995)

In contrast to this supposedly typical anonymous comment and these British press pronouncements on the oriental psyche, a survey carried out by the Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shinbun* found that 90 per cent of Japanese people think the war should not be forgotten, and 62 per cent think Japan has not compensated enough for the war (1 January 1995). As part of their international diplomatic campaign, Japanese politicians have fallen over themselves to apologise for the war during the past year—so much so that some Japanese MPs and Asian nationalists such as the Malaysian prime minister, Mohammed Mahathir, have told Japan to stop bowing and scraping to the West.

The Japanese attitude certainly seems far more contrite than that of the USA, which, far from apologising for the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in the fiftieth anniversary year, proposed issuing a special postage stamp to celebrate the event. The stamp depicted a mushroom cloud with the caption 'Atomic bombs hasten war's end, August 1945'. As one American commentator pointed out, it is hard

to imagine an equivalent Japanese stamp with a picture of a sinking battleship and the slogan: 'Japanese aviators achieve surprise at Pearl Harbor, December 1941.' (*International Herald Tribune*, 7 December 1994)

The real reasons for treating Japan differently from Germany are political, and have far more to do with international relations today than with what happened 50 years ago. Through their attitude towards this year's anniversaries, the American and British authorities are effectively re-running the war against Japan. This serves a useful role for the Western governments, at a time when an economically powerful and politically ambitious Japan is increasingly seen as their most dangerous rival around the world.

A race apart

In criticising Japan for its war record and its alleged failure to atone for the past, US and British commentators are strongly implying that their Japanese competitors cannot be treated as a civilised nation in the present. The message is that Japan is still a problem, a mysterious and aggressive nation not yet fit to be trusted to play the role of a global power. The flipside of this argument is that history is deemed to invest the USA and Britain with moral authority over Japan. The Japanese may have the industrial and financial might today, but the Anglo-Americans can still use the legacy of the war to assert that right is on their side. As Geoffrey Wheatcroft put it, quoting AJP Taylor: 'the British were the only people who went through both world wars from beginning to end'—on the victorious side, which was also the right side.' (*Daily Mail*, 6 January 1995). In the battle of the history books, the victors are always right.

The unequal treatment of Japan is underpinned by the routine habit of depicting the Japanese as a race apart; an 'oriental' people with a culture so different as to be incomprehensible to the Anglo-Saxon mind. Much of the coverage of the recent Kobe earthquake, for example, took the opportunity to suggest that the disaster revealed Japan's 'Asian soul', which apparently has more in common with the third world than the West (see page 16). The implication of such commentaries is that racial and cultural characteristics make Japan not only different, but inferior to Western nations such as the USA, Britain and Germany. ▶



In the differential treatment of Germany and Japan today there is a continuity with the kind of double standard which justified the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the first place.

While Allied propaganda during

The campaign for compensation is fronted by veterans but sponsored by the Foreign Office

the war was directed more against Nazis than Germans, the whole Japanese people as a race tended to be demonised. As one study notes, 'Western film-makers and publicists found a place for the "good German" in their propaganda, but no comparable counterpart for the Japanese' (J Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 1986, p322n).

Before and during the war, politicians and newspapers depicted the Japanese as a sub-human species, most frequently as monkeys. In July 1941, even before the Allies were at war with Japan, the famous British cartoonist David Low illustrated the racial difference between the 'Yellow peril' and the white powers, depicting a Japanese monkey playing eeny-meeny-miney-mo to decide which of the broad-shouldered Russians, Americans or British it should stab in the back first. A year later, one *Washington Post* cartoon drew a typical distinction between the atrocities committed by the two Axis powers: while Hitler alone stood on a map of Czechoslovakia, a monkey representing all 'Japs' mimicked the Nazi by stamping on the Philippines.

Not necessary

The pervasiveness of such poisonous images lent legitimacy to the dropping of the Bomb on the Japanese. As US president Harry Truman said at the time of the bombing, 'when you have to deal with a beast, you have to treat him as a beast'. Today's media coverage of the anniversaries may eschew such crude racial images, but the view of the Japanese as a people different from, and morally unequal to, Western nations is little changed. That is why Western commentators can continue to browbeat Japan about wartime atrocities while insisting that the atomic destruction of two Japanese cities and 200 000 Japanese lives was entirely justifiable.

The unquestioned consensus view among journalists and politicians remains that the Bomb saved lives by hastening the end of the war. The only debate in the West has been about just how many American lives would have been lost in an invasion of Japan. Shortly after last year's forty-ninth

anniversary of Hiroshima, *Newsweek* repeated the claim that the slaughter at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was justified: 'The US calculation, grimly momentous though it was, seems inescapable: an invasion of Japan would have been bloodier than bombing.' (29 August 1994) Thirty years previously, however, *Newsweek* was more circumspect, quoting the view of former president Dwight D Eisenhower, the wartime Supreme Allied Commander in Europe: 'The Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with this awful thing.' (11 November 1963)

The sense of Britain's moral legitimacy over the Bomb and the war is so ingrained that it is echoed even by writers who try to take a distance from the anniversary fever. The *Guardian's* political editor, Michael White, rightly set today's obsession with the war in the context of 'a backward-looking, heritage-minded society...where the past offers more comfort than the future' (14 January 1995). Yet even as he described Britain's attempt to monopolise the 'trade in moral superiority', White referred to the atomic-bombing of Hiroshima as 'a cost-effective life-saver'. 'They' commit atrocities and never apologise, while 'we' save lives (and cheaply) by atom-bombing them; no wonder Britain claims moral superiority.

Our man in Japan

The way that the British authorities want to use the wartime anniversaries to project a sense of moral superiority over the Japanese is summed up by the officially orchestrated campaign to win compensation from Japan for former British POWs. At the press conference to launch the government's anniversary year plans, representatives from three Far East veterans' organisations were on hand to offer bitter soundbites justifying the decision to exclude the Japanese, even though it is evident from the newspaper letters pages that their views do not represent those of all veterans. The campaign for compensation is being fronted by a few veterans, but sponsored by the Foreign Office, which sent Sir Kit McMahon to Tokyo last November to try to rescue John Major's plan for a compensation fund.

Media coverage of the POWs' campaign has been uncritical, with no questions asked about why a government not generally known for its concern for the welfare of pensioners should now make such a high priority of wartime reparations, 50 years after the event. Instead, the veterans' case has been widely covered by all the newspapers and television news programmes, most of which have gone beyond mere reporting to take sides with the POWs.

The *Sunday Express* even took exception to the government's decision to allow one Japanese diplomat to attend the VE-Day commemorations. Above the headline 'An insult to heroes', the *Express* carried pictures of the Japanese ambassador and Far East veteran Sid Tavender with the caption: 'This man represents Japan. He will be an honoured guest at the VE-Day ceremonies. This man was tortured by the Japanese. He will not be invited to the VE-Day ceremonies.' (22 January 1995)

'Tenko-style' factory

On the same day that the *Daily Mail* was devoting three quarters of its editorial page to the 'enduring shame of modern Japan', the *Daily Star* ran a front-page story which illustrated how the past is used to bolster a comforting sense of British superiority in an uncertain present: 'Life in our Jap factory is like Tenko.' (6 January 1995) The story detailed how workers at the Toyota car plant in Derby suffer under 'a Tenko-style regime'. In fact, many of the conditions described—speed-ups, having to ask permission for a toilet break or being phoned at home by your boss if you are off sick—are increasingly common in British workplaces, and are far from being peculiarly Japanese.

It is British employers who are responsible for some of the toughest working regimes. As a recent feature on 'The new slavery' in *Scotland On Sunday*, put it: 'Already tethered to their desks and computers for more hours than anyone else in Europe, British workers have now overtaken the Japanese in the amount of hours they give to their employers.' (8 January 1995) Sixteen per cent of British employees work more than 48 hours a week—the highest proportion of any European country. With an average working week of 39.9 hours, Japan is below the European average of 40.4 hours, while Britain now has an above average 43.7-hour working week. Presumably, this government-backed extension and intensification of our working lives is one of the reasons why Britain attracts Japanese investors; but it is evidently more comforting to imagine that deteriorating working conditions are the 'Tenko-style' imposition of Japan, and to remind ourselves who won the war.

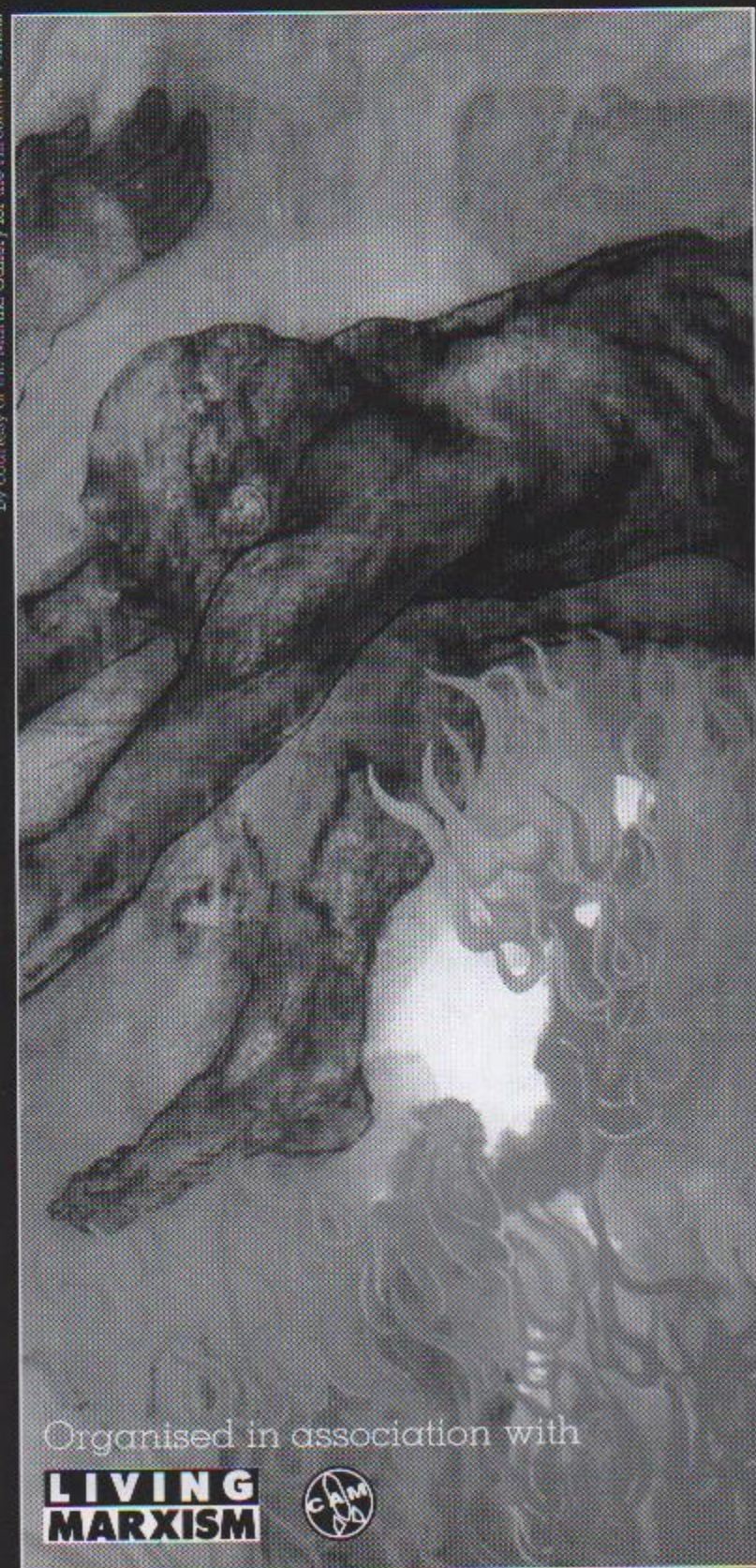
Phil Hammond is Research Coordinator of the London International Research Exchange, which is monitoring media coverage of the Second World War anniversaries as part of its *Images of Japan* project. The Exchange's report on media coverage of the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day, *History as News*, was published last June.

HIROSHIMA THE WEEK

INTERNATIONAL ANTI-WAR CONFERENCE

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By courtesy of the Maruki Gallery for the Hiroshima Panels



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Gloating at Ko

Western governments and commentators seized upon the tragedy of the Kobe earthquake as a rare opportunity to look down upon modern Japan, argues Daniel Nassim

The Western media coverage of the January earthquake in Kobe, Japan was in the worst possible taste. As the death toll climbed to more than 5000, there were the usual expressions of sympathy for the Japanese victims. But the underlying message of all the coverage was very different from the media treatment of something like the recent European floods. After Kobe, the dominant tone was one of gloating at the failure of the West's major international competitor to cope with the tragedy.

Western journalists and editors gatecrashed Japan's mass funeral in order to condemn the grieving nation. The commentary on the earthquake routinely described Japan as inefficient, overrated, corrupt and racist. You could have been forgiven for assuming that the Japanese had just perpetrated some terrible act against humanity, rather than being the victims of a natural disaster.

Envy of the world

Everywhere from the USA to Germany and Britain, much was made of the slowness of the Japanese emergency services in dealing with the effects of the disaster. Both the television news and newspapers described in detail how it often took hours for the Japanese rescue services to reach the scene of the disaster; and when they did eventually arrive they were often powerless to act—for example, firemen could not put out fires as water mains had been cut off by the quake.

One leading German liberal newspaper, *Die Zeit*, seized upon the failings of the emergency services in order to rubbish Japan's bid to join Germany in returning to the centre of world affairs. The paper quoted a German teacher who had lived in Japan for 20 years, and who clearly thought that Germany could teach the Japanese a thing or two about leadership. 'On the one hand we have

continuously been told how capable the Japanese self-defence forces are because Japan wants to play a bigger role in the UN; on the other hand, there is obviously a lack of quality leadership in a case of emergency....Here people have a contemplative relationship towards catastrophe.' (*Die Zeit*, 20 January 1995)

Meanwhile in Britain, the implicit message of media coverage of the crisis was that this could not happen over here. The British emergency services, supposedly the envy of the world, would react rapidly and efficiently to deal with any disaster.

Those of us who have to rely on the infrastructure of the British emergency services might see things a little differently. Even under normal circumstances, the under-resourced ambulance service and fire brigades are finding it increasingly difficult to operate efficiently. Getting emergency treatment in Britain today can often mean finding somebody who is prepared to give you a lift to the nearest casualty ward which has not been closed down yet, and then waiting for hours before you can be treated by exhausted medical staff.

It is hard to imagine how Britain could cope with a disaster on the scale of the Kobe earthquake—with 25 000 people injured, 300 000 homeless, major roads blocked and water mains severed. Even minor climactic changes seem to bring Britain's ageing infrastructure grinding to a halt. British Rail's notorious excuse for late-running trains—'leaves on the line'—sums up the way that Britain's transport system is stretched to the limit at the best of times.

The comparisons made between the Kobe earthquake and the one in Los Angeles a year earlier appeared more serious. All of the US commentaries in particular emphasised the fact that only 61 were killed in

California in 1994, while many times more died in Japan. However, important differences between the Kobe quake and Los Angeles were generally only mentioned in passing, if at all. Firstly, the Kobe quake was far more powerful. The difference between 7.2 on the Richter scale and 6.8 may not sound like a lot to the uninitiated but, because of the way the scale is calculated, it means that the Kobe quake was actually four times more powerful. Secondly, the Kobe quake was far closer to the surface than the one in Los Angeles. Finally, Kobe and the surrounding area is far more densely populated than the part of Los Angeles hit by its quake.

Much was made of the failure of hi-tech Japan to curb the impact of the quake. The message was 'they're not as clever as they think they are, these Japanese'. But all the evidence suggests that buildings constructed after 1981, when building regulations were toughened to insist on modern techniques, stood up to the shock well. The casualties were concentrated in poorer areas of Kobe, where people lived in traditional-style wooden houses with heavy tiled roofs. In Japan—like everywhere else—it is the poor who suffer disproportionately from such disasters.

Jumped-up Japan

Perhaps the most striking symbol of Japan's supposed technological impotence was the elevated section of the Hanshin expressway which was tipped on its side by the quake, and which appeared prominently in every Western news bulletin. Yet, as the *Economist* revealed, 'in many places it looks as though the ground had given under the flyovers, rather than that the earthquake had broken them. This is a common problem in coastal cities, which are often built on soft alluvium rather than solid rock' (21 January 1995). In so far as there was a technical ►



Shooting star

be's graveside

PHOTO: PRESS ASSOCIATION





deficiency, it was insufficient use of the available high technology rather than the failure of Japan's advanced techniques. Sections of the expressway which were fitted with special metal jackets to contain the force of the quake stood up well.

Every death was taken as confirmation that Japan is a backward 'oriental' state

The assumption underlying all the talk of Japanese inefficiency was that, whatever problems we might have, the West is still superior to the rest. The message was that while Japan may have the technological trappings of an advanced industrialised country ('trappings' which can run rings around most Western industries in world markets), it still cannot match the civilisation of the West.

Superiority complex

Every failure of technology to cope with the impact of the quake, every death beneath the rubble of Kobe, was taken as further confirmation that the Japanese have more in common with the third world than the Western world. The predominant Western reaction to Kobe was a revolting display of old-fashioned gloating at the suffering of a rival, dressed up as a critique of Japanese technology and cultural attitudes.

The notion that Kobe proved that Japan is a backward 'oriental' state rather than a modern civilised nation was generally an understated theme in the coverage, rather than a blunt assertion in the headlines. But some commentators did go further in spelling out the implication of the Western image of Japan.

The German papers suggested that Kobe proved how third world status would always be a natural attribute, unaffected by economic and social progress. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* declared that 'today Japan recognises the third world in itself and is shocked by the fact that it always existed' (19 January 1995). In the British *Independent* a comment piece by Peter Popham, an old Japan hand, expressed openly what his peers had all been implying:

'Just as the earthquake itself strips away Japan's Western veneer, revealing its Asian core and leaving it with the sort of massive death toll one would expect in a city of the third world, so the prospect of a fatal quake exposes the unchanged Asian contours of the Japanese soul.' (18 January 1995)

The extensive coverage of the quake by *Newsweek*, the American news magazine, included an essay on the 'End of the age of hubris'. It noted with satisfaction that the quake 'marks the end of Japan's superiority complex' (30 January 1995). *Newsweek's* comments point to the real issues that were at stake in the discussion of Japan's latest earthquake. For Western commentators, the important thing was not the earthquake and the suffering itself, but the fact that a powerful rival had been dealt a heavy blow, and that the Western nations had been afforded a rare modern opportunity to look down on Japan. This explains their gloating over the Kobe tragedy.

A desire to get one over on Japan also explains why the Western nations rushed to offer token post-disaster aid to a country as rich and capable as Japan. By presenting Japan as dependent on Western largesse, it could be made to look like a third world country rather than a global power. Again the British contribution to this debate was nothing short of farcical. A spokesman for the Overseas Development Administration criticised Japan for being slow to accept British help and particularly for holding up the despatch of a 15-member earthquake rescue team. The idea that Japan—with an economy over three times the size of Britain's, much more advanced technology and vast experience of dealing with earthquakes—should crave help from British pot-holders is a laughable display of national conceit.

'Send in the marines!'

The wrangle over aid from the US military, which still has large bases in Japan, was motivated by similarly cynical considerations. Bill Clinton offered help from the US military while praising the heroic efforts of US marines and American students based in Japan. His comments were broadcast round-the-clock on the American Forces Network radio station, which is widely listened to by English-speakers in Japan. The clear message was that Japan could not get by without the help and guidance of the USA—especially the American soldiers who have occupied Japanese soil since the Second World War.

Since Japanese officials understood exactly what the USA was doing, it was not surprising that they refused offers of help from the American military. 'We are quite willing to accept all donations in accordance with actual local demands', a foreign ministry official was quoted as saying. 'But we are continuing to determine what we cannot do and what we need to obtain from outside sources.' (*International Herald Tribune*, 21 January 1995)

The idea that Japan needed US financial aid to survive the impact of the quake turns the real economic relationship between the two countries on its head. Even the worst estimates put the cost of repairing the earthquake damage at less than two per cent of Japan's gross domestic product; and far from being seen as an economic disaster, the prospect of that reconstruction investment was welcomed as a boost to Japan's construction industry. Japan does not need a few dollars from the USA to survive an earthquake. Indeed it is multi-billion dollar loans from Japan that has kept the US economy afloat over the past decade.

Insecure West

Despite all of the criticisms and contempt shown for Japan, there was one aspect of the response to the earthquake that was widely admired in the West. The word that kept on recurring in commentaries on Japan was 'stoicism'. The Japanese people were apparently accepting all the privations that followed the quake with barely a murmur of complaint. Many Western journalists pointed out that, unlike the chaos which reigned after the Los Angeles quake, there were no reports of looting in Kobe.

Western commentators could not help expressing their admiration for the ability of the Japanese elite to maintain control over such a potentially volatile situation. As *Newsweek* argued: 'Despite the anger with officialdom, everywhere there were tales of politeness, perseverance and civility. Japan's tightly knit and remarkably durable society had been sorely tested—and held together.' (30 January 1995) The *Economist* reporter in Kobe noted that it was 'a curiously orderly disaster.... The 13 000 soldiers despatched to Kobe are not here to restore order, as they might be in many countries, but to help put out the fires and clean up the mess' (21 January 1995). The next logical question for the Western elites would seem to be 'why is it not like that in Los Angeles or London?'. In the minds of the insecure Western authorities, jealousy of Japan's ordered society vied with the attempt to gloat at Japan's supposed deficiencies.

It is an indictment of the Western media that it celebrates what is worst about Japanese society, while attacking its good points. The technological prowess and organisational efficiency that are so widespread in Japan should serve as an inspiration to us all. But the regimented character of society and the ability to suffer at the hands of the authorities without complaining is hardly a quality to be admired.

Additional information supplied by Matthias Heitmann.

Shooting star

The public lionisation of Private Lee Clegg reveals who has the upper hand in the Irish 'peace process', says Mark Ryan

The campaign to release paratrooper Lee Clegg shows that despite all the talk of peace in Northern Ireland, the Irish are treated with more contempt than ever. Clegg, who shot dead Belfast joyrider Karen Reilly in September 1990, has had support from large sections of the British establishment, including John Major and Prince Charles. The campaign for his release has turned him from a trigger-happy convicted murderer into a Christ-like victim of injustice. Rather than an embarrassment, his actions are a source of pride for his backers in the media, parliament and the army. Tory MP Anthony Grant has said that Clegg should be given a medal, not locked away.

When the killer gets all the sympathy and the victims are thought to have got what they deserved, it is difficult to be dispassionate. But looked at coolly, the Clegg case tells us much about the war that was fought in Northern Ireland and the 'peace process' which brought it to an end.

Lee Clegg can indeed count himself unlucky; most British soldiers who shot Irish people walked away scot-free. The security forces in Northern Ireland killed over 350 people in the course of the war. But Clegg is only the second British soldier to have served time for murder. In 1984 Private Ian Thain was jailed for the killing of Thomas 'Kidso' Reilly, a road-manager for the pop group Bananarama. After serving



The legend on this mural erected by Clegg's regiment reads: 'Vauxhall Astra—built by robots, driven by joyriders, stopped by A Company'

Meanwhile 18-year old Karen Reilly has been turned from a hapless victim of an army ambush into a legitimate target. First there was the story that the joyriders' car had crashed through a checkpoint, injuring one of the soldiers. In other words, Reilly and her fellow joyriders got what was coming to them. It turned out in court that this was a lie which all 16 soldiers on the patrol had conspired to concoct. Despite this perjury, the media continues to treat the lie as the truth. The papers then revealed that Reilly's father was IRA volunteer Kevin McGrillen, shot dead by the army in 1976 'in similar circumstances'. The implication was that Karen Reilly was just like her father, that violent behaviour was in the blood. If summary execution was good enough for him, then it was good enough for her too.

two years of his life sentence, Thain was quietly released from jail and rejoined his regiment.

For 25 years, the British authorities fought a war against the Irish republican movement while denying that they were fighting a war at all. Instead they claimed to be simply upholding law and order against Irish 'criminals'. In practice, however, the security forces and the judiciary operated as they normally do in war, killing and imprisoning the enemy, the IRA, and letting their own killers go free. The propaganda war in the media, designed to present Britain as peacekeeper and the Irish as criminals, was never allowed to interfere with the practicalities of fighting a dirty war on the ground.

Clegg is the odd man out. Initially, the shooting of the joyriders drew no more than the usual perfunctory police investigation. Even when the

lone RUC man on patrol with the paratroopers testified that everything the soldiers said was a pack of lies, the case remained closed. The soldiers even put up a mural in their barracks celebrating their heroic encounter with the joyriders—not the actions of men fearful of prosecution. One RUC officer testified that the file was marked 'Not for prosecution'; all the soldiers involved, including Clegg, continued patrolling. It was only 11 months after the killings that the case was reopened.

However it is the broader political context of the time that explains why Clegg was prosecuted.

In 1990 the British government reopened its long dormant line of communication to the IRA. For some time ministers had been aware that the republican movement was looking for an end to the war. Between the middle of 1990 and November 1993, the British government played a skilful diplomatic game, attempting to woo the republicans with suggestions of British concessions in exchange for an IRA ceasefire. It was a time for making some token gestures. The reopening of the case against Lee Clegg should be seen against this background.

At a time when the diplomatic war against the IRA being waged through the secret talks was so delicately balanced, prosecuting Clegg could help the British government to send the right signals to Sinn Fein and the broader nationalist community. The judiciary as a whole and the Northern Ireland Office have tried to stand by the decision to give Clegg a life sentence. However for many other sections of the British establishment, the sentence handed down to Clegg seems no more than an act of gross treachery.

In the past such a row would have been settled behind closed doors—the threat of the IRA forced the establishment to close ranks against its common enemy and to settle its differences in private. Now that enemy is gone, the cracks in the establishment have appeared, and the row is being held in public. Indeed it is significant that the public campaign for Clegg's release only started three years after his conviction and three months after the IRA ceasefire.

The debate surrounding the Clegg case shows who is running the 'peace process'. The British establishment may have lost its old coherence and fierce sense of solidarity. But the collapse of the republican challenge means that, however weak and incoherent the British authorities may be, they are still firmly on top in Ireland. Forget the Unionist hysterics about the British government 'selling out' to Dublin, and the IRA achieving 'victory by the back door'. The fact that the British establishment can publicly lionise soldiers who shoot dead Irish teenagers shows the real balance of forces today. Facing no serious opposition in Ireland, the British authorities retain the power to rewrite the history of the war—and to determine the future of the 'peace process'.

The collapse of the old opposition in Ireland makes the plight of the families of those killed by the security forces even more bitter. Irish nationalists were always vilified by the British media. But at least they had a movement of their own to sustain them and give a sense of direction. Now it is the families alone against the awesome fury of the British establishment. And in a few months, Private Clegg will be a free man.



Respectable rebellion in Middle England

How has animal welfare moved from being a fringe concern to a national focus for anti-government protest and finally turned into a government policy? James Heartfield investigates

Joyce D'Silva, the director of Compassion in World Farming stepped up the fight with Britain's veal trade about a year ago. Thousands of male calves are surplus to British requirements every year, because Britain prefers dairy farming, and so are shipped off to the Continent. Sheep too are exported live, and since the main ports shifted to exclusively human cargoes, animal exports have shifted to the smaller ports along the south coast.

In other times live animal exports would not have become so pressing an issue. Yet throughout the New Year animal welfare protests at Shoreham on the Sussex coast and Brightlingsea in Essex provoked large demonstrations and sympathy throughout the country. What's more, the government has bent over

backwards to meet the concerns of the protesters, promising to take the case to the EU. The way in which animal welfare was suddenly transformed from a fringe issue into a national concern provides a snapshot of the state of political life in modern Britain.

The animal welfare protests of 1995, like most radical activism today, began with a small circle of 'respectable' Middle England types. Joyce D'Silva was once a religious education teacher in Witham, Essex. Her co-workers in Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) had been a theatre director, a teacher, and a company director. The campaign used high-profile endorsements by actresses like Joanna Lumley, Penelope Keith and Julie Christie to publicise their concern.



Advertising for support, CIWF finds readers of the *Daily Telegraph* are most responsive. According to Mrs D'Silva, 'our readers are the sort of people who give to War on Want and Christian Aid. Funnily enough we don't do so well with the *Guardian*', putting the CIWF in the same advertising bracket as silk scarves and retirement homes. The CIWF started protests in Shoreham, where large exports of livestock were turned back. They were boosted by the campaigning of Joyce D'Silva's two daughters, who live in Brightlingsea, the port where the sheep exports were redirected.

Brightlingsea Against Live Exports (BALE) is a studiously respectable campaign. Its leaflets apologise in advance for the inconvenience to traffic, promising to keep disruption to a minimum. In Brightlingsea,

hundreds joined a multi-denominational open air service to pray for an end to live animal exports, where they were told by Baptist minister Ian Reed that they were 'lucky to belong to a community that cares'.

The big idea

The founder of Compassion in World Farming, Peter Roberts, himself a farmer, writes in the campaign's bulletin that 'there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come. Compassion in World Farming is such an idea'. It is true that the 2000 protesters on the evening of 20 January represent about a quarter of the population of Brightlingsea, but they were not really all there because of animal suffering. It might be the case that animal welfare protests have taken the country by storm;

it does not follow that the people who support them share the motives of the original campaigners.

Protests like those at Brightlingsea have become a focus for an outburst of frustration at a whole variety of issues quite apart from concern for sheep. According to John, a middle-aged protester, 'we don't want those lorries through here—they're a danger', while two sixth-formers, Alan and Katie, pointed out that the wharf was rather narrow and the freighters 'played havoc with our dinghy sailing'. BALE's publicity leads on the issue of health hazards created by lorries passing front doors. Neil, a forty-something teacher on the march in January, condemned the 'evil, disgusting trade', but he could not remember having felt strongly about it before. ▶



Like so many people that support the protests around the country, the marchers at Brightlingsea are angry about lots of things today. Beyond the closed circle of activists, the animal protests have become a vehicle through which a great many people can vent their anger—against the government, over economic insecurity, or any other contemporary concern. This is why

The animal welfare issue seems to hover above mere interests in the ether of moral righteousness

many more people sympathise with the protesters and their cause without having any substantial attachment to the rights of animals.

The way that the animal protesters' appeal works is in the first place a model of respectable activism. The real success of the animal protests is that they represent no vested interest whatsoever. The issue they raise is so distant from the practical concerns of people in their everyday lives that it seems to hover above mere interests in the ether of moral righteousness.

What is new is that this kind of respectable politics, normally associated with the middle aged and middle class, is embraced by a much wider audience than before. The appeal of the moral high ground extends to young and working class people as well. It is not difficult to see why. Conventional politics is mired in corruption and disgrace. All the traditional political ideologies stand discredited, whether they are left-wing or right-wing.

Any issue will do

The Labour Party, despite its success in the polls, has gone out of its way to eschew any belief in anything. No political principle is so grand that Tony Blair will not dump it in the hope of impressing the press. The Conservatives' political programme is even more empty, consisting of little else than trying to find the revenue to fund the tax cut they hope will get them re-elected.

The result of this political impasse between left and right is that hostility towards the government is immense, but there is no means to express it. Labour's lead in the polls—fluctuating between 20 and 40 points—shows how unpopular the government is, but it does not mean anyone feels genuinely enthusiastic about Tony Blair.

The scale of bitterness people feel towards the government means that anger at the Tories can blow up over a variety of issues, like the Child Support Agency, corruption or the privatisation of the railways. It is not quite that any issue will do, but any question that catches the government out immediately appeals to the vast numbers who are repulsed by it. These days, if a prisoner escapes, there are demands that the Home Secretary must go; and if a live calf is exported, the cry is for ministers with farms to resign.

The ideal focus for this kind of multi-purpose anti-government protest is a non-threatening issue which does not provoke real conflict in society and is consistent with the interests of the chattering classes. Opposition to live animal exports fits the bill. Animal welfare protests stand out as principled actions that nobody could disagree with.

Not football hooligans

Like the protests over the M11 link road before them, animal welfare protests range the greedy exporter or developer against the selfless and respectable campaigner. It is a morality tale that invites everyone to join in the condemnation. Supporting the protesters has a cathartic effect. Everybody's unvoiced frustrations combine with the argument.

Throughout the confrontation between the protesters on the one hand and the exporters, police and government on the other, the powers that be have given way at every stage. Shoreham convoys have been turned back and then stopped, the Brightlingsea MP has pleaded with the port authorities to stop. A government that stood up to the miners, the Soviets and the IRA seems to have melted away in the face of a few hundred animal-lovers.

Behind the pattern of one concession after another is the underlying fact that the government is devoid of moral authority, the one commodity that the protesters have in abundance. Contrary to all experience, it is the government that stands for sectional interests while the protesters enjoy the support of the mass of people.

However, while the animal welfare issue might embarrass them, it does no lasting damage at all to the government or the authorities. The moralism of the animal welfare protests might be a focus for anti-government sentiment but it does not challenge reactionary ideas. In fact it can reinforce them. Perhaps the most remarkable part of the story of the animal welfare protests then is the ability of the authorities to accommodate their concerns.

Invariably the protesters insist on the respectability of their cause.

At Brightlingsea, demonstrators were outraged at their treatment at the hands of the police. They were shoved about and filmed on police video cameras, while police officers hid their faces and numbers. John called them 'mindless thugs', adding 'we're not poll tax protesters'. According to Joyce, the police from outside were diabolical—'do we look like football hooligans?'

However, while it might have been a new experience to the good people of Brightlingsea, this was a police operation more restrained than any football supporter or even a poll tax protester could expect. In a letter to his constituents, Brightlingsea's MP, Bernard Jenkin, defended their right to protest and added, 'I very much regret conflict between protesters and police' (21 January 1995). Hardly the sort of condemnation reserved for a 'rioter' or a 'hooligan'.

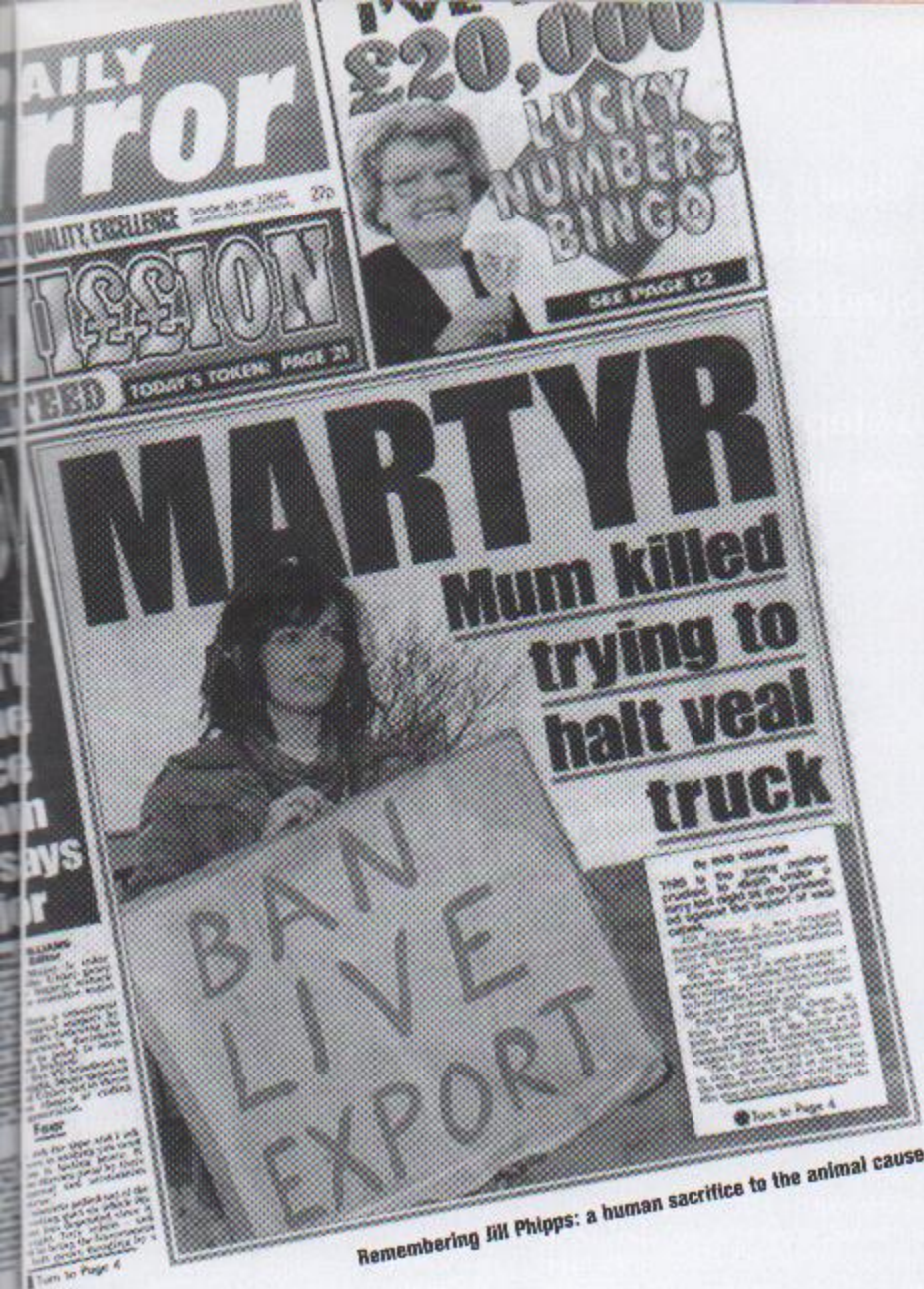
Since then the death of Jill Phipps, crushed under a lorry carrying veal calves for export at Coventry airport has provoked a national outcry. She was mourned as a martyr even by the press, and exports from the airport were suspended immediately. Miners killed trying to stop coal trucks in the 1984-85 strike were only told that they should not have been there. Of course, protesters who stoned police in Plymouth the next day were condemned—but only as outside agitators, in contrast to the respectable protesters.

'Our caring attitude'

The Tories can readily, if not honourably, concede the argument to the protesters because at the end of the day it does not matter. Characteristic of protests today, animal welfare is not an issue that will rock the status quo. In the very nature of its ethereal moral value, banning live animal exports will do no harm to the Tory government or the vested interests it represents.

In fact animal welfare is so malleable a proposition that it can easily be reformulated in the terms the Conservatives prefer. In his letter to Brightlingsea, Bernard Jenkin explains patronisingly that the matter is complex because it is 'tied to our membership of the European Union'. 'Unfortunately', he continues, 'few of our European partners share our caring attitude towards animals'.





Animal love

The celebrated British love of animals is one element in the romantic rural idyll that appeals to an overwhelmingly urban society. The more Britons live in towns, the more important the countryside has become. Nature and the countryside provide an emotional refuge to city-dwellers. As the south-east becomes more congested, the remaining undeveloped pockets take on a mythical quality that few farm workers would recognise.

Animals especially are a peculiarly British love for the simple reason that Britain is the country that has been industrialised for the longest, and where the highest percentage of the population lives in developed urban areas. It is only when people no longer have to raise animals to live that they could raise them as pets.

One dairy farmer, Martin Bazeley, expressed his incomprehension at the sheer illogicality of the animal welfare protests. Is it really worse that male calves are raised for slaughter than that they are shot at birth, as some of the protesters suggested, he asked. Of course, to a farmer, for whom cattle are work to be done and a product to be sold, it was an argument that made no sense. But Bazeley also understood that it was not a rational argument on the protesters part, but an emotional empathy with the captive calf.

'People are so anthropomorphic', he complained. Looking at animals as beings with feelings that can suffer is a thoroughly modern and urban prejudice. Children have pets to teach them responsibility and how to care for others. We often carry the fiction that animals are like people into adult life—giving them names and talking to them.

In reality pets are being used just as much as livestock are—but for emotional rather than physical needs. Most societies have an injunction against cruelty towards animals in the same way that they forbid sexual relations with animals. It is not for the animal's sake, but for the human's. Gratuitous cruelty to pets is considered degrading, because it reveals disturbed emotions.

But to equate a farmer with a child that tortures the cat is missing the point. If a man were to keep a calf crated in his garage for fun, he would be cruel. But if a farmer keeps 100 crated in a barn, he would be a businessman.

Thousands of people all over the country empathise with caged animals. But at the same time more and more people are being caged. Britain has the highest prison population in Europe apart from Turkey. These are human beings, locked up for 23 hours a day and fed slop. Even the most terrible criminal is still human, but a calf will only ever be a dumb animal.



For the protesters the animal welfare issue creates a moral framework that establishes their self-righteousness. But it can just as easily create a moral framework for the self-righteousness of the Eurosceptic Tory. In fact the Conservative Party has been active on the issue longer than many of the protesters.

Tories like the maverick ex-minister Alan Clark have been promoting animal rights in much the same spirit as Joyce D'Silva—as a classical Home Counties prejudice about the superior ways of the English. Preoccupied with its own dwindling support, the Conservative government has been trying to make animal welfare into a stick to beat other EU countries with.

The Tories argue that they banned live exports in the seventies, only for the Labour government to overturn the ban. 'Since then', writes Bernard Jenkin, 'the single European market, which makes no distinction between live animals and other produce has opened up'.

Those filthy foreigners, with their disgusting eating habits and cruelty to animals....This is the prejudice that the Conservatives have introduced into

the animal welfare issue. Not that it was difficult. The whole point about animal welfare as a cause is that it creates a pulpit from which to lecture others.

Roberta Hyland spent a night in police cells after intervening to save her son from a beating at Brightlingsea. Effortlessly she asserts, 'Continentalers are cruel: look at the way they treat their dogs'. It is a petty prejudice of little consequence, but it is an indication of the way that moral outrage suits reactionary sentiment.

Roberta Hyland's outlook is not so different from Alan Clark's or even William Waldegrave's. It is also an example of the way that a protest like the animal welfare campaign can go full circle. It starts with a thoroughly respectable issue pursued with apparently radical tactics; then the issue gets taken up by everyone as an uncontroversial vehicle for protest at the government. But because the issue never was a big challenge to the status quo anyway, the cause can even be adopted by the government and given the stamp of British conservatism.

Additional reporting by Alec Turner

James Ferman, director of the British Board of Film Classification, is Britain's top censor. These days, however, he is more interested in the new school of media education than in imposing old-fashioned bans.

Andrew Calcutt asks whether this is a step forward for the consumer or a more insidious way of controlling what we are allowed to watch

I am the last of the old-fashioned regulators. By the year 2000 close regulation of the media is not going to work. I don't think anyone who succeeds me is going to be able to keep a grip on all the media through pre-vetting because things are flying into our homes from all directions, from beyond our shores. We will have to teach kids how to survive in a media-saturated society.

James Ferman, 64-year old director of the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), is convinced that old-style censorship ('pre-vetting') is being left behind by new media technologies such as satellite TV, dial-a-video and the information superhighway. It is his view that 'within the next 10 years the problem is going to be not the material, but the way people use it'. Teaching the correct use of media is Ferman's new priority. In 1994 he played a prominent part in lobbying the Department for Education to put media studies back on the national curriculum.

The BBFC is only one of a whole family of regulators which monitor and control what we can see on radio, television, film and video. These include the Broadcasting Standards Council, the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, the BBC's new in-house watchdog, the Independent Television Commission and the Advertising Standards Authority. All are tightening up their rules on what we can and cannot watch.

The BBFC is the oldest and most influential of these institutions. Its director probably enjoys more legal powers than any other censor in the

Western world. 'There's no doubt, I suppose, I do act like a Big Brother', he admits.

But Ferman is no stereotypical censor. He is critical of 'media hype' about screen violence and 'simplistic' politicians who want to outlaw everything they dislike, and says he would expect *Living Marxism* to produce a serious discussion, not a trivialisation of these complex issues. In October 1994 the BBFC banned Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* after press reports that the film prompted copycat killings. Ferman investigated the claims and found them wanting. 'We talked to local police officers and the FBI, and did a trawl of the American press, and checked the French case too. We found media hype but no valid connection, so we decided to act on our original intention.' *Natural Born Killers* was eventually released on 24 February 1995, with an '18' certificate (and the 150 cuts made in America).

Velvet glove

Last year, too, Ferman opposed David Alton's amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill on the grounds that it would impose excessive and unworkable restrictions on video. His mildly sceptical stance on the alleged effects of screen violence has more in common with cultural studies professors than religious fundamentalists such as Alton or Mary Whitehouse. In the two years since the death of James Bulger, the BBFC director has stood out against waves of hysteria over violent videos. His record as a TV director (*Emergency*

Ward 10, Armchair Theatre) and his own experience of the censor's blue pencil (in 1961 his TV documentary on Northern Ireland was first banned and then cut by 17 minutes before transmission), appear to have immunised him against the excessive zeal associated with his profession.

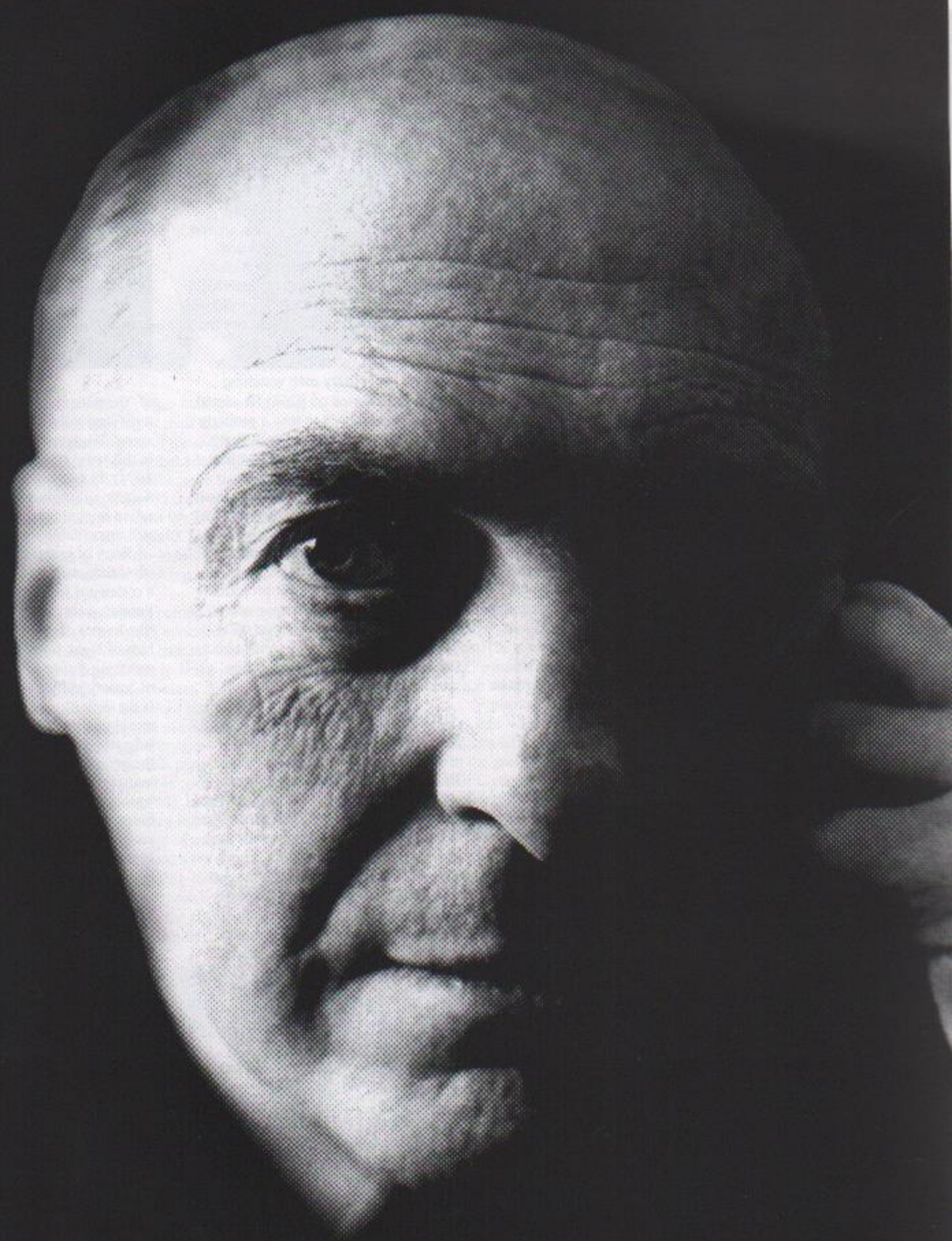
Do not, however, be fooled. Ferman has a velvet voice but he's no soft touch. This is a sophisticated operator who now eschews old-fashioned censorship in favour of more subtle methods of regulating what we can and cannot see. The methods which are emerging under his direction are less explicit but more extensive than traditional techniques of 'close regulation'. Even in our own homes, we will be increasingly subjected to the insidious influence of the BBFC and other regulatory bodies.

Ferman speaks the new language of empowerment, as he outlines how we are moving away from a situation where everybody has to trust the BBFC's judgement, to one where the BBFC can help people acquire 'the information and the understanding' necessary to make judgements for themselves. Yet behind the fashionable vocabulary, the BBFC operates on the basis of a set of elitist assumptions which are as old as censorship itself.

The BBFC director takes it for granted that he and his peers know what's best. They have superior knowledge which must be imparted to the rest of us, and they assume the right to decide how much media we can cope with. But who asked the board to impose its 'understanding' on the rest of us? Certainly not the viewing public. ▶

PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

Interview with



th the censor



The BBFC is as unrepresentative today as it was in 1978, when even the government-sponsored Williams committee on obscenity and censorship described it as 'a self-perpetuating private body answerable to no one for the way it conducts its affairs'.

The director, together with the president (the Earl of Harewood) and the two vice-presidents (Lord Birkett

Ferman insists that the BBFC must be allowed to take decisions on our behalf

and Monica Sims, former controller of Radio Four), was appointed by private arrangement between the Home Office and the film industry. The deliberations of the BBFC are made public only at the director's discretion. Examiners are chosen by the director from the ranks of the professional classes. The current intake includes psychologists, social workers and teachers. It all adds up to a combination of old-fashioned paternalism (Lord Harewood's pedigree is Eton, Cambridge and the BBC) and the 'caring professionalism' of the nineties, with Ferman as the link man between the two. For all the changes he has made, the BBFC is still an example of the great and the good deciding what's best for the rest of us.

Ferman insists that there is a particularly pressing reason why the BBFC must be allowed to take decisions on our behalf today: women and children are at risk, and he has to intervene to protect society's victims.

'There are certain kinds of images and certain kinds of contexts for images which are worrying. Sexual violence is the most obvious. There is very good research evidence that men are turned on by certain kinds of sexual violence towards women. It plays to the old Adam and I'm afraid a lot of men still have the thrill of the chase in them...apparently 40 per cent of males are vulnerable to this kind of media influence.'

The case for media 'effects'—the alleged link between screen images and human behaviour—remains entirely unproven. Yet Ferman takes it as read that 'apparently 40 per cent of males' may not be able to control their hormones or their reactions to visual stimuli. So he takes it upon himself to do it for them.

A couple of examples typify the condescending attitudes and working practices which are current at the BBFC, where every film is scrutinised and many are edited with what *Evening*

Standard critic Alexander Walker once described as 'gynaecological precision'. Ferman told me about the changes he had made in Abel Ferrara's *Bad Lieutenant* (1992) before issuing it with an '18' certificate. 'In the rape on the altar scene there were two very sexual shots. We didn't want it to be sexually exciting, so we took them out.'

In *Censored: The Story of Film Censorship in Britain*, Tom Dewe Mathews explains how Ferman altered a scene of graphic sexual violence in *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1991). At one point Ferman inserted a later shot: 'The principle we followed in cutting the scene was to cut out the masturbatory pleasure. We were worried about the sexual turn-on element for solitary men watching at home.' (Quoted on p268) He aimed to 'get the audience to take a properly moral view about the violence that's shown on screen'. The idea that the audience could, as director John McNaughton intended, simultaneously enjoy a violent sexual fantasy and feel uncomfortable about doing so, has no place in Ferman's low opinion of the man in the multiplex.

By such meticulous but profoundly unscientific methods, Ferman sets himself up as the authority on what people can get sexually excited about, and on who can masturbate, when and for how long.

Satanic abuse

The BBFC director was keen to explain his role of 'moral guardianship' in the protection of children from dysfunctional homes. 'We can't censor things for adults on the basis that some adults will be irresponsible with their children. On the other hand, I think too many children are seeing "18" videos as a matter of course. They live in dysfunctional homes where their parents don't care what they watch. That is worrying and it must affect general standards. If "18" doesn't really mean "18" in a significant minority of homes, then maybe some adults will have to give some things up. This is why video is slightly more strictly regulated than cinema, because cinema has a gatekeeper at the box office and video doesn't.'

Note that, despite his initial claim of non-intervention in adult viewing, Ferman reserves the right to judge parents, to define families as 'dysfunctional', and to regulate home videos accordingly. But what gives this self-appointed 'gatekeeper' of family morals the right to make such judgements? The record shows that the BBFC's expressions of concern for children have often acted simply as another pretext for controlling the viewing of adults. In 1992, the board refused a certificate for the release of *The Exorcist* on video because



PHOTO: WARNER BROS

of 'the potential use of the film in terrifying children as a part of "Satanic" abuse. We know that videos are used in this way' (*Guardian*, 18 February 1994). In fact we now know that Satanic ritual abuse was a figment of urban mythology; yet *The Exorcist* is still unavailable for home-viewing.

Wary of criticism that 'dysfunctional' has been used as a codeword for working class families, Ferman went out of his way to include 'the homes of media people where kids of eight, nine, ten are all upstairs watching *Robocop*' as symptomatic of 'emotionally dysfunctional' families. If the definition of families in need of moral guardianship is so flexible, what is to stop the BBFC expanding it further, perhaps to encompass households where unattended children watch violence on the news? Since Ferman is not answerable to the viewing public, it seems that only he can define the limits of interference in our private affairs.

Imbued with elitism

Current working practices at the BBFC are imbued with elitism, old and new. Ferman's plans for media education involve more of the same, except that the next generation of professional intervention will be even more intrusive.

The education programme is still at the research-and-development stage. 'We are working with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children', explained Ferman, 'on a series of short leaflets which will be in retail shops and video libraries. The leaflets will ask "Do you know what your child is watching?", "Are you able to talk to your children about what they see?", "Do you think you ought to?". On a fairly ordinary level for ordinary people—life problems and how you deal with them'.

The leaflets are the practical expression of Ferman's submission to the 1994 parliamentary inquiry into video violence and young offenders, in which he argued that 'in the end, it is



Can watching a video turn you into a natural born killer? (Above left) Will Henry: *Portrait of a Serial Killer* make you go blind? (Above)

up to adults to police their own viewing and the viewing of their children'. It might sound as if the dulcet-toned director is saying that adults should be treated like adults, with the right to choose what's good for them and their children. But when the BBFC director says 'it is up to adults', he really means it's up to us to do as he suggests and to 'police' our viewing according to his rules.

The reasoning behind the Ferman strategy for media education is that 'ordinary people' lack the maturity and independence to make informed and responsible choices. As he told the *Evening Standard* last year, 'most people ensure that medicines and alcohol are kept out of the reach of children. Yet few parents grasp the need for comparable controls on TV or video' (6 June 1994). In his submission to the parliamentary inquiry, Ferman highlighted the role of media education in teaching people to stop doping their children with the plug-in drug of screen images: 'The need now is for a serious attempt to educate the public about their own responsibilities...we are going

to have to teach parents how to exercise responsibility.'

In Ferman's eyes, it seems, parents have not yet reached the mental age where they can be trusted to use the remote control without supervision. With media proliferation undermining the old gatekeeping techniques, new methods of supervision are required. Media education is the foremost of 'the other ways of control' which Ferman says the BBFC is 'trying to depend on'. Unlike the gatekeeping censors of yesteryear, the methods of control in the BBFC's media education programme can reach right into our homes.

Ferman believes that 'everybody' can benefit from media education. From the cradle to the grave, no one will escape the BBFC education programme. All children will be taught that 'violence on screen isn't real', despite the many studies which show that most children of about five pick up this distinction as a matter of course. 'By 14, 15 we can begin tackling their sexual experiences', he says, 'the lies that pornography tells them, and that

mutual relationships are really about mutuality'. Is this media or moral education? Ferman readily admits that 'it certainly will be connected with moral education'.

Media studies originated as an attempt to enable students to decode messages in screen images. Ferman's plan is to incorporate media studies into the broadcasting of moral messages, as a modern, secular form of religious education. No doubt the BBFC will decide which media images are consistent with the designated thought for the day.

The BBFC director denies that his 'consumer advice' will be obligatory. But, as he told the select committee of MPs, he is at ease with the idea that 'we are probably at the last gasp of the rights-based society...about to be overtaken by the society that acknowledges duties and obligations'. In short, this means that the right of adults to watch what they see fit will be abrogated in favour of the parents' duty to submit to the code of appropriate viewing prescribed by the board. An unnamed BBFC official admitted as much to the *Daily Mail*: 'parents who refuse to toe the line could be made to feel like drink drivers—people who are beyond the pale.' (13 April 1994)

Instead of old-style censorship, this is control by moral censure: censure-ship.

Of course Ferman denies being elitist—that would be vulgar. But his starting-point is that adults cannot cope with being bombarded by media images, unless they are schooled throughout their lives by professional educators. Spreading the gospel that only the professionals can save us from ourselves, and teaching the viewing public not to trust its own judgement—these are the debilitating lessons of the Ferman strategy for media education. ●

Regulation rules

The BBFC was set up in 1912 by the cinema industry itself, in an initially successful attempt to forestall direct control of films by the government. For 70 years it existed in a legal limbo—its only official role was to advise local councils on the suitability of films for public exhibition.

In the early 1980s, against a background of moral panic over video nasties, the BBFC became a statutory body. The Video Recordings Act (1984) charged the BBFC with classifying all video works, and those video/computer games which contain 'human sex, violence to animals or humans, or human genital nudity'. Trafficking in uncertificated works became a criminal offence.

BBFC director James Ferman recently told the parliamentary select committee for home affairs that the provisions of the Video Recordings Act are now applied more strictly. He calls it 'classifying for the real world'.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) awarded still further powers to the board. In classifying videos for home-viewing,

the BBFC is now obliged to consider 'any harm which may be caused to potential viewers (including under-age viewers), or, through their behaviour, to society, by the manner in which the work deals with sex, violence, horror, drugs or criminal behaviour'. A late addition to the act empowers the board to reclassify videos if the original classification is no longer deemed appropriate. The BBFC must present an annual report to parliament, and those who disagree with its decisions may appeal to the divisional court. The act also allows trading standards officers greater flexibility in tracking down illicit material.

Ferman has welcomed the introduction of jail sentences for trading in uncertificated videos, and he supports the recent Court of Appeal decision endorsing the entrapment of retailers suspected of hiring or selling videos to under-age customers. He is lobbying for ID-cards for teenagers, and for the strengthening of the 'deprave and corrupt' provision in the Obscene Publications Act. Although Ferman has said that the days of 'close regulation' are numbered, the BBFC shows no sign of relinquishing any of its wide-ranging legal powers. Film critic Alexander Walker recently described the board as 'in effect, if not yet in name, a part of criminal law and an arm of the Home Office'.

Behind the hysteria about an Islamic threat to the West, the French and other Western governments are backing a bloody war against the Algerian people. Robert Hughes reports

A fundamental confusion

Algeria has become the front line in the supposed war between Islam and the West. 'If Algeria's fundamentalist rebels overthrow its military government, as they probably will, some implacably bitter people will take control of North Africa's biggest country', warned the *Economist* last summer. And worse was to come: 'This may help fundamentalists to come to power elsewhere. For a time there will be a trans-Mediterranean cold war; perhaps, in flashes, a hot one.' (6 August 1994)

What is particularly worrying to Western commentators is that the Islamic opposition in Algeria is not only anti-Western, but irrational, apparently motivated by dark forces which 'we' cannot comprehend. After all, as Ronald Payne noted after the Christmas hijacking of a French airliner, the West 'cannot win an anti-terrorist war against suicide bombers burning with faith' (*European*, 6-12 January 1995).

But what is so unfathomable about the Algerian conflict? And, when it comes to relations between the West and Algeria, just who is threatening whom? There is nothing particularly mysterious about the causes of the war in Algeria. But the facts have been buried under a mountain of hysteria about the 'Islamic threat'. The truth is that for more than three years the French and other Western governments have backed the Algerian regime in a brutal war against its own people.

Algeria won independence from France in 1962 following a bloody eight-year conflict which cost a million Algerian lives. But by the end of the 1980s, the nationalist project of the National Liberation Front (FLN) had reached the end of the road.

The FLN regime's attempt to build a strong, independent country was curtailed by Algeria's continuing subordination to the world economy. In common with other third world countries, the Algerian economy was dependent on export sales of its resources. Oil and gas provided 97 per cent of Algeria's export earnings. By 1987, after a global collapse in oil prices, 87 per cent of those earnings were being eaten up by interest payments to Western financiers.

President Chadli Benjedid embarked on a massive programme of austerity and market reforms—'Chadli's perestroika'. This met with the approval of Algeria's foreign creditors, but led to a further dramatic fall in the living standards of ordinary Algerians. By 1988 unemployment had reached 60 per cent for young Algerians. Even the most basic foodstuffs became scarce and could only be bought on the black market at inflated prices. A chronic housing shortage meant massive overcrowding.

The resentment of young Algerians erupted in major riots in October 1988. It took the army several days to regain control, and then only after killing 500 people. Chadli attempted to contain popular anger by rapidly introducing political reforms. Opposition parties were legalised for the first time.

The extent of disaffection from the ruling FLN was revealed in local elections in June 1990 when a majority of seats were won by the recently formed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The legitimacy of the FLN had rested on its leadership of the heroic struggle against the French and its promise of economic prosperity to come. But this meant little to the majority of Algerians who had been born after the war, and who could see no future except empty stomachs. The pauperisation of Algerians at the hands of Western banks made a mockery of Algerian independence.

The vote for the FIS did not mean that Algerians thought that a theocracy was the answer to their problems. Instead, the FIS filled a political vacuum. It expressed opposition to both the Algerian regime and its Western backers, at a time when the West was humiliating the whole of the Arab world through its destruction of Iraq in the Gulf War. In January 1991 half a million people marched in Algiers in support of Iraq.

After several delays and army crackdowns, the first round of elections to the national assembly took place in December 1991. The FIS won 189 of the 231 seats decided, requiring only 27 of the remaining 199 seats to win an outright majority in the second round.

But the second round never happened. The army commanders decided that things had gone too far. In January 1992 the Algerian armed forces took control and launched a massive crackdown. Over 10 000 FIS supporters were interned without trial in concentration camps in the southern desert. The FIS was outlawed. FIS leaders called for calm and urged people not to respond to army provocation. But things could not be contained so easily. After an initial lull there were riots and gun battles. Armed groups began to organise to take on the army. The war had begun.

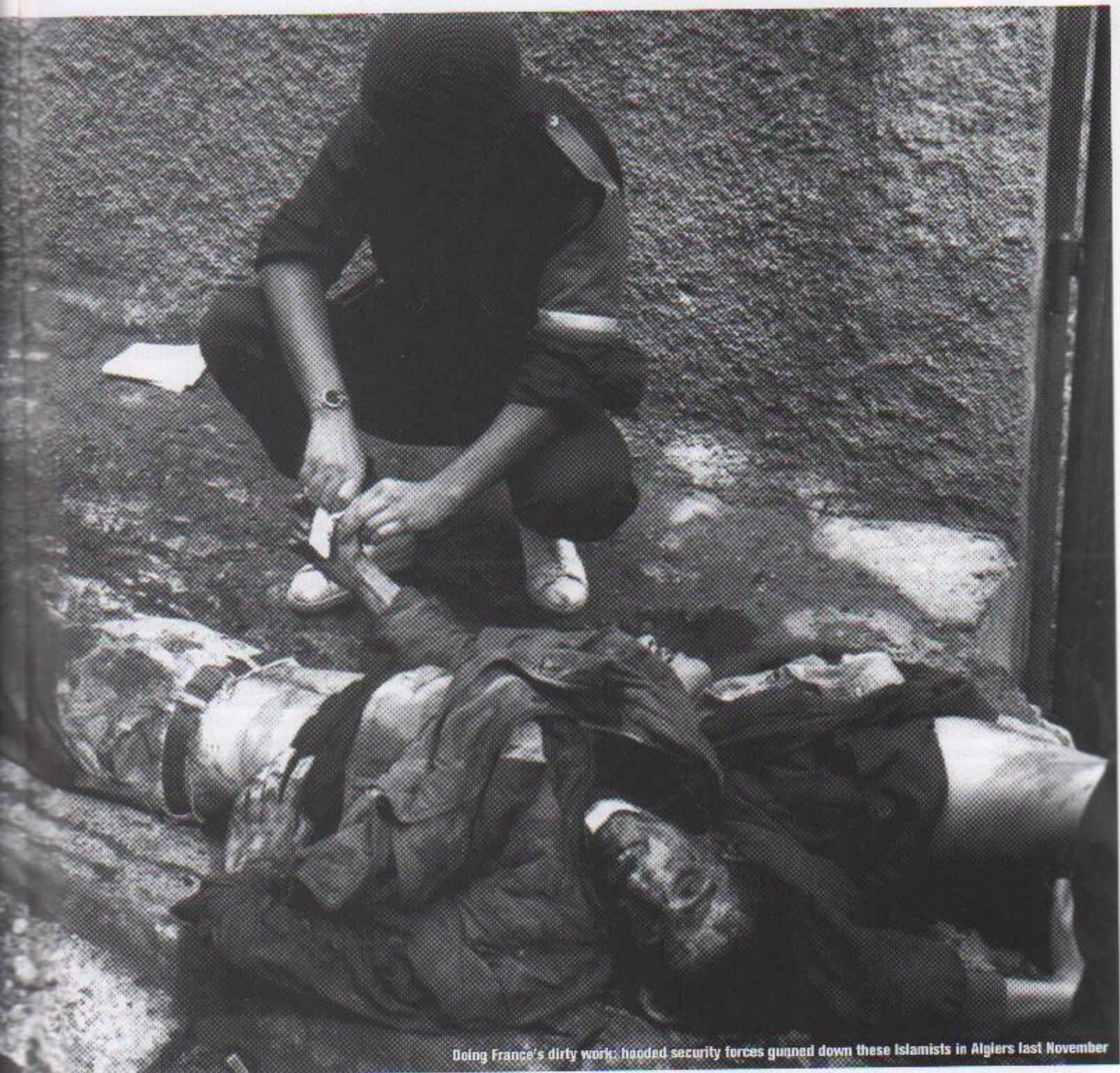
This is a war that until recently attracted little media coverage. It has only hit the headlines when Europeans have been killed or when a particularly gruesome atrocity, like the January car-bombing that killed 42 people in Algiers, has been attributed to Islamic fundamentalists. Anybody reading the reports would have the clear impression that the government had adopted an essentially defensive posture,



under siege from Islamist terror groups picking off government forces and civilians at will.

The reality is that the Algerian government is responsible for massacring thousands—not only Islamist activists but friends, family or sympathisers, or those with no connection with the FIS at all. Army policy includes the destruction of whole villages in reprisal for Islamist attacks. The government rules by terror, in a grim echo of French rule during the FLN's own war of independence. Little wonder the regime is now known as 'Hizb Fransa' (Party of France).

In the words of Professor Monique Gadant of the University of Paris VIII, 'the so-called "security" forces use exactly the same methods as those branded "barbaric" [when used] by the fundamentalists. Summary executions, torture



Doing France's dirty work: hooded security forces gunned down these Islamists in Algiers last November

and even throats slit and the public exposure of corpses' (*Middle East Dialogue*, 19 May 1994).

A recent report by Amnesty International detailed some of the government's grisly methods (*Algeria: Repression and Violence Must End*, 25 October 1994). The security forces have shot hundreds of people in retaliation or as an alternative to arrest. Tens of thousands have been detained under emergency laws. Special courts presided over by anonymous, masked judges have passed over 1100 death sentences.

State prisoners are held incommunicado for weeks or months after arrest and routinely tortured. Torture methods include the 'chiffon' (partial suffocation with chemical-soaked rags); the use of blowtorches and drills; the extraction of toenails and fingernails; electric shocks;

suspension by the wrists in contorted positions for long periods; sexual abuse with bottles and sticks; beatings, death threats and mock executions. Confessions extracted under torture are routinely accepted in court. The regime has tortured scores of Algerians to death.

Amnesty also documented other activities of the security forces—the burning and mutilation of bodies, sometimes in front of the families of the victims; throat-slitting and decapitation of men, women and children; maiming by severing of genitals and limbs. The army has also taken to hanging bodies from trees, *pour encourager les autres*.

Until September 1994 the Algerian government insisted that the war had only produced 4000 casualties. Then, as a prelude to talks with

the FIS, the government upped its figures to 10 000 dead. But in December 1994, *Le Parisien* disclosed figures from a secret Algerian army report stating that almost 35 000 had died in the first 10 months of 1994 alone. Current casualties are estimated at 800-1000 per week.

Against this bloody background, the reaction of the FIS is more noteworthy for its relative moderation than for its brutality. The actions of the FIS leadership have often belied its blood-thirsty image. The Islamists are not even responsible for many of the attacks for which they are blamed. For example, the televised assassination of President Mohammed Boudiaf in 1992 was immediately put down to fundamentalist terror. In fact, Boudiaf was killed by his bodyguards, probably as a result of a feud within the regime. ►

For the French elite, the war is not merely a question of what happens in Algiers, but of what will happen in Paris

From the start, the FIS has tried to contain popular anger. Its leaders have repeatedly expressed their willingness to work with the West, in particular voicing their appreciation of the call for negotiations from the USA. The aim of the FIS has never been to create a revolution, but to achieve a stake in power. Violence was only a reaction to government repression. Once violence broke out, the FIS aimed to use this as a lever to pressure the authorities to negotiate. The initiative for talks has constantly come from the FIS. Even the bogeymen of the Armed Islamic Group, responsible for the Christmas Air France hijack, have recently expressed their willingness to negotiate a ceasefire.

The key factor in sustaining the conflict has not been fundamentalist fervour, but Western intervention. Rather than being the innocent bystander threatened by Islam, the West has played a full role in the war from the start. Without support from its Western backers the Algerian regime would have had to come to some accommodation long ago.

France has played the leading role in orchestrating the war against the FIS, and was almost certainly directly involved in organising the 1992 coup that subverted the elections. Various reports have stated that Algerian interior minister General Larbi Belkheir visited Paris twice between the FIS victory in the first round of elections on 26 December 1991 and the coup on 11 January 1992, promising that on his return he would sweep the Islamist militants from the streets.

Shortly after the coup France's then foreign minister, Roland Dumas of the Socialist Party, visited Algiers to tell the junta that its 'policies of restoring the authority of the state and economic reform' were 'courageous'. France has supported the regime economically, politically and militarily. France led the way in winning agreement from Algeria's creditors in the IMF, World Bank, EU and elsewhere for the rescheduling of debt and the advancement of fresh loans. This Western aid to the junta has amounted to well over \$20 billion since the 1992 coup.

There is intimate cooperation between the French and Algerian military and intelligence services. As the war has progressed the Algerian security forces have become more and more an adjunct of the French military. Indeed it seems more than a coincidence that the current army chief-of-staff Mohammed Lamari, along with the heads of military security and the gendarmerie are all former officers in the French army. Regular secret night-time flights from Rennes airport in Brittany have supplied the Algerian regime with French military equipment, including a large number of helicopter gunships with infra-red vision and thermal sensors to hunt down Islamist activists in the countryside at night. The French military are training helicopter

pilots at Le Luc, near Toulon. The Paris weekly *VSD* reported in November that 50 French military advisers were operating with the Algerian armed forces.

Following an attack on the French embassy compound in August 1994, 1500 French paratroopers flew into Algiers with two plane-loads of equipment. This was more than enough to guard the French embassy and consulates. Rumours circulated that the paras were also there to provide personal protection for the junta. While having access to Algerian intelligence, the French also operate their own monitoring systems. A French spy ship sits just off the Algerian coast monitoring all radio traffic—not just from the Islamist groups, but government communications too. French spy planes patrol Algeria 24 hours a day. Spying is also coordinated through the French embassy.

The Christmas Air France hijack made clear that Algerian sovereignty no longer exists in practice. It is normal procedure that the government of the country where the plane is located takes responsibility for resolving a hijack. However, although the plane was hijacked in Algeria, France made it clear from the start that it expected to run the show. France criticised the Algerians for refusing to allow French diplomats to negotiate from the control tower. The French pilot refused to cooperate with the Algerian authorities and kept the aircraft doors locked in order to thwart any attempted rescue by the Algerians. 'We insisted forcefully that the Algerian authorities should not allow a bloodbath in Algeria and expressed our strong desire to get the plane back', disclosed French foreign minister Alain Juppé. When the Algerians delayed, French prime minister Edouard Balladur phoned Algerian president General Liamine Zeroual with his orders. Within two hours the plane was on its way to Marseille.

For France, Algeria is far more than a foreign issue. Until 1962, Algeria was not merely a colony, but a department of the French state. Even today, the French political class automatically assumes that France is responsible for what happens in Algeria, and that what happens in Algeria will have serious repercussions for the domestic stability of French society. Hence the last vestiges of Algerian sovereignty have disappeared as the French have moved to take control of the crisis.

For the French elite, the war is not merely a question of what happens in Algiers, but of what will happen in Paris. 'We do not want to meddle in Algeria's domestic affairs', says prime minister Balladur, 'but we have the right to tell them, since a large Algerian community lives on our territory, that we look forward to the return of civil peace on Algerian soil'. In these circumstances it is not surprising that interior minister

Charles Pasqua has been to the fore both in formulating France's Algeria policy and conducting a crackdown on immigrants from north Africa within France. A recent *Le Monde* cartoon equated Islamic fundamentalism with Aids. The implication is that the immigrant community will be the carriers of the Islamist virus into the heart of France.

In fact Muslims in France show little interest in Islamic fundamentalism. A recent opinion poll in *Le Monde* showed that fewer than 10 per cent wanted a FIS government in Algeria. If anything, it is the harassment at the hands of the authorities which will turn Muslims against France.

The hysteria about the 'Green Peril' of Islam has much more to do with the insecurities of the French authorities than with any real threat from fundamentalism. After all, if France's rulers were confident about their hold on society, there would be no need to worry about the loyalties of immigrants (or of the French). Like the rest of the Western political elite, the French authorities are dogged by self-doubt and a loss of direction. They command little respect from the wider population because they have no solutions to the problems of contemporary society. It is hardly surprising that they see fundamental threats around every corner.

While the French are in the front line, other Western powers appear more relaxed about events in Algeria. The USA has criticised France's hardline approach as the barrier to a negotiated settlement. The US government has maintained extensive contacts with the FIS, and repeatedly called on the Algerian authorities to open a dialogue. In turn, the supposedly anti-Western FIS has hailed the USA for its 'objectivity and maturity'. Despite the killing of over 70 foreigners by Islamic groups, there has not been a single attack on a US citizen or US interests.

But US intervention has little to do with a desire for a just peace in Algeria. Washington simply wants a settlement that will enable it to extend its influence at the expense of the French, and to protect the multi-billion dollar contracts which US corporations have recently signed to exploit Algeria's oil and gas fields. Although Washington has criticised France for backing the Algerian military, US intervention has also stirred things up. The US supported the coup and has quietly provided support for the regime. At the same time, however, US contacts with the FIS have given it something to fight for, in the belief that it can play off the USA against France.

The yearning of ordinary Algerians for a better life has been suffocated by a brutal war and a sordid contest for Western sponsorship between the regime and the FIS. The first step towards a real solution must be to end all Western interference in Algeria's affairs. ●



The British way of death

In one of the most famous and oft-repeated clips in British TV history, the middle class satirical show *That Was the Week that Was* paid tribute to President Kennedy after his death in 1963. The traditional song poking fun at the week's events was replaced by a melodramatic ballad. David Frost took a break from rocking the foundations of the establishment and became a spokesman for BBC values, putting on his sincerest face to deliver a speech on the meaning of mortality. He explained how on the day of Kennedy's assassination, hundreds had died in an accident in America, yet we would remember the one death and forget the others. In death, as in life, we are not equal, he concluded.

This of course is a familiar concept to those of us who have grown up since those early days of television. 'Japanese earthquake kills hundreds—blonde British model safe' is just the latest variation on the theme. It is indeed accepted that in death, as in life, some are more British, more socially important, more equal than others.

When it comes to these cynical calculations, nothing surprises me. There is no shortage of examples of innocent people slaughtered to suit the purposes of the powers that be in Westminster and Whitehall. And there is no shortage of journalists prepared patriotically to ignore these uncomfortable facts. In keeping with this tradition, recent commemorations of the Holocaust chose to overlook the British government's refusal to bomb supply lines to Auschwitz, or its rejection of thousands of Jewish refugees, let alone its silence on the subject of the persecution of the Jews, a silence which it disingenuously tried to justify on the grounds that raising the subject would encourage popular anti-Semitism.

For the British, experience of death camps was restricted to the troops who arrived at Belsen and the secondhand accounts of foreign survivors. The whole issue of the Holocaust is inseparable from the smug sense of moral superiority that is perpetrated through the national myth of a people's war against fascism—a myth that was consciously created during the war, and has formed a core element of what it means to be British for the generations born since. Whenever a mass grave is shown, the nation gives itself a pat on the back.

The establishment's true feelings were revealed, quite unself-consciously, by Richard Dimbleby in another historic broadcast—more famous even than David Frost's—which he delivered from Belsen in April 1945, shortly after its capture by the British army. The broadcast was shown again as part of the recent TV Holocaustfest, introduced in suitably reverent terms by Jonathan, who managed to pull his head out of Prince Charles' arse for long enough to explain to us that the importance of the piece lay as much in his father's performance as in the events he described. As I say, I'm not usually

surprised by this sort of thing, but Dimbleby's remarks—hardly off-the-cuff, after all—were genuinely shocking. Reflecting on the horrors surrounding him, he snapped: 'This is what the Germans did, let there be no mistake about it, did deliberately and slowly to doctors, authors, lawyers, musicians, to professional people of every kind.'

Of course, there is a long tradition of patriotic British anti-Nazism, which stresses the 'respectable' and passive victims. The authorities liked to play down the Jewish aspect. The left version, as espoused by *Picture Post* in the thirties, liked to contrast Jewish Nobel prize-winners to the Nazi philistines who were forcing them into exile. Both versions put forward a flattering picture of Britain as a haven of civilised values. Only the other day, Paul Johnson wrote a commemorative piece that concentrated on singing the praises of famous Jews who enriched our culture.

All the same, it's hard to comprehend the mentality of a figure like Dimbleby. One eye firmly on posterity, well aware of the importance of the subject, he writes a script for broadcast to tens of millions of people via the BBC. Faced with thousands of naked corpses, he chooses to see doctors, authors, musicians, lawyers, professionals of every

kind, and takes the trouble to distinguish them from the rest. Understandable, though, for a man in his position, confronted by a crime against professional humanity.

Much has been written on the subject of the Cantona incident, most of it biased and ill-informed. After the initial crucifixion of the great man, attention has shifted to the 'problem' of the hostile nature of spectators. Matthew Simmons, the Crystal Palace fan alleged to have provoked the fiery Frenchman, has been accused of shouting foul and racist abuse, but he strongly denies this. According to his version of events, he shouted, 'Off you go, Cantona—it's an early shower for you!' and pointed to the dressing room. As an eye-witness myself, I can vouch for this. Although I was too far away to hear the exact words used by Mr Simmons, his meaning was plain from his gestures, and was typical of the general response of Palace supporters.

When Cantona reacted incautiously to Simmons' remarks, it is true that the crowd voiced its disapproval, but reports of howling mobs with faces twisted in hate were well wide of the mark. Lip-readers will have no trouble in verifying the responsible nature of the advice offered to the hot-headed protagonists. 'Steady on, Eric!' and 'Enough's enough, chum!', cried those spectators sporting United favours, while Palace enthusiasts urged Mr Simmons to 'Cool down' and 'Don't stoop to his level!'. I hope that this will be the last we hear of the matter. ●

'Japanese quake kills hundreds—blonde British model safe'

The speed with which Mexico's economy has gone from 'boom' to bust exposes the underlying weakness of the world economy, says Andy Clarkson

The market goes down Mexico way

Just before Christmas, US financial experts were going wild about the prospects for the 'newly emerging markets' of Latin America in 1995, encouraging anybody with some spare capital to invest it south of the Tex-Mex border. But before Wall Street's financiers could carve their turkeys, the Mexican Bolsa (stock exchange) had crashed, and they had to watch the value of their Latin investments tumble by some \$20 billion.

The sudden rise and fall of the Mexican economic 'miracle' is a story of global capitalism today; a system in which speculative gambling has overtaken productive investment, PR hype substitutes for economic analysis, and instability is just about the only thing you can count on.

Incapable of tackling the huge task of rejuvenating the stagnant American economy, investment analysts have been desperately casting around for any sign of life elsewhere in the world market. For much of the 1990s, Wall Street's finest have focused on what they generously call the 'emerging markets' of Latin America, depicted as dynamic areas of growth in America's backyard. Latin America, they eagerly told investors, was the 'comeback kid' who had staged a remarkable recovery from the debt-ridden days of the eighties and was now producing annual economic growth of three or four per cent. The venture capitalists went for the bait, and American investors were responsible for \$45 billion out of the estimated \$60 billion that flowed into Latin America in the early nineties.

By April 1993 the *Amex Bank Review* was arguing that Latin America was pioneering economic recovery among the lesser developed countries (LDCs), 'with direct investment rising from a low point of under \$4 billion in 1986 to an estimated net flow of close to \$14 billion in 1992'. Indeed, Amex believed that the future for Latin America looked even brighter than for the newly industrialised states on the Asian side of the Pacific Rim, because 'Latin America is enjoying large amounts of investment while the Asian countries are now the major borrowers'.

There is, however, an important difference between Asia and Latin America in this respect. In countries like China and Taiwan, serious money (much of it Japanese) is being invested

on a long-term basis in establishing new industries and services. By contrast, the mainly US funds that have been flowing into Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Chile have been almost entirely short-term speculative investments.

Systematic economic development can only happen when foreign investment brings in new production plants, research facilities, plus all the accompanying infrastructure (transport, telecommunications, etc). This is commonly known as direct investment. If sustained over a long enough period, the economy can begin self-generating industries. This has been the experience of the Asian tigers like South Korea and Taiwan.

Foreign investment confers fewer lasting benefits when it is in the form of speculative short-term financial transfers which are used, not to create productive outlets, but to buy shares in existing companies, stocks and bonds and other pieces of paper. These transactions are known as portfolio investment or 'hot money', and account for a large proportion of international dealings today. (Indeed the official figures, quoted by sources such as Amex, tend to underestimate the extent of portfolio investment, since a financial investment of more than 15 per cent of a company's shares is typically reclassified as direct investment.)

Asset-stripping

Most of the investment that Wall Street poured into Latin America has been hot money looking for a fast buck. The lure that Latin American regimes dangled to entice the money markets was privatisation. A rash of sales of state-owned concerns throughout Latin America attracted the financial sharks from Wall Street, the City and the Bourse. They were drawn by the prospect of buying up whole industries at rock-bottom prices, closing down the companies, and selling off the equipment at a big mark-up. This practice, usually called 'asset-stripping', was hardly the basis for building sound economic growth in Latin America.

Even if you examine foreign direct investment trends in Latin America, the signs have not been good. Foreign finance has recently been moving away from investment in Mexican manufacturing industry, towards

building big shopping malls which can sell American-made goods to Mexico's rapidly expanding population of 85m.

Of the new foreign direct investment that Latin America did secure in the early nineties, more went into raw material extraction or tertiary services than into high-grade manufacturing activity. The small industrial base that has been created by foreign investment in the tax-free *maquiladora* zone on the US-Mexican border accounts for only eight per cent of all foreign investment in Mexico. Even this evidence of industrialisation-on-the-cheap is deceptive; the *maquiladora* economy is dominated by 'screwdriver' plants paying unskilled Mexicans a pittance to assemble kits for US corporations.

The overwhelmingly speculative character of foreign investment in



Latin America meant that the economic 'recovery' of a country like Mexico was always fragile and vulnerable to outside pressures. Yet, although some more sober commentators had begun to raise doubts over the past year, the US capital markets retained their high-pitched enthusiasm for investing in Latin American LDCs. For those who wished to see the reality rather than the hype, it was plain that the fundamentals of Latin America's economy were far from healthy. As a spokesman for the Mexican finance house Grupo Moneda conceded in October, 'the political situation is tense, the economy is still not strong and companies are not reporting good results' (*Financial Times*, 29 October 1994).

When the crash finally happened just before Christmas, the US and Western financiers all turned on the Mexicans, blaming the government for devaluing the peso and the Zapatista guerrillas for destabilising things. Yet most of Mexico's leaders are Harvard and Yale-educated men who did everything according to the Wall Street book. Moreover, they did not receive the slightest whisper of criticism from US financiers until the crash finally

happened. Indeed, right up to the end, the money men were proclaiming Latin America to be the best bet for the smart investor in 1995: 'Latin nations are creating a powerful new trading bloc for everything from software to trucks' (*Business Week*, 5 December 1994). The embarrassing reverse that followed soon afterwards reflected the out-of-control character of international capitalism and the USA's loss of grip, not the incompetence of the Mexicans.

Nafta in tatters

In the past, as in the Depression of the thirties, it was said that when the USA sneezed the rest of the world caught a cold. A poor country like Mexico was merely an offshoot of the US economy, dependent on the whim of the mighty dollar. Now things have changed. Latin America remains reliant on foreign investment, but the stagnation of the US economy and the frailty of the US financial system mean that, today, when Mexico catches a cold, it is likely to give it right back to Wall Street. The problems in the American economy that encourage Wall Street investors to look abroad for investment outlets also make the USA more susceptible to foreign reverses.

In January 1994 the USA launched the North American Free Trade Area (Nafta), to unite the American, Canadian and Mexican economies in a trading bloc. The Clinton administration also backed Mexico's application to join the OECD, commonly known as the rich man's club of nations. In December 1994, at the Miami 'Summit of the Americas', the US government announced that Chile would join up with the Nafta trio in 1996, with the ultimate objective of making the entire hemisphere (except Cuba) a regional trade bloc by 2005. But just one week after Miami all of these US-sponsored initiatives were in tatters because of the Mexican financial crash.

The Mexican crash placed a question mark against America's status as a major power in the world economy. 'We have a strong interest in the prosperity and stability of Mexico', said Bill Clinton on 11 January, as he told the US Treasury to prepare to dole out another tranche of credit to shore up Mexico's free-falling peso. *Business Week* agreed that 'faith in the Americans' own financial system would be damaged if Mexico were allowed to slide into financial chaos' (16 January 1995).

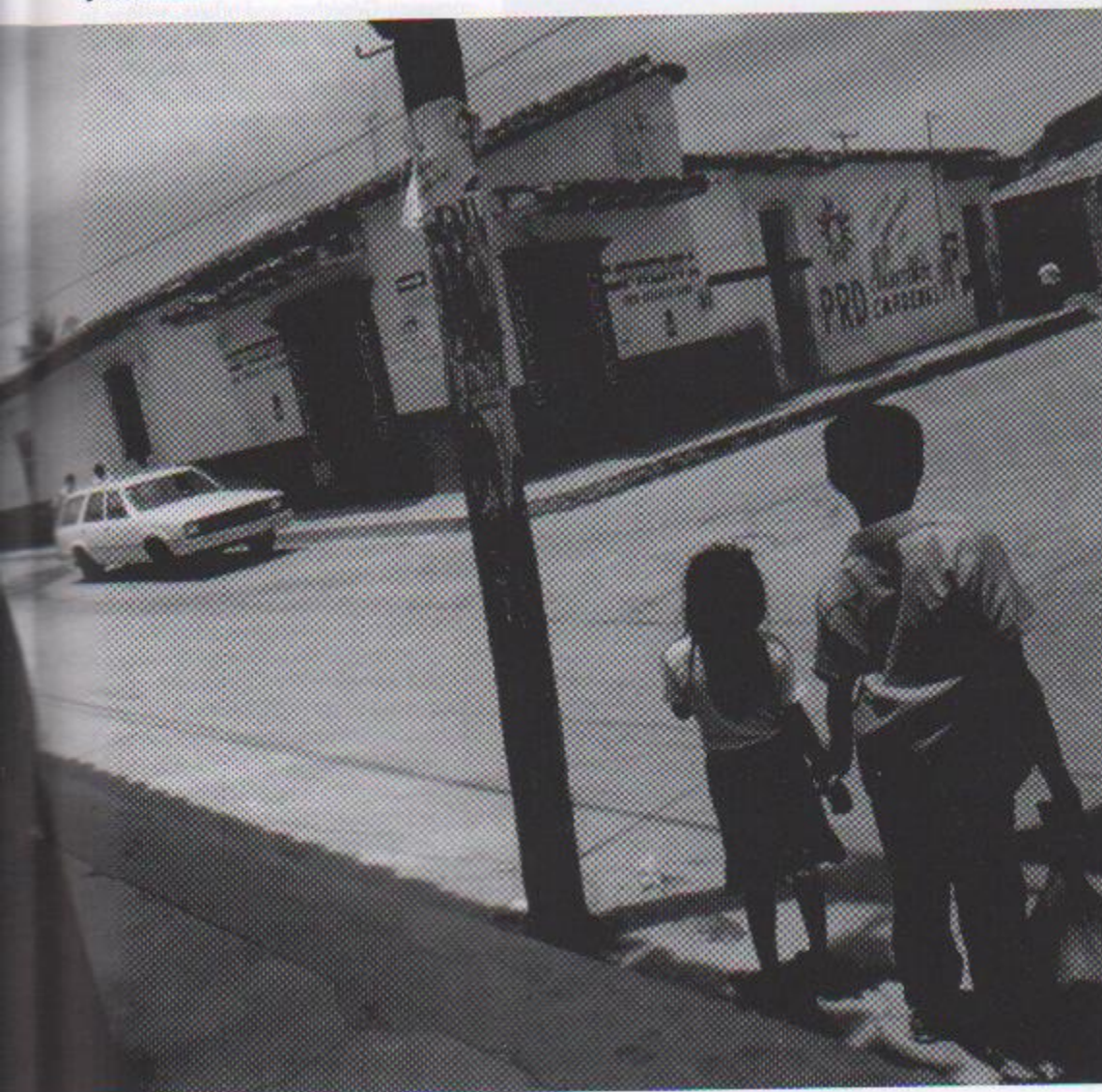
Yet, despite the importance to the USA of resolving the Mexican issue, the US authorities had great difficulty in getting their act together. The problems which the Clinton administration faced in cobbling together a multi-billion dollar rescue package for Mexico, in the face of opposition from the Republican-dominated congress at home and a lack of enthusiasm from major financiers abroad, served only to confirm the extent to which Washington has lost its grip.

The grass isn't greener

The financial crisis in Mexico has highlighted the instability of the major capitalist economies today; when the Bolsa crashed, the repercussions were not only felt in Latin America and the USA, but in Canada and several indebted European countries—Sweden, Italy, Spain, France and Belgium. The crisis has also exposed the hollowness of the notion that 'emerging markets' around the world can miraculously rescue the West from its slump.

Yet before the smoke of the crash had even cleared, finance houses on both sides of the Atlantic were launching new Latin American investment funds, promising that Argentina or Brazil could be the answer for speculators with hot money burning a hole in their pocket. As any gambler could tell them, chasing your losses by doubling your stake is a dangerous business.

Most foreign investment passes by most Mexicans



Who owns your genes?

Genes are now being patented as 'inventions'. Joseph Kaplinsky argues that this is protecting commercial profits at the expense of research and treatments for disease



If you are a woman with a history of cystic fibrosis in your family, you might approach an expert to find out if you carry a copy of a gene which puts your future offspring at increased risk of getting the condition. If you do so today, you might well find that the scientist wants to seek advice before carrying out any tests—not from the medical authorities, but from the Patent Office. And if you are a scientist who wants to study any aspect of genetics and breast cancer, you had better budget for a bill arriving on your desk from patent attorneys representing an American venture capitalist. Welcome to the world of gene-patenting—perhaps the ultimate example of how capitalism turns everything into a commodity to be bought and sold for profit.

The information gained from research into biological structures, cell lines and techniques is increasingly being patented. The Human Genome Project—the plan to map out the chemical structure of every human gene—is well under way. And recent discoveries, like the mutant forms of genes BRAC1 and BRAC2, which play a role in inherited forms of breast cancer, have been put under lock and key by patent attorneys. Genetically engineered farm animals, like cows and sheep which produce valuable drugs in their milk have also been patented, as has a mouse programmed to get cancer which is used as a model in medical research.

So far the main use of patents on human genes has been to monopolise various tests for inherited genetic disease—such as cystic fibrosis. In the future, pharmaceutical companies will use patents to make money from effective drugs developed using human genetic information. And we are talking big business here: one estimate suggests that the biotechnology industry will be worth \$60 billion worldwide by the year 2010.

It is hardly surprising that in the middle of a world slump there

is fierce competition for the fruits of medical research. The British drugs giant SmithKline Beecham has tried to do a deal for exclusive rights to the results of research at the American research organisation Human Genome Sciences. The French drugs corporation Rhône-Poulenc Rorer has gone a stage further. It is attempting to put together a deal for a 'superclub' with the Lawrence Berkeley Human Genome Centre in the USA, the French research company Généthon and others, with royalties from 'ownership' of genes used in product development fixed at six to 10 per cent. The creation of such cartels is the ultimate guarantee of monopoly control of a gene in the marketplace.

The obsession with patenting and exclusivity is helping to create an increasingly secretive climate which is damaging to scientific research. This is illustrated by advice recently given in the journal *BioTechnology* (Vol 12, p79). Patent attorney Eugene Rzucidlo first recommends that researchers should 'keep a proper notebook'. That may seem like sensible advice—writing down your conclusions and hypotheses every day is vital for researchers, to help formulate ideas clearly, ensure that they develop in accordance with the experimental data, and preserve them for future research. However, Rzucidlo has no such lofty goals in mind. For him, keeping a notebook, like the rest of an experiment, is dictated by the needs of patent attorneys. He claims that to 'be a successful inventor requires a mindset. Every time he or she enters the lab, the inventor's goal must be not only to discover important results, but to run and record experiments in such a way that they can be patented'.

The insidious consequence of this 'mindset' is fully revealed by Rzucidlo's second recommendation: do not 'publicly disclose your inventions before filing' for a patent. He helpfully offers some examples of 'public

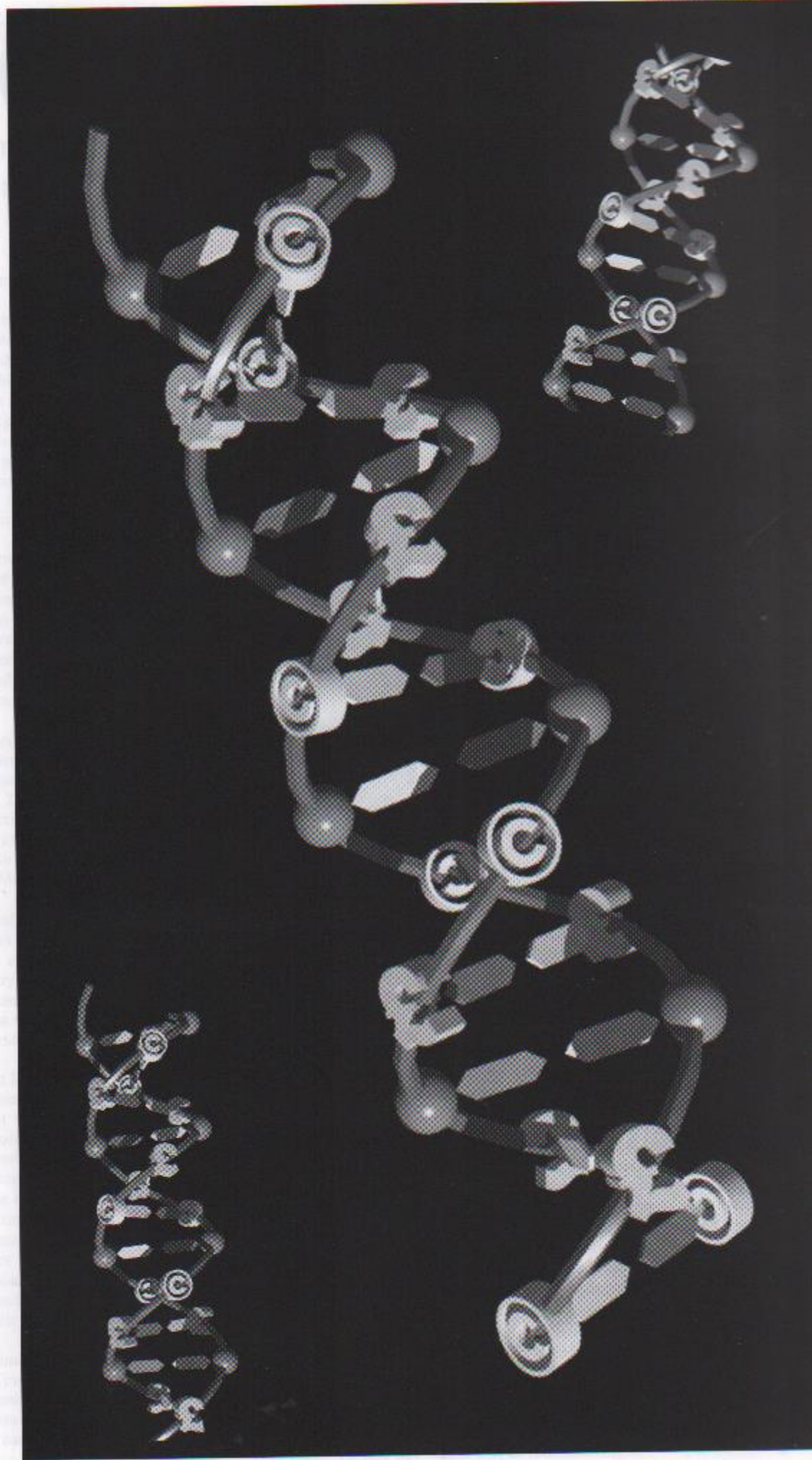
A challenge to prejudice and mysticism on matters scientific, technological and environmental.

FUTURES

disclosure' which catch people out: 'giving a 10-minute public talk at a meeting'; submitting manuscripts for publication; submitting data to public databases. Imposing strictures on these normal methods of disclosure strikes at the heart of the process of scientific advance. Being able to subject ideas to debate and criticism, whether in a meeting or a journal, is one feature which distinguishes science from dogma. By contrast, today's climate of secrecy and silence is undermining the openness and debate once considered to be scientific ideals.

Of course, there are those who deny any conflict between openness and filing patents on scientific work. Edward Penhoet, Chief Executive of Chiron Corporation, claims that he does not 'prevent publication': 'This is a straw-man people set up, and I've never heard of anyone having to do it.' Oh yeah? Penhoet should cast an eye over the terms of Rhône-Poulenc Rorer's 'superclub': publication of data is forbidden for one year. Or perhaps he should have a word with his own attorney—Chiron is currently being challenged in the courts by rival diagnostics company Murex International over a patent on a blood screening test for hepatitis C. Murex produce diagnostic kits, but the Chiron patent prevents them from carrying out further research on screening techniques—let alone publishing any results (see *Nature*, 8 December 1994).

The problems Murex has encountered getting permission to carry out further tests reveal how new research and potential treatments are being held up by the lust for profits of commercial organisations. The patents on genes which play a role in inherited forms of breast cancer are another case in point. Any scientist who carries out research designed to use the knowledge derived so far to gain more knowledge is expected to pay a royalty. In effect, an open-ended patent has been imposed on all ►



connected research, creating a barrier to both scientific advance and to the development of treatments for at-risk women.

The whole idea of patenting genes is of course absurd. Patenting is supposed to be applied to human *inventions*. In what way is the human gene responsible for cystic fibrosis an invention? Patenting genes makes as much sense as patenting diamonds or the air we breathe. Governments, scientists and ethical committees which have studied the matter on the whole agree that patenting of genes is ethically wrong. Most also accept that it is too restrictive because it creates monopolies. After all, if a company patents one form of painkiller, another company can discover a different type. There is, however, no alternative to studying the gene responsible for a particular illness.

However, such concerns have not stopped the stampede towards patenting, because capitalism is not driven by ethical considerations. It is driven by the profit motive. Even scientists who oppose the trends are taking out what they call 'defensive' patents—to stop someone else patenting their work.

Even where patenting has been outlawed, the commercial imperative has created many of the same problems in a different form. For example, Human Genome Sciences and SmithKline Beecham have generated a mass of information which could help identify roughly one third of human genes. Because this is not complete information on the genes, they have been refused patent protection by the America courts. They have responded to this setback by keeping the information secret, offering access only to those scientists who agree to give SmithKline first refusal on anything patentable that comes out of their work.

The trend towards the patenting of genes and all that goes with it is in no small part caused by the commercialisation of the academic world. Increasingly, academic work in the sciences is being funded by commercial organisations, and they want their pound of flesh in return. Knowledge produced in academia is more and more becoming the private property of the company sponsoring the research, and less and less the property of society. The sort of secrecy once reserved for trade secrets is now being applied to knowledge of our molecular biology.

The widespread reaction to the commercialisation of research is to call on governments to regulate the process. However, we should not be taken in by governments' formal declarations against gene-patenting. At every stage, each major government has pushed



to ensure that its national drugs industry does not lose out, and that it has all the rights to patent that it needs.

The US government brought the debate about whether human genes should be patented to a head in 1991, when the government-funded National Institutes of Health (NIH) filed a patent application on thousands of fragments of human DNA. At the time it was not known which genes the fragments came

The government advisory committee lists diseases not as 'medical opportunities' but as 'commercial opportunities'

from, or what their functions might be. The prospect of a patent being granted in these circumstances caused a major controversy among scientists worried that future research on the fragments might be restricted by the patent-holders. The row culminated in the resignation of James Watson, co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, from directorship of the Human Genome Project in 1992. Since then the Washington-backed NIH has continued to push forward patenting precedents in cases like this.

Governments might be concerned about gene-patenting in principle. But, in practice, the primary concern of each government is the commercial advantage of its own national industry. To secure this they will help file all the patents deemed necessary. The damaging consequences for the development of treatments is of little moment to ministers who are more concerned about the commercial health of their industries than about the health of their people.

For example, the UK government's Advisory Committee on Human Genome Research was ostensibly set up to secure the benefits which such research offers 'for human welfare, healthcare and UK industry'. The fact that the committee is more concerned with the cash flow of UK industry than with such high-minded matters as human welfare is revealed in its first report, where the tables 'Common diseases with a recognised genetic component' (such as heart disease and cancer), and 'Therapeutic implication of the Human Genome Project', are listed not as 'Medical opportunities', but as 'Commercial opportunities'.

Government action in this field tends to lead to a further increase in patenting and secrecy, and a breakdown in international cooperation. The British

government recently commissioned a working group to examine what should be done with Britain's microbial culture collections. Bacteria and fungi of the sort found in these collections have provided humanity with antibiotics, enzymes for detergents, and the polymerase enzyme crucial for the Human Genome Project and DNA analysis, to name just a few.

The British working group considered the idea of a future Europe-wide collection, which would allow the development of greater specialisation and expertise by delegating different collections to different regions. It was rejected on the grounds that 'the growing recognition of the commercial value of culture collections is likely to make member states reluctant...to give up national interests in more exploitable organisms'. The 'national interest' cited is not the interest of the UK population, nor even that of UK scientists in understanding microbiology and the products it can provide. It is the interest of those concerned with the 'commercial value' of 'exploitable organisms'—those who own and control 'UK industry [who] have expressed a preference for a comprehensive, UK-based microbial resource...to accept the widest range of organisms for patent purposes'.

Business clearly appreciates the efforts of governments to protect the 'national interest' through patenting policies. Wallace Steinberg, chairman of the board of the US HealthCare Investment Corp, understood the importance of the American government-funded NIH patenting the DNA fragments: 'My God, if this thing doesn't get done in a substantive way in the United States that is the end of biotechnology in the US. There is a tremendous effort in France, England and Japan...if this becomes a race and if gene fragments become proprietary, then it is in the best interests of the US and entities of the US to file for patents.' (Quoted in R Cooke-Deegan, *The Gene Wars*, 1994)

The drive to patent genes is a result of drug companies searching for profits, with the help of governments tightening the grip of private property over science. The consequence of the patenting of this 'intellectual property' is to destroy the collective ability of humanity to advance science and knowledge. The international Human Genome Project was trumpeted as a great collaborative project for the benefit of all humanity. Today it is still a great scientific project, but it is fast becoming a fractious enterprise, as commercial and national interests undermine the lofty goals which it was founded to achieve.

Holocaust denial

Remembering the victims can also be a way of trivialising the meaning of Hitler's 'Final Solution', suggests Will Deighton

It is 50 years since the end of the Second World War, and 50 years since the Nazi concentration camps fell into the hands of the Allies. At Auschwitz, survivors attended memorial services in January. Throughout the year the successive anniversaries will be an occasion to remember the six million Jews murdered under the racial policy of the Nazi regime.

Some right-wing historians have tried to claim that the Holocaust did not take place. Today that record of mass exterminations is clear for all to see. But there are other, more subtle, ways of denying the true record of the Holocaust.

Throughout the Western world every government honours the victims of the Holocaust, and every newspaper and television commentator insists that it must never happen again. But each nation is concerned to remember the victims of the Holocaust in its own way. Every government is working overtime to minimise the responsibility of its own national elite for what happened to the Jews.

For Britain and America, the anniversaries are an occasion to insist that the German nation carries the shame of the Holocaust, as John Casey spelled out in the *Sunday Times* (29 January 1995). The British and Americans prefer to remember that they 'liberated' camps like Belsen, rather than that they refused to save a million Hungarian Jews in 1944, Lord Moyne protesting 'what shall we do with them?'

Those remembering the liberation of the camps might also recall the 100 000 Jews who were left to rot in Germany and Austria at the war's end because they were refused entry into Britain by Clement Attlee's Labour government. As late as 1946, Jews barred from Britain were still being slaughtered in pogroms in Poland.

Blaming Germany for the Holocaust looks fair enough. But the policies of racial supremacy that were used to justify the Holocaust were shared by all the great powers. Some American states imprisoned and sterilised thousands of the supposedly 'feeble-minded' under eugenic policies which paralleled Germany's race laws. European powers had been operating concentration camps and 'coolie' labour in plantations throughout the colonies long before the Germans. Sharing the same racial outlook, the other Western powers found nothing to condemn in Germany's race laws until it suited their own wartime propaganda.

For the German authorities minimising responsibility for the Holocaust seems an impossible task. It was the German government that authorised the 'Final Solution' after the reversal of Operation Barbarossa—the Nazis' eastern campaign. As the Soviet army advanced on



Berlin, the slave labour camps were turned to the business of liquidating European Jewry.

The German authorities have not tried to disguise the fact of the Holocaust. Instead they have sought to spread the responsibility for it through the concept of 'collective guilt'. This was a policy, imposed by the Allies when they occupied Germany after the war, which restrained reprisals against Nazis rather than encouraging them. The Allies were saying to the German people, 'you are all as guilty as each other'. After the occupation, collective guilt became the German government's official stance.

The policy of collective guilt suits the German authorities, since it acts as a denial of their real culpability for the Holocaust. The German working class was not the beneficiary of the Nazi regime. German workers' own lives were close to slavery. Their organisations were banned, their leaders sent to the camps, and they were massively exploited in work.

The people who benefited from Nazism and from the concentration camps were the German capitalist class. Krupps, Siemens, IG Farben and Volkswagen were firms that built their success on the slave labour of Jews, prisoners of war and the cowed German working class. To this day

German courts refuse to award compensation to former slave labourers in German companies. The West German economic miracle of the 1950s, precursor of today's German success, was premised upon the regime of massive exploitation established during the war.

Today the German elite insists that all Germans are to blame for the Holocaust because that is the best way to deny its own responsibility. Remembering the victims of the Holocaust ends up as way of spreading the blame for their deaths.

Spreading the blame for the Holocaust is also an instinct common to the ruling elites in other Western countries. Britain and America are uncomfortable with the idea that one of the most advanced and cultured Western nations should have descended into such barbarism. Today, they are seeking to redress the balance by discovering new incidents of genocide in the third world and Eastern Europe.

According to the French aid organisation Médecins Sans Frontières it is too late to say 'Never again' because the Holocaust has happened again in Rwanda (*Populations in Danger*, 1995). In Bosnia, too, commentators claimed to have discovered another holocaust.

Atrocities have been committed in Rwanda, Bosnia and countless other civil wars. But to say that these are 'holocausts' only trivialises the extermination of the Jews. It also denies the culpability of the Western powers in the Holocaust. If there are many holocausts all over the world, then there is nothing unique about Germany's extermination of the Jews, nor anything uniquely Western about the race policies that justified it.

A willingness to think that anyone is capable of committing genocide creates a situation where nobody is truly to blame. Once the answer to the question 'Could it happen here?' would have been an emphatic 'no', as the British revelled in their moral superiority over the Germans. During a recent edition of BBC's *Question Time*, the panel was less sure, thinking that, in fact, everyone is probably capable of evil.

The *Question Time* panellists were engaged in a very modern version of Holocaust denial. They made no attempt to disguise the horrors of the Holocaust, yet they did deny its real meaning. When everyone is capable of genocide, nobody is to blame—least of all the capitalist powers that created the racial policy in the first place. Moreover when everyone is deemed capable of genocide, state control and legal restraint are clearly necessary to save us from ourselves. The very people who did instigate a holocaust, the authorities and their backers in big business, are the only people who gain by this way of remembering it. ●

Nicolas Poussin has never been a popular artist. But, argues Louis Ryan, a major exhibition at London's Royal Academy shows how his work can still speak to us

The art of reason

The French painter Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) holds a paradoxical place in the history of art. He has always been recognised as one of the major figures of seventeenth-century painting and his subsequent influence has been immense. In the decades following his death, his work was extolled, particularly in France, as a paragon of the classical virtues. He had a decisive influence, at the time of the French Revolution, on the heroic art of David. In the early nineteenth century, figures as diverse as Ingres and Delacroix acknowledged Poussin as their master. At the dawn of our own century, Cézanne looked back to him for inspiration in his struggle towards a new artistic language. 'Every time I come away from Poussin', he said, 'I know better who I am'.

Yet Poussin has never really been a popular artist. In his own lifetime his work was received primarily by a small audience of wealthy and highly cultured connoisseurs. He lived most of his adult life in Rome, yet obtained only one major ecclesiastical commission there for a church painting. In fact Poussin was alien both in temperament and outlook to the flamboyant sensuality of the High Baroque. He developed instead his own artistic language, austere and intellectual, which demanded the studied attention of those who would enter his world. 'Things which partake of perfection should not be looked at in haste', he wrote, 'but call for time, judgement and intelligence. The means employed in their appraisal must be the same as those used in their making.'

The demands which Poussin's art has always made of its viewers are likely to seem particularly onerous today. It is not

easy, living as we do with a flux of ephemeral images, to train our attention on themes which at first sight seem so remote from our own experience. But the real difficulty in approaching these paintings lies not so much in the iconography—drawn mainly from the Bible and the Greek and Roman classics—as in the style: there is none of the nod-and-wink relationship, none of the cosy complicity between image and viewer, which characterises so much of today's visual culture.

Walking into a room full of Poussins, our first sense of the paintings is their sublime indifference to the viewer—hence the superficial clichés about his work being 'cold' and 'academic'. But when we allow ourselves to be drawn into their magnificent harmonies, we begin to understand that the sense of order they express derives not from any *a priori* schema. What we feel instead is a passionate striving to distil what is essential from what is merely contingent in human experience. The characteristic stillness of his paintings, even when they depict dramatic events, shows how that striving is consummated in the work of art.

Unity of vision, subordination of the parts to an intelligible whole, self-sufficiency of the finished work—these are values profoundly at variance with those which hold sway today. And this is no accident; for while Poussin witnessed the dawn of the rationalist epoch in Europe, we live—if the claims of postmodernism are to be believed—at its demise. Today it is increasingly difficult to uphold a unified rational perspective, as human experience disintegrates into a welter of exclusive identities. This is why it is now both more arduous and more rewarding to

engage with Poussin's art. His themes may be steeped in antiquity but their conception brings us closer to the pure springs of the rationalist outlook. The subtle interplay between religious theme and rationalist conception may be seen in one of his most beautiful works, the *Landscape with Saint Matthew and an Angel*.

There is a magic about this image which no analysis can exhaust. Yet we may find a starting point in the paradox that there is little sense of a supernatural occurrence in the angel's apparition. The light which suffuses the composition is the same on the calm recession of the landscape as on the two figures in the foreground: the winged messenger seems in harmony with the natural order of things. The saint's face is in shadow while the angel's is bathed in light, suggesting the latter's guiding role as Matthew writes his gospel. Yet there is also an intimate unity between the two of them, beautifully enacted in the interplay of hands. The vestment draped over the stone beside them draws out this point: it evidently belongs to the saint, yet is white and flowing like the angel's garb.

The classical ruins in the foreground and the angel's inspirational function relate him to the muses of Greek and Roman mythology. Angels were always, according to Christian dogma, the servants of a transcendental deity. The classical muses, on the other hand, were more easily interpreted as projections of man's own poetic and intellectual faculties. Here this ambivalence leads us to wonder whether we are witnessing a messenger from above, or a vivid emanation of the saint's own mind.

Such a distinction gains in significance when we place it in the intellectual

Landscape with Saint Matthew and an Angel



LANDSCAPE WITH ST MATTHEW (1640) BY NICOLAUS POUSSIN, STAATLICHE MUSEUM ZU BERLIN

context of the time. Poussin was a compatriot and near-contemporary of the first great rationalist philosopher, René Descartes. The Cartesian method of enquiry established a dualism between mind and matter; through this dualism it came to assert the primacy of mind over both divine power and material determination. Instead of man being utterly dependent on God, as in the medieval outlook, God now became a postulate of man's reasoning faculty. Consequently the Cartesian divinity could be apprehended only through reason, rather than revelation.

There is nothing in Poussin's composition which is formally at variance with Christian dogma. Yet, viewed in its totality, one must feel that the ostensible theme—the revelation of God's providence to man—does not disclose the secret of the painting. Just as Descartes inverted the relationship between man and God, so the winged angel of Poussin seems more a projection of man's own

powers than a messenger alighted from above. There is certainly a sense of revelation here; but what is revealed to the rapt gaze and the waiting pen of Saint Matthew is rather man's own higher faculty, his rational consciousness, bodied forth for the first time.

The Royal Academy exhibition is the first major Poussin showing in Britain for nearly 35 years. It may also be the last time we can see such a collection for some considerable time. At the exhibition the *Landscape with Saint Matthew and an Angel* is hung near its twin, *Landscape with Saint John at Patmos*. The former is normally housed in the Staatliche Museum in Berlin, the latter in the Art Institute of Chicago: so this is a unique opportunity to view them in one gallery. Unfortunately these two paintings, like several others in the exhibition, are hung too low and set in a rather clinical light which detracts from their shimmering ambiguity.

Such lighting is helpful, however, in analysing larger compositions with a multiplicity of figures, such as the famous *Rape of the Sabines* or the *Israelites Gathering the Manna*.

The layout of the exhibition is clear and intelligible, showing how Poussin returned to former themes, conceiving them anew as he strove for an ever more purified artistic language. Retracing this development is a lesson in rigour and integrity; it is also a wonderful visual experience. It reminds us that the 'painter-philosopher' as he was called defined his aims in remarkably unassuming terms. 'The end of art', he wrote, 'is delight'. But the delight of Poussin's art yields itself only to patient contemplation. Whatever else they symbolise, Saint Matthew and the Angel may serve us as an image of that rapt attention which great art elicits and demands. ●

The Nicolas Poussin exhibition is at the Royal Academy, London until 9 April.

Foreclosed

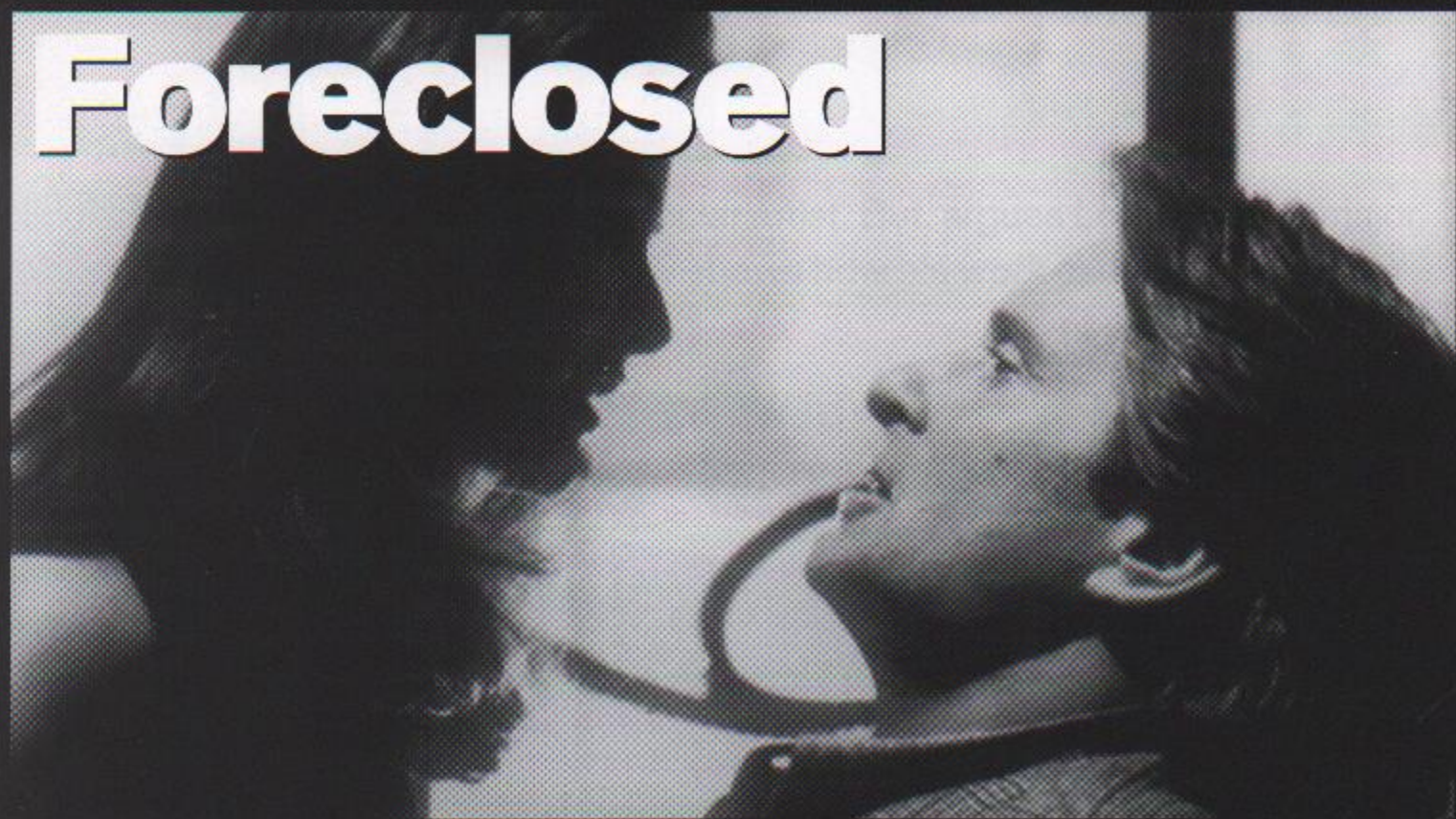


PHOTO: WARNER BROS.

Janice Bryan on Michael Douglas' latest insecure anti-hero in the sexual harassment movie, *Disclosure*

A stalked husband in *Fatal Attraction*, a cop on the edge in *Basic Instinct*, a redundant employee over the edge in *Falling Down*, a computer whizz-kid publicly humiliated in *Disclosure*. Michael Douglas seems to be reinventing himself as the anti-hero for our age: the put-upon white male, lost in a world he does not understand; fighting to defend the moral values and certainties of a world he believes in, but which no longer exists; a man who cannot comprehend why the line between good and bad no longer seems to be where it was. "I'm the bad guy?", he asks quizzically at the end of *Falling Down*. "Why don't I just be that guy, that evil white guy you're always complaining about?", he echoes in *Disclosure*.

Given Douglas' run of recent roles, it was only a matter of time before he found himself in a Michael Crichton film. Crichton's skill as a writer comes from his ability to tap into contemporary America's sense of insecurity—whether about the Japanese (*Rising Sun*), genetic science (*Jurassic Park*) or, now, man-eating women (*Disclosure*). The contrast between high technology and low morality that lies at the heart of all Crichton's work gives expression to the sense of the breakdown of a society and its traditional values. In *Disclosure* Douglas plays Tom Sanders, a whizz-kid in multimedia, who is passed over for promotion in

Demi Moore, about to make Michael Douglas' eyes water

favour of Meredith Johnson (Demi Moore). Johnson is a high-octane career woman, smart, single-minded and not frightened to act like one of the boys. Moore, however, is no Linda Fiorentino and, though she gives one of her best performances to date, Johnson never comes over as the kind of *femme fatale* the script requires.

Snippets of conversation imply that Johnson got promotion despite little technical experience for the job. The plot thickens when it is revealed that Sanders and Johnson were once lovers. On the first day of her promotion, in the middle of crucial merger negotiations, Johnson decides to rekindle the flame. Being a happily married American family man, Sanders naturally resists her advances; but, being the conniving, domineering woman that she is, Johnson eventually seduces him. Things get pretty steamy, until Sanders suddenly remembers the wife and two kids back home. "You stick your dick in my mouth and then you get an attack of morality?", sneers Johnson—then seeks revenge by accusing him of sexual harassment.

Dick in mouth or not, Sanders scuttles off to the nearest judge to complain. The rest of the film is a fairly forgettable plot about Sanders' fight to gain justice, regain his wife's trust, save white men from their reputation as the bad guys and rescue the company from an incompetent, conniving *vagina dentata*.

What is 'disclosed' in *Disclosure* is that men too can face sexual harassment. It is hardly the most rivetting of plots for a thriller. In the past the idea would probably have fallen at the first script conference. In today's climate of increased concern about sexual behaviour it has been turned into a blockbuster. But even as a film about sexual insecurities, *Disclosure* fails abysmally.

In *Falling Down* the figurative reversal of roles—with Michael Douglas unable to comprehend why he is the bad guy when he thinks he is just standing up for his rights—leads to a gripping drama. As we journey through a nightmarish urban landscape, and as Douglas descends into incomprehending fury, the tightness of the dramatic structure and cogency of the themes gives us a genuine insight into Douglas' predicament.

In *Disclosure*, the role reversal is literal rather than figurative. The man is harassed, the woman the harasser. But the plot is too predictable and the characterisation too stereotyped for the film to be anything more than tedious. We know that Johnson is bad because she likes pornography and anal sex. Sanders is good because he is married with two kids. In *Falling Down* there is genuine ambivalence about whether or not Douglas is the bad guy. Here the ambivalence is foreclosed at the start and all that unfolds is a conventional morality play.

WAR & PEACE IN IRELAND

Britain and the IRA in the New World Order
by
Mark Ryan

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to the present debate.'

Tim Pat Coogan

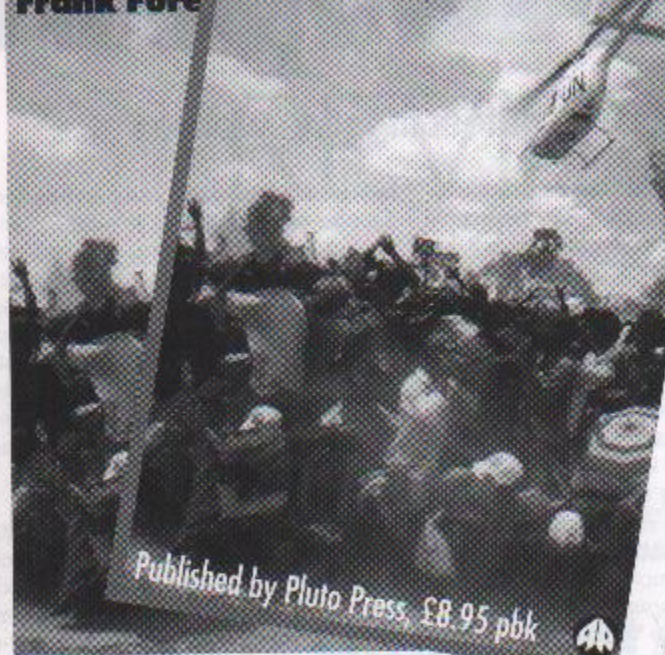
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VI Lenin

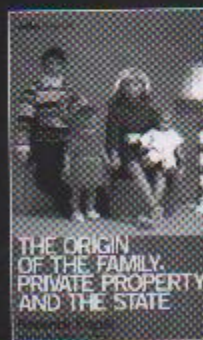
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THE ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE STATE

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Danger: men in pain

Helen Watkiss lends an unsympathetic ear to men's latest lifestyle worries

Welcome to the women's zone' proclaims the first letter from the editor of *Men's Health*. With those few words he has consigned my father's *Fleury Jack* to the medicine chest of history. For this magazine

is not for those who believe that if you run it under a cold tap, it will be all right in the morning. Gone are the days when men worried about the serious issues of the day, like where their team was placed in the league. No, this one offers advice on the really pressing matters at hand—like how to cut your toe nails.

Men's Health is the latest lifestyle magazine to hit British newsstands. A mixture of new laddish macho and men's group wimp, it is aimed at men who want to be men, but believe that they are sensitive enough to behave like women. It's for the kind of man who 'always puts the welfare of women first', so much so in fact that women have 'been having a field day with healthcare'. You know, the kind of man who has sympathetic PMT symptoms, as opposed to the ones who know you're having your period and say, 'You think that's a drag? Well, you don't have to shave every day'. Whether the publishers will find the 60,000 PMT sympathisers who are needed for the magazine's finances to break even is a moot point.

Men's Health wants to make sure that when it comes to worrying about life's little problems, women should not have all the fun. 'When we feel pain', it confides, 'we don't like to bother the doctor about it.

Men's Health:
for men who want
to be men, but are
sensitive enough to
behave like women

We get really sick. And one day, suddenly, we wind up in hospital—on the critical list.' Now, call me a cynical old cow if you like, but my experience is that if a man sneezes more than once the whole world has to know about it, and the contents of the handkerchief. Not so, says *Men's Health*: 'We're men and we're too proud, too cock-of-the-walk, to ask for help or admit that we don't know a lot about how to keep our bodies in the race.' Excuse me? What about, 'No, I won't have any painkillers, I don't like putting artificial substances in my body (my body is a temple) but a nice cup of tea, with lots of sugar, the contents of the biscuit tin, and the remote control might make me feel a little bit better'?

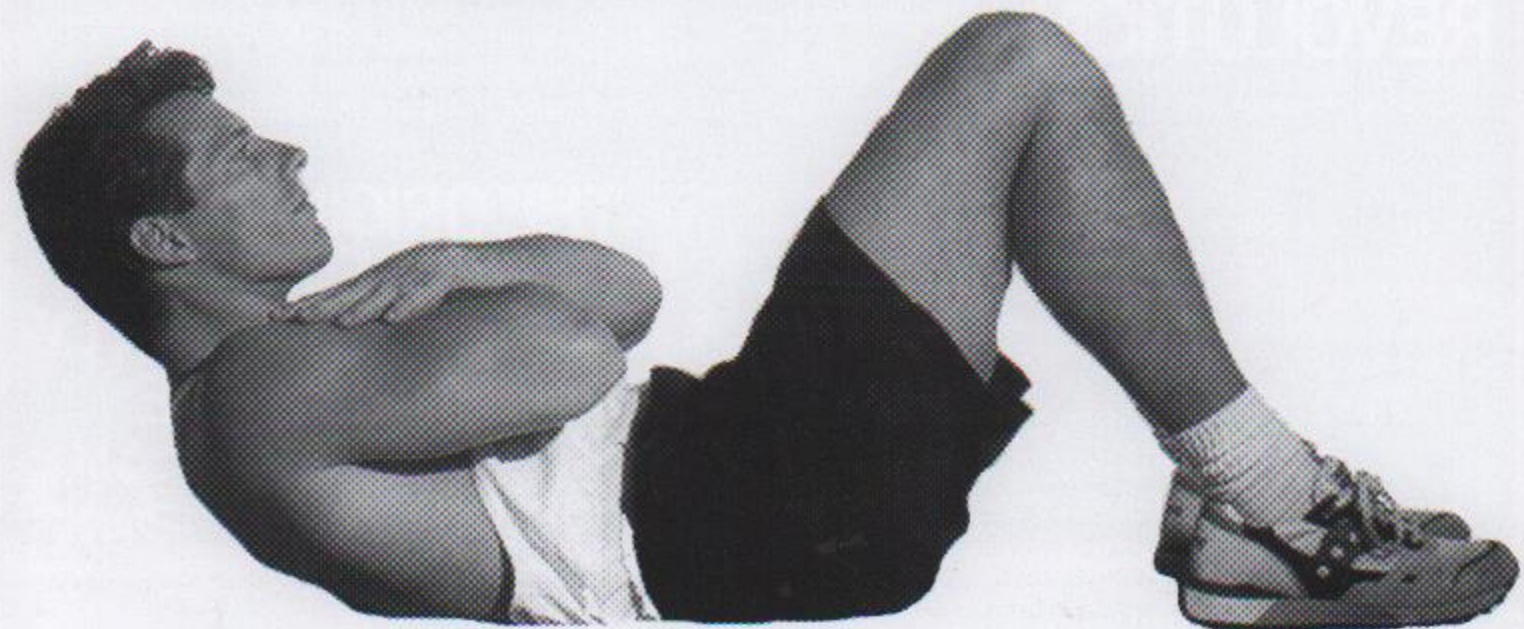
If you are one of those men who are 'too cock-of-the-walk' you are unlikely to be after reading this. If something can go wrong with your life, then the chances are that you will find it in the pages of *Men's Health*. As it says, 'You never know what's coming next in life: could be a bee sting, a dislocated tooth or a sneaky ingrowing toe nail'.

The special report on 'Health checks that could save men's lives' kicks off with 'let's start with a warning. Being a man can damage your health'. I could have offered that advice for free. The report goes on to explain how fondling your bollocks could save your life and describes how to check your poo for problems. If you think that this is just the stuff to while away those mid-life crisis hours, you would be wrong. Apparently if you are 20-years old you should test your blood pressure and sexual health every year. Every three years check

out your eyes, ears, chest, abdomen, lymph nodes, testicles, penis and thyroid, and make sure your reflexes and strength are up to scratch. You also need regular blood tests for potential problems with cholesterol, glucose, kidney and liver functions, and urine tests for infection, diabetes, cancer, kidney and liver functions. You wonder how any man has time left over in his life to read *Men's Health*.

If you weren't worried about your health before, you certainly will be after you have read *Men's Health*. And it is not just health problems that are lurking around the corner. Other articles in the first issue warn of the fatal attraction of the babysitter, explain how to avoid getting your lights punched out in your local and highlight the 'minefield' of flirting: 'A woman smiles at you. Is she interested or is it a cover for what she's really thinking—'You're a tedious bore and I wish you'd buy a one-way ticket to Australia?'. If that's what troubles you every time a woman smiles then really you do have a problem—and not one that will be set to rights in the pages of *Men's Health*.

The nineties marketing men who have dreamed up the chaps' version of *Cosmo* know that these are worrying times, and worries make for good business. The question is whether there really are so many men with a spare £1.95 out there who worry that their willy is too small and their waist is too large, need handy hints on how to iron their shirts, but also want to know how to win a dogfight in a MiG-29. ●



MARXIST

REVIEW OF BOOKS

Robert Fletcher looks at the new-found radicalism of the middle classes, and finds nothing progressive about passive resistance

Disobedient servants

Civil Society and Political Theory, Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, MIT Press, £17.95 pbk

Civil Resistance, Michael Randle, Fontana, £6.99 pbk

At long last it appears that the political map is being redrawn. No longer is politics a stale exchange between two political parties whose relevance to the concerns of the majority has become increasingly questionable. There is now an evident (if minority) trend towards activism, where the rules of the game are to break the rules. Last summer, we saw 'motorway protesters' occupying trees and placing themselves in front of bulldozers to prevent the construction of the M11. More recently, there has been the large-scale mobilisation of animal rights activists and *Daily Telegraph* readers alike against the export of livestock in previously genteel towns like Shoreham in Kent and Brightlingsea, Essex.

These protests seem to be a challenge to the authorities, but just how radical are they? An examination of the case for non-violent civil disobedience shows that it is a long way from the kind of direct action needed to effect real change.

The books reviewed here champion the new protest politics. *Civil Resistance* is written by Michael Randle, a lecturer in the Department of Peace Studies at Bradford University who has engaged in a lifetime of civil disobedience. Randle first came to fame and notoriety in the early sixties, when he was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment in Wormwood Scrubs for organising the disruption of an American military air base in Essex. During his time in prison he befriended Soviet spy George Blake—and decided that Blake's extraordinary 42-year sentence made him a Cold War POW. Upon his own release, Randle masterminded and executed a plot to break George Blake out of jail. As police searched far and wide for the Soviet spy, with police checkpoints at all the ports and airports, Randle and his colleagues had him 'hidden' in a bedsit opposite Wormwood Scrubs. When the search for Blake was finally given up, Randle and his family drove Blake to East Germany in a Volkswagen van.

Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato's *Civil Society and Political Theory* is less grounded in direct action than academia: the book is part of the MIT Press' excellent series on Contemporary German Social Thought. It is nonetheless an attempt to rationalise the outlook of middle class protest politics. Jean Cohen, Associate Professor of Political Theory at Columbia University, New York, has previously written widely on what are called new social movements—'peace, feminist, ecology and local-autonomy movements that have proliferated in the West since the seventies' (p403). Andrew Arato, a Hungarian emigré to the United States has previously written on Eastern Europe, and is a contributor to the journal *Telos*. An expert on critical theory and the Frankfurt School, Arato is Professor of Sociology at Manhattan's New School for Social Research.

What brings two East Coast intellectuals and a maverick like Randle together is that they all advocate a politics of civil disobedience, even if it means breaking the law. Throughout Randle's book, he makes the case for civil disobedience being justified where it takes the form of 'non-violent collective action'. Most of the examples Randle gives us of this 'non-violent collective action' which breaks the law are applied to what he deems 'repressive regimes' and, therefore, he argues, justified. Randle applies this sentiment to the enactment of civil disobedience on the home front, where he sees it as a force for revitalising democracy and creating a civil society:

'Indeed, if this promise is not fulfilled, there is a danger that the democratic impulse will be frustrated by the huge disparities of wealth and power created by the prevailing economic system, and suffocated by the alienating and disempowering force of the modern bureaucratic state.' (p198) ▶

Cohen and Arato argue for the necessity of civil disobedience in Western democracies along similar lines. The basis of their argument is that the law and democracy as they stand are not perfect. Both legal rights and democracy are an ideal yet to be realised. A legal right to engage in civil disobedience seems odd, but according to Cohen and Arato it is needed if the promise of democracy is to be attained. Civil disobedience, Cohen and Arato believe, is like a learning process for those involved and society at large, about what is and what is not legitimate:

'we shall argue that the integrity of constitutionalism hinges on the acceptance by a political culture of the normative and valuable character of illegal collective action in the form of civil disobedience. Accordingly, we assess civil disobedience not merely as a tactic, but as an expression of legitimate citizen action' (p567).

The civil disobedience defended by Randle and by Cohen and Arato is surprisingly well received in the current British political climate. The *Independent* recently ran an editorial praising the embattled middle classes in places like Shoreham for their 'imaginative' and 'articulate' protests, but most of all for their 'courage' in making a stand and being willing to break the law if necessary.

Of course animal welfare protests have their own particular causes and dynamics. But they also stand as part of a series of middle class protests, from the campaigns against developments at Oxleas Wood and the M11, through the actions of pressure groups like Outrage and the World Development Movement, to the poll tax protests and even the last wave of protests over the closing of Britain's coal mines in 1992. The intriguing common denominator is an apparent uprising among the middle classes. As a consequence of this, conventional politics has been shunned in favour of a new, experimental politics that is voluntaristic and audacious.

These recent events have really animated the theoretical project undertaken by Cohen and Arato, and provided a wider forum for the kind of activism Michael Randle wants to see. The question which needs to be asked, however, is why is this middle class rebellion happening now, and what is it all about?

Now that the old contest of left and right is exhausted middle class activism is filling the vacuum

Middle class protests have taken off because of the way that the traditional political debate of left and right has run out of steam. In the past the outlook of the middle class was influenced by the balance between the working class and the ruling class. Trade unions and employers, Labour and Tory used to dominate the political debate, and the middle classes could be found rallying to whichever camp had more influence. Now though, the old contest is exhausted, and middle class activism is filling the vacuum.

Both *Civil Resistance* and *Civil Society and Political Theory* are framed in opposition to the old politics of left

and right. The traditional left project of welfarism gets short shrift in Cohen and Arato's book. Following much of the discussion about the virtues of civil society in the eighties, they portray state socialism as an encroachment upon civil society. Randle is less hostile to welfarism, but shares with Cohen and Arato an identification with the oppositional movements that emerged with the collapse of East European societies—movements which also took up the banner of civil society against the state.

What is more confusing in *Civil Society and Political Theory* is that the authors want 'a model that differentiates civil society from both state and economy' (p464). Once upon a time the category 'civil society' would have been almost identical to the economy or the market, referring to anything that lay outside the state. But, for Cohen and Arato, there are other problems to face than the state. They also want civil society to be a refuge from mass media, McDonalds and other market phenomena that encroach upon their world. In effect the category 'civil society' is a name given to the things the middle class likes—even to the point where that means state protection or even state subsidy for middle class values: 'we cannot accept the strategy of privatisation and deregulation', insist Cohen and Arato, 'these recipes call for the re-economisation of society and the destruction through monetary relations of many of the institutions and cultural potentials of modern civil society' (p469).

They succeeded in getting public sympathy at a time when political activism is generally held in contempt

In its own bookish way this is an accurate reflection of the outlook of the middle classes today. While they retain their Thatcherite hostility to welfare payments to the working class, they now also resent the way they themselves have lost out in subsidies to higher education, the arts and so on. Civil society is a category that in Cohen and Arato's treatment only expresses the characteristic middle class concern to find a third way—between welfarism and the free market, or between left and right. And by the happy coincidence of the exhaustion of the old left/right political framework, the politics of the third way have found their moment.

The depressing thing about the 'third way', though, is just how narrow it is. Most of the concerns expressed by these protesters are parochial or outright reactionary. Behind the protests over development there often lies a desire to keep common folk out of the Home Counties. Development is all right as long as it is 'Not in my back yard'. On the other hand, the tactics of civil disobedience are quite inventive and show an admirable contempt for the proper channels.

This activism is seen to be the way forward, and has seemingly been vindicated. The M11 protestors at least delayed the construction of the proposed new motorway. The Brightlingsea protestors under the organisational umbrella of Compassion in World Farming, have got a ban placed on further 'live exports' from that port. But most of all they succeeded in getting public sympathy at a time when political activism is generally held in contempt.

The advantages of the passive civil disobedience that Randle is advocating and which has been occurring of late is that it is fresh and innovative. The protesters at Brightlingsea have no ideological baggage; they are not tied to any decaying political tradition or tactics; confidence and innovation appear to win the day. This voluntaristic elan is embodied in Randle himself, who in 1991 stood trial at the Old Bailey for his part in the escape of George Blake. Randle confidently 'rejected' the judge's instruction to the jury to convict him, and told the jury that they could override the judge's decision. Randle won his case.

The disadvantages of civil disobedience are its conservatism and, ironically, its implicit obedience. First of all non-violent civil disobedience has a real victim mentality. Randle sums this up well, recounting approvingly the Gandhian method of 'moral Jiu-Jitsu: 'the non-violent resister throws the opponent morally off-balance by the unexpectedness of his or her response' (pp103-4). Similarly Randle cites Gandhi's 'emphasis on voluntary suffering to touch the heart of an opponent' (p109).

Doubtless 'voluntary suffering' on the part of the distressed gentlefolk of Brightlingsea has touched the hearts, or at least the votes, of their opponents. But that ability to sway your opponent depends on their initial view of you. Everything about the passive resisters of the middle class protests emphasises their 'respectability'. The kind of people they are—middle class, middle-aged, middle-England—is pointed out again and again. And the concerns they fight for are thoroughly respectable too: conservation, animal welfare.

Where the issue at hand does not seriously call into question the status quo, and the people are so thoroughly respectable, 'voluntary suffering' probably does pull a few heart strings. But if the cause or the people concerned were less respectable, no amount of 'voluntary suffering' would sway the authorities. No amount of hardship would persuade the media to support a militant strike for jobs in the way that they have supported the animal welfare protests. Middle class protesters insist upon their respectability, precisely to distinguish themselves from the common herd, and because they know that their respectability means that they can call on public sympathy in a way that is not available to the rest of society.

The very idea that millions of MTV-watchers could have a say about what happens in a democratic system appals Cohen and Arato

Nor even is it the case that these civil disobedients are that interested in overturning the status quo. In fact Cohen and Arato argue that civil disobedience has a regulative effect for society: 'On the level of political culture, the readiness to engage in justified civil disobedience serves as a prophylactic against potential departures from justice and thereby introduces stability into a well-ordered society.' (p574)

On the face of it this is a strange argument. Why would there be any danger of 'departures from justice' in a 'well-ordered society'? The reason is that Cohen and Arato do not trust a democratically elected government to

guarantee the privileges of the middle classes. However little real authority the mass of people have, the very fact that millions of MTV-watchers could have a say about what happens in a democratic system appals Cohen and Arato.

Of course Cohen and Arato would never concede that they are concerned with privileges. Instead they talk of moral principles, but moral principles that the hoi polloi are too prejudiced to understand: 'legislative majorities can err or, worse, be misguided by prejudice and thus violate the moral principles underlying the constitution.' (p571)

As Cohen and Arato say scathingly of others, and unwittingly of themselves, 'the current vogue in political theory is (once again) to view liberalism and democracy as fundamentally antithetical' (p346). For them, too, the mere possibility of democratic decision-making is fundamentally antithetical to rights. But rights and real democracy could only be antithetical where the rights in question are really the sort of minority privileges—like access to Oxleas Wood—that the masses find difficult to identify with.

Cohen and Arato immediately lose patience with any social movement that fails to live up to the 'moral principles' that 'underlie the constitution'

The point of civil disobedience for Cohen and Arato is that the law is suspect because it is supposed to be democratic. The very idea that 'legislative majorities' might have the last word, makes the champions of 'civil society' nervous. The only reason that Cohen and Arato reserve the right to break the law is because of their contempt for the very idea of democracy, that they might be subject to majority rule.

The ideas put forward in *Civil Society and Political Theory* are the opposite of a Marxist approach to the law. For Cohen and Arato non-violent civil disobedience is a last-resort guarantee against a hostile majority. By and large, though, the rule of law, as the guarantee of private property and minority privileges is something they want to uphold. For Marxists, by contrast, the law is to be challenged because it masks and defends the privileges of private property.

Characteristically Cohen and Arato immediately lose patience with any social movement that fails to live up to the 'moral principles' that 'underlie the constitution'. Non-violent civil disobedience is justified only by reference to the defence of 'civil society' against the prejudiced majority. Opposition movements in Poland and Argentina are denounced for their failure to pursue 'self-limiting' democracy, meaning that they did not accept the limitation that the privileges of a middle class civil society were sacrosanct.

Passive or non-violent civil disobedience is a tactic that sums up the implicit conservatism of middle class protests. Any goal that was really worth fighting for could not be won by a 'self-limiting' movement, or by 'voluntary suffering'. That kind of passive protest can only reinforce the status quo. It is, in the words of the nineteenth-century German socialist Ferdinand Lasalle, 'resistance that is no resistance' (*Civil Resistance*, p36).

Straitjacket Society: An Insider's Irreverent View of Bureaucratic Japan, Masao Miyamoto, Kodansha International, £19.99 hbk

Edith Cresson, then the French prime minister shocked everyone when she described the Japanese as 'termites'. But if Westerners today usually avoid bestial metaphors, popular images of the Japanese still show workers doing callisthenics together or crowds of commuters being crammed on to underground trains. Compared to the rugged individualism of a John Wayne western, there are always at least seven samurai. In the Western view, the Japanese are always conforming to the group. But 'groupism' is not just a Western prejudice; many Japanese too think that loyalty is a particularly Japanese trait. As the proverb goes 'the nail that sticks out gets hammered down'.

Straitjacket Society's surprise bestseller status is due to Masao Miyamoto's strident attack on groupism in his native Japan. For 10 years he worked as a psychiatrist in New York City, where he came to believe in individualism. Returning to work in Japan's civil service, and later as quarantine officer in the port of Tokyo, he outraged his superiors by jealously guarding his private life—declining unpaid overtime and taking two-week vacations. After writing about his different views in magazine articles, Miyamoto was moved first to Yokohama and finally to Kobe.

Straitjacket Society has been praised by non-Japanese like Walter Mondale, former US vice-president and Bill Clinton's current ambassador to Japan. Miyamoto modestly describes his disbelief at being invited to a reception at the French embassy with former prime minister Michel Rocard.

For Miyamoto Japan's pervasive bureaucracy is 'the ultimate microcosm of Japanese society' (p20), a world where openly to say 'no' is to threaten the consensus that is modern Japan—and to risk the bullying of your peers. But a lot of what Miyamoto complains about hardly sounds unique to Japan. For instance, Miyamoto makes much of the distinction between the concepts of *tatamae* (an official stance) and *honne* (what bureaucrats really think or feel). Miyamoto argues that 'no such distinction is sanctioned in the West'. In fact the gap between what officials say and do is so institutionalised in the West that the American congress can openly debate the merits of 'covert operations', while the British civil service's 'economy with the truth' is legendary. In one anecdote Miyamoto is castigated for incinerating records that he protests are redundant. In Britain he could easily have been sacked for doing so, and would be in breach of the Official Secrets Act for writing about it.

The discussion about 'groupism' is one more way that Westerners patronise the Japanese. But more recently arrogance towards Japan has slipped into an envy of the loyalty and conformism of Japanese society. Instead of castigating the groupism of the Japanese, many American writers now see Japan's supposed 'communitarianism' as a virtue. US business writers long for the supposed group loyalties of the Japanese worker. In their eyes we are all termites now.

Daniel Nassim

International Territory: The United Nations 1945-95, Adam Bartos and Christopher Hitchens, Verso, £19.95 hbk

Reflecting on 50 years of the United Nations seems a bitter sweet affair for both essayist and photographer in this portrait of the UN as 'an arena of paperwork and hypocrisy'. Hitchens' essay and Bartos' photographs of the United Nations buildings in New York sentimentally portray a time when the United Nations was supposed to embody the ideal of universal rights.

Bartos disregards recent modernisation of the UN buildings, rather looking for the spirit of the mid-century in his photographs. Empty of people, his pictures of bakelite fixtures, vinyl upholstery, and chunky manual typewriters in the press 'bull-pen' attempt to evoke the period when the West fought the good fight, and the USA was in the ascendancy. The art of Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Fernand Léger, which was commissioned for the UN headquarters, captures the spirit of new internationalism. In the event Léger's mural for the General Assembly was completed by an art student because the artist himself was refused entry to the USA. All these things seem to symbolise to Bartos the triumph of Western ideals—however flawed—of civilisation and democracy. Things were simpler then.

Hitchens, slightly more circumspect in his cataloguing of the history of the UN, looks over past events with a kind of misty-eyed sentimentality for the good old, bad old days. Hitchens sees the UN's role in such atrocities as the Korean War as a consequence of the way it was hijacked by the power politics of the five permanent members of the Security Council—the USA, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, China and France. He makes the mistake of seeing the end of the Cold War and of American hegemony as a new opportunity for the Little Man.

Hitchens issues a five-point plan for bringing the UN up to date in line with its current global role. This includes the creation of a kind of 'World Guard', a UN army autonomous of governmental interference and with an independent budget. Most importantly, in order to redress the balance in the structures of the United Nations, a UN Parliamentary Assembly is needed, Hitchens pleads. An assembly where 'even the most hardened practitioners of *realpolitik* can become convinced not only of their own self-interest, but also of the general human interest'.

In reality the UN was from the outset a creation of the victors of the Second World War, with the United States dictating the terms. The United Nations only ever succeeded in disguising Western domination over the world. Now that the protests of the Soviet bloc and the third world are no more, a major complication for the West is out of the way. More than ever before, the United Nations serves only to render Western policy in the humanitarian colours of international concern. Hitchens' proposed reforms could only add to the illusion that the UN works for 'the general human interest' when in truth it is the instrument of 'the most hardened practitioners of *realpolitik*' on Earth.

Sally Gray

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